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Aboriginal patterns of trade between the Columbia Basin and the Northern Plains

Gillett Griswold

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ABORIGINAL PATTERNS OF TRADE BETWEEN
THE COLUMBIA BASIN AND THE NORTHERN PLAINS

by
GILLET GRISWOLD
B. A. Montana State University, 1953

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY
1954

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Dean, Graduate School

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G. G.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>List</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF PLATES</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Chapter

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. PATTERNS OF PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Lower Columbia</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Dalles</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Plateau</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Northern Plains</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. VALUES AND VALUE SYSTEMS</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. PATTERNS OF EXCHANGE</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Lower Columbia</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Dalles</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Plateau</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Northern Plains</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## LIST OF PLATES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plate</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I.</td>
<td>Dentalium Shells and Beaded Band</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ornamented with Dentalia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.</td>
<td>Haliotis Shell Ornament and Large</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Triangular Haliotis Necklace</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pendant Probably Cut From a Monterey Shell</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.</td>
<td>Obsidian Core, Such As Used in Trade</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV.</td>
<td>Marine Shell Pendant or Gorget and</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Portrait by Catlin on the Upper</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Missouri Showing Manner of Wearing Such Shells</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V.</td>
<td>Blackfoot &quot;Kissing Stone&quot; Believed To</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Be the Gizzard Stone of a Dinosaur,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ornamented with Blue and White Beads,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dentalia, and Haliotis Shells</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI.</td>
<td>Dentalium Necklace with Probable</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Monterey Shell Pendant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII.</td>
<td>Blue, White, Red, and Transparent</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trade Beads of Type in Use in the Northwest about 1800. From the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Property of Peter Skene Ogden</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII.</td>
<td>Plains Woman's Smock Decorated with</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Elk Tusks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to discover and compare the aboriginal patterns of trade that existed within three distinct but inter-related cultural areas of the Northwestern United States.

The focus of the study is on intertribal trade, as distinct from trade with the whites; and the problem is to secure as clear a picture as possible of the types of exchange that were in effect before European contact in the form of the fur trade had disrupted and altered the prehistoric systems. Since European trade goods such as beads and knives reached this region through native channels long before the arrival of the whites, these goods as well as local materials will be considered.

In the widest sense, trade patterns include modes of production and distribution, types and values of exchange media employed, and the methods of exchange. A chapter is therefore devoted to each of these subjects. Gambling, though in vogue among all of the tribes of the Northwest and of considerable significance economically, has not been treated since it is doubtful if this activity could properly be regarded as a form of trade.
The tribes under discussion occupied much of the territory that is now within the states of Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, and North and South Dakota. Portions of three great prehistoric culture areas—the Northwest Coast, the Columbia-Fraser Plateau, and the Great Plains—were represented here. The specific cultural sub-areas treated in this paper are:

(1) The Lower Columbia (Northwest Coast), extending east upriver from the mouth of the Columbia to the Dalles, just west of the Cascade Mountains.

(2) The Southern Plateau, which extends from the Dalles in Washington to the main range of the Rocky Mountains in western Montana and which lies between the Fraser River drainage on the north and the Great Basin on the south.

(3) The Northern Plains sub-area which extends from the Rockies on the west to the big bend of the Missouri River in North Dakota on the east, and from the Canadian forest country north to the headwaters of the Arkansas River south.¹

Because of the unique characteristics of their marketing operations, the Dalles Indians are treated separately from the remainder of the Lower Columbia tribes.

In discussing intertribal trade matters it has been necessary at times to distinguish in the text between

different localities within the same cultural area. References to the Columbian Coast and the Columbian Valley are to sub-regions of the Lower Columbia; references to the Columbia Basin, the Columbian Plains, and the Middle and Upper Columbia are to various sections of the Plateau.

In accordance with standard anthropological practice, the term "tribe" is used to designate political units at village and band level as well as those of tribal status. It should be understood, however, that the village was the basic political unit in the Columbia River area, and that most of these were autonomous, functioning under separate chiefs.

Reference to individual tribes, particularly in the heterogeneous Northwest Coast region, has been held to a minimum to avoid needless complexity. Wherever possible, linguistic group designations such as "Lower Chinook," "Sahaptin," and "interior Salish" have been used. This is practicable because of the fact that each of these groups may be considered culturally as a unit. For the same reason, examples of trade patterns drawn from a few of the many tribes in each of the major culture areas are taken to be representative of those areas.

The following general tribal distributions should be borne in mind. Chinookan-speaking peoples occupied most of the Lower Columbia area. Sahaptin-speaking groups and a
few interior Salish tribes were along the Middle Columbia, and interior Salish plus the Kutenai held the Upper Columbia. On the Northern Plains from west to east were the roving Sarsi, Blackfoot (including the Piegan and the Blood), Atsina, Crow, Cheyenne, Arapaho, Teton Dakota (Sioux), and Assiniboin. Also in this area, below the big bend of the Missouri River, were the horticultural village tribes—Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara.

To secure primary data on these nonliterate societies it has been necessary to rely upon the early records of Europeans in the area. The records consist mainly of the journals of exploring parties, such as the Lewis and Clark expedition, and those of fur traders of the North West, Hudson's Bay, and other companies that operated at an early date in these territories. Thus the intertribal trade situation represented in this thesis is that which existed between the late 1780's and the early 1800's.

Due to the scarcity of material on the subject, the writer had also to draw upon later sources for information. This is entirely valid, however, not only because the Indians clung tenaciously to most of their traditional values and patterns of exchange during the fur trade era, but also because the fur companies found it expedient and generally profitable to cater to Indian custom in their transactions.
Finally, an intensive examination was made of selected ethnographic literature on the area. Only in a few instances did the yield compensate for the expenditures of time involved. In all but the most recent studies a section on technology usually constitutes the sum total of observations on intertribal economic behavior.

No other major activity engaged in by the Indians of the Northwest in early historic times seems to have been so completely overlooked, by fur traders and professional ethnographers alike. As an example, the writer found it necessary to scrutinize dozens of publications merely to assemble basic data on dentalium shells—and this despite the fact that these unique money and wealth tokens were in wide circulation at the time of white contact in the Northwest and for years thereafter. A total of eighteen sources were ultimately required to present a reasonably accurate picture in this paper of the role of dentalium in the economies of the areas under review.

Information on native values is likewise fragmentary and inadequate. The data available on intertribal trade is most deficient, however, with respect to methods of exchange. Very few of the numerous early accounts furnish any detail on the patterns employed in such transactions, and those that do are incomplete.

Because of these and other limitations, the
conclusions reached in this thesis on the comparative incidence of various traits associated with native trading activities are necessarily tentative. Nevertheless, in view of the past neglect of the subject, this paper should be useful as a preliminary survey and point of departure for future studies of the role of intertribal trade in the aboriginal cultures of the Northwest.
CHAPTER I

PATTERNS OF PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION

The Lower Columbia

The Chinook, occupying the lower reaches of the greatest inland waterway on the Pacific coast in a region that was densely populated and rich in natural resources, were among the most commercially-minded inhabitants of native North America. Their villages dominated three great breaks in Columbia River transportation: the Dalles portage, nearly two hundred miles inland; the Cascades portage, at the beginning of tidewater fifty miles below; and the coastal area at the mouth of the Columbia. Since almost all interior travel in the region in aboriginal times was confined to the Columbia and its tributaries, the Chinook exercised absolute control over the traffic of the area.

The economic activities of the coastal Chinook were closely geared to those of their kinsmen at the Dalles. However, because the trade situation of the two groups differed considerably, they will be treated separately.

The Lower Chinook were essentially middlemen, operating a complex system of distribution whereby they
exchanged the products of the seacoast tribes for the products of the interior that came down the Columbia from the Dalles. They transported these wares in a variety of canoes ranging from fifteen-foot dugouts to fifty-foot craft capable of accommodating thirty persons or up to 10,000 pounds.¹ Usually their exchanges with the Dalles market were effected through the Skilloots and the intermediate Chinookan groups located at the Cascades, for they themselves rarely went up as far as the falls.² They carried their maritime traffic south as far as the Salishan-speaking Tillamook and north as far as Cape Flattery at the entrance to the Strait of Juan de Fuca.

At some time in prehistory, to facilitate their intercourse with many different language groups, they developed a trade jargon incorporating Nootka, Salish, and other words with selections from their own tongue. By the time of white contact with the Columbia River tribes the Chinook jargon is said to have been in use along the seacoast from California to far up Alaska, cutting across a

hundred different language areas. This is an impressive indication of the extent of prehistoric commerce on the Pacific Coast. English and French words were added to the jargon following the advent of the whites, who were quick to press the speech into their own service in the Indian trade.

From the Dalles and the lower river the coastal Chinook imported furs, robes, dresses skins, slaves, pounded salmon, dried meat, berries, mountain goat wool, wappato and camas roots, "chappalel bread," bear grass, spruce roots, and wild hemp. In return they sent upriver vast quantities of dentalia shell-money, shell ornaments such as haliotis and olivella, canoes, seacoast furs, slaves, eulachon or candle fish, dried seal meat, dried sturgeon, cured shell fish such as crabs, shrimps, oysters and clams, whale blubber, whale and dogfish oil, mats, baskets, and basketry hats.

---


Being a numerous people, the Chinook absorbed large quantities of their own imports, but in the role of producers they did not bulk so large. The principal items that they furnished for the coastal and upriver trade were dried salmon, seal meat, candle fish oil, sturgeon, and dried shellfish. They did very little ocean fishing,¹ for the mouth of the Columbia and Willapa Bay just to the north provided them with an abundance of marine food. Great numbers of seals frequented the Columbia, following the salmon runs. Sturgeon in the area grew up to thirteen feet long and attained weights of 1,000 pounds.² Lewis Clark observed that sturgeon were not caught by the natives above the Cascades.³

The principal oyster and clam fisheries of the Lower Chinook were in Willapa Bay. The fish were strung for curing on cords of cypress bark, then transported to the Columbia by way of the Naselle River and a short portage, thus avoiding the long ocean route from the mouth of the bay over the dangerous bar at the entrance to the Columbia. Saltwater fish were highly esteemed by the tribes of the interior, providing a welcome variety to their diet.⁴

²Ross, Oregon Settlers, p. 108.
⁴Ray, Lower Chinook, pp. 43, 100; Swindell, Reprt, pp. 12, 33.
Trade items of Lower Chinook manufacture included several varieties of canoes, plus highly ornamented mats, baskets, and hats, in the making of which they excelled and which were eagerly sought by other tribes. These articles were woven of cedar bark and imported beargrass and were so tightly constructed that they were waterproof without the addition of gum or rosin. The baskets took the place of pottery, which was nonexistent in this region, and ranged in capacity from a small cup to several gallons. The hats were brimless and in the shape of a double cone.

The main coastal procurement centers for the Chinook trade were situated to the north, on Vancouver Island and Cape Flattery. The Nootka on the island produced virtually all of the dentalia shells that as media of exchange and objects of ornamentation moved in immense quantities through the Chinook southward as far as northern California and eastward up the Columbia River to the tribes of the Plateau and the Plains. They also furnished many of the abalone shells used as personal ornaments and the sea-snail shells used as decoration on canoes; all of the so-called "Chinook" canoes that were used by the coastal peoples: much of the dogfish oil; and many of the slaves. These commodities, together with native copper imported from the Copper River

2Thwaites, Ibid., pp. 359-360
in Alaska, were bartered to the Makah Indians, who transported the cargos to their own territory on the Cape. The Makah gave in exchange mainly dried halibut, sea-otter skins, whale blubber and whale oil.\(^1\)

To obtain these articles of Nootka production the Chinook traders regularly met the Makah at Cape Flattery and at Point Grenville, giving in exchange Columbia River foods and materials and vermilion or cinnabar obtained from the tribes of southern Oregon. To this the Makah added such items of their own as whale blubber, dogfish oil, and slaves procured from Puget Sound.\(^2\)

With respect to the practice of the potlatch among the Chinook, Lewis traced the complex as far south as the coastal groups at the mouth of the Columbia, but held that "it does not seem to have been of much importance in that region, as none of the early writers mention the custom at all."\(^3\)

Ray states:

Among the Lower Chinook the complex known as the potlatch existed only in the most superficial sense. . . . All of the signification of the typical potlatch was absent. Presents were distributed but return was in no sense obligatory,

\(^{2}\)Paul S. Martin and others. Indians Before Columbus: Twenty Thousand Years of North American History Revealed by Archaeology. Chicago, 1947, pp. 73-74.
to say nothing of return with interest.¹

Subsequently, he wrote:

"This institution was highly typical among the Lower Chinook; indeed, it amounted to hardly more than the familiar feasting and gift-giving complex found throughout western Washington, western Oregon and the entire Plateau. Both the gift-matching, fixed interest, and face-saving features of the Northwest Coast potlatch were absent . . . .

It is highly probable that what is called the potlatch among the Chinook was not directly related to the complex of the potlatch on the Northwest Coast but rather the temporally old and widespread pattern of feasting and gift-giving which had accreted a trait or two in isolation from the complex of the potlatch after that complex had been broken down into constituent elements in the process of diffusion. . . . .

the so-called potlatch of the Chinook in its function and cultural setting conveys in no wise the impression of an attenuated Northwest Coast potlatch of recent borrowing but rather a thoroughly integrated ceremony paralleling very closely the Plateau winter dance.²

Because the Lower Columbia area provides outstanding examples of tribal specialization variously based on localization of materials, on tradition, and on skill, the subject will be given extended discussion.

Dentalia (Dentalium pretiosum).—Commonly called by the Chinook jargon term hiaqua; also called tusk-shell money tooth-shell, shell money, and Iroquois. Dentalium was employed as the standard medium of exchange by the

¹ Ray Lower Chinook, p. 93.
natives of the Northwest Coast and as a highly-valued object of ornamentation. Much confusion exists in the literature regarding the provenience of this marine univalve and the species involved, due in part to the fact that long before the coming of the whites it was in circulation among the tribes from farther Alaska to Northern California, and that various species of dentalia flourish off the coasts throughout this area. Actually, only Dentalium pretiosum was used, and the immense quantities that were in circulation of the North Pacific came almost entirely from a single source—the west coast of Vancouver Island. The Queen Charlotte Islands seem to have been the only other source for these shells,¹ But the production there was inconsiderable; the tribes in that area and farther north did not utilize nor value the shells in any degree comparable to those to the south.²

The reason for this extremely localized production was that Vancouver Island and the Queen Charlotte group contained the only beds of these creatures that were sufficiently shallow to permit the Indians to harvest them. With regard to the distribution of related species elsewhere, Kroeber has this to say:

Dentalia occur in California, the species D.

¹Ray Lower Chinook, p. 93.
hezonum inhabiting the southern coast, and D. Indianorum perhaps the northern. Both species, however, live in the sand in comparatively deep water, and seem not to have been taken alive by any of the California Indians. The Yurok certainly were not aware of the presence of the mallusk along their ocean shore, and received their supply of the "tusk" shells from the north. They knew of them as coming both along the coast and down the Kalamath River . . . . it is certain that every piece in Yurok possession had traveled many miles, probably hundreds, and passed through a series of mutually unknown nations.¹

That the extensive trade in these shells must have developed at a very early date is evidenced by their occurrence in archaeological mounds in Ohio, Tennessee, and elsewhere in the Mississippi Valley² Orchard states that they were even in use as decoration among Atlantic tribes, and that "Some of the Mid-continental tribes used them extensively, sewing them in patterns to their clothing and baby carriers, wearing them in the form of necklaces and in other ways."³ Dentalia shells incised and decorated in the manner of the California Indians, a practice unknown among the Columbian tribes, have been found in an archaeological site in Washington,⁴ thus

³William C. Orchard. Beads and Beadwork of the American Indians. Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, 1929, p. 19. This statement requires qualification. Orchard fails to indicate the period he refers to. White traders began importing these shells to the Missouri village tribes via the Atlantic seaboard in the 1840's or 1850's. See the section on dentalium in Chapter II of this paper for further details.
⁴Orchard, Beads, p. 20.
thus indicating that they had been bartered from Vancouver Island all the way to California and back.

Even at Vancouver Island the accessible dentalia grounds were sharply limited. Only two important beds existed, both within the territory of the Nootka. Certain chiefs of four of the Nootkan tribes shared the dentalia fishing rights to these areas, and no one else could send men out to gather the shells.¹

The dentalia here did not occur between tidemarks. the shallowest beds were in depths of twenty-four to fifty feet, where the mollusks lay buried in the sand with the large end of the shell protruding.² Two methods used for obtaining the shells are described by Swan:

A piece of wood a foot square is filled full of little pegs, which are sharpened to a fine point. This block is fastened to a long pole, and thrust down into the water till it reaches the shell-fish, and the sharp points enter the hollow shells, breaking them from their hold on the bottom, and bringing them to the surface. Another method described to me by the Indians is to tie a large piece of seal or whale meat to a pole, and press that down firmly on the shells, which, becoming imbedded in the meat, are easily broken off, and thus secured.³

For the deeper beds, however, a much more

²Hodge, Handbook, Part 2, p. 909
A bundle of fine cedar splints was lashéd to one end of a long fir pole in a round bundle flaring toward the unlashed end in a form resembling somewhat that of a home-made broom. A hole was cut in a narrow piece of board so it would slip over the end of the bundle where it was lashed to the pole, but would not slip off the flaring end of the "broom." Two stones of about the same size, weighing, informants estimated, about 10 pounds each, were lashed in withes and secured to the ends of the perforated board. The dentalia fisherman provided himself with enough additional poles in 15- to 20-foot lengths, to reach bottom at the grounds when joined end to end, and a quantity of good heavy cardage of nettle fiber. He went out to the grounds with the poles and the broomlike affair in his canoe. There he laid the "broom" in the water, with the perforated board in place. The weight of the stones pulled the "broom" end down, and the fisherman lashed another of his poles to the upper end, continuing to join the poles till he could sound the bottom. For greatest efficiency of the . . . implement, of course, the stone weights should have almost counter-balanced the effective buoyancy of the poles and board . . . when he had enough poles lashed together, he jabed downward sharply a few times, then pulled up the pole, letting the top lean over till the whole length was afloat in the water. One informant specified a line was made fast to the lower end, just above the bundle of splints, to pull it up by . . . . As the gear was raised the weights drew the perforated board down snug over the splints, compressing them slightly. If he had been lucky the fisherman found . . . . dentalia . . . . pinched firmly between the splints...¹

As Drucker comments, "the apparatus is an invention of no mean order. . . One is impressed by the abstract reasoning involved . . . whoever invented the

¹Drucker, Nootkan. p. 112.
dentalia gear had to be able to visualize what his equipment was doing out of sight in deep water."¹

The shells were boiled to remove their occupants, then stirred in a box of fine sand to polish them. After this they were sorted according to size and either placed in cedar bark baskets or strung on fathom-long strips of sinew.²

The Shells of the dentalia are fang-shaped, being pure white, tublar, and slightly curved (Plate I). Since they are naturally perforated, they required no preparation for use as ornaments or to be strung for exchange. They vary in length from one-fourth inch to four inches, with a diameter of about one-half inch for the larger ones. The longest shells are much the rarest, and were consequently valued far above the small ones.³

The use of the dentalium as money will be discussed in another section of this paper. Its use for ornament and in ritual varied widely among the tribes. Among the Makah, girls were required to wear a headdress of the shells from the time of puberty until they were married.⁴ They also wore the shells as ear ornaments. Swan describes

¹Drucker, Nootkan, p. 113.
²Ibid
⁴Swan, Cape Flattery, 13
PLATE I.

Dentalium Shells and Beaded Band Ornamented with Dentalia
them:

As these shells are evidences of wealth, the women are anxious to display as many as they can on great occasions. Some of these girls I have seen with the whole rim of their ears bored full of holes, into each of which would be inserted a string of these shells that reached to the floor, and the whole weighing so heavy that, to save their ears from being pulled off, they were obliged to wear a band across the top of the head.¹

Lower Chinook men sported a single dentalium as a nose ornament. The shell was inserted horizontally through the cartilage of the nose, and through it was passed a string from which were suspended additional baubles. The shell prevented the string from chafing the flesh.²

Dentalia, then were produced by the Nootka and transferred to the Makah who in turn passed them on to the Lower Chinook. From these people a great flow of the articles moved south along the coast and up the Columbia to the Dalles, where they were bartered in all directions; many passing east to the village tribes on the Missouri, and south along the Willamette and Deschutes Rivers via the intermediary Modoc and Klamath to the northern California tribes. The coastal movement of the shells to the south must have been considerably slower, at least in historic times, for none of the many different tribes living south of the Tillamook possessed either horses or sea-going canoes.³ Here the dentalia must have filtered

¹Swan, Coast, p. 159
³Lewis, Tribes, p. 193.
slowly down to California through tribe after tribe.

When Lewis and Clark inquired of the Chinook the origin of the dentalium shells the Indians replied that they were sucked up by strange creatures at the end of the world. Curiously enough, this same explanation was extant among the Yurok in California. It is no unlikely that the crafty Chinook fabricated and spread this tale for the express purpose of protecting their middleman monopoly on the source of supply for these valuables.

Some time later the Chinook told Lewis and Clark that a trader named Swipton furnished them with the shells. It seems, then, that by 1806 some enterprising whites were cutting in on the traffic—securing the article, in all probability, by barter from the Nootka. The pattern evident here is somewhat similar to that which developed with regard to wampum on the Atlantic coast. However, the writer has encountered no indication that it ever reached the point of artificial manufacture of the shells. In any event, they were soon joined by blankets, and beaverskins as the least common denominator in the region's exchange.

_Haliotis shell_ (Haliotis cracherodii, H. rufescens, and H. splendens).—also called abalone and mother-of-

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1Kroeber, Handbook, p. 23.
2Thwaites, Lewis and Clark, Vol. IV, p. 187
pearl. These shells were in wide demand as nose, ear, hair, and clothing ornaments, and were traded far into the interior (Plate II). The smaller species were apparently common to many localities, but Swan states that the largest specimens in use on the Columbian coast were obtained from Vancouver Island, Particularly from Cowitchan territory on the east side.¹ He does not name the species.

H. cracherodii, however, must have been imported, for it is peculiar to the waters of Monterey, California. It is characterized by a large, gree-backed shell, and was much favored bycause of the thickness of its nacreous layer. Heizer, in an article on the subject in the Pacific Northwest Quarterly,² cites the records of Spanish trading voyages to Vancouver Island as early as 1774 to the effect that they carried Monterey shells among their cargo. He therefore holds that all of the large haliotis noted by early travellers in the Columbia region were Monterey shells, though he fails to mention or dispose of Swan's report to the contrary. Drucker, on the same subject, dismisses Swan's statement regarding the Vancouver source as a "rumor," but he does not say why.³

Be that as it may. Heizer, after reciting the

¹Swan, Cape Flattery, pp. 17, 47.
³Drucker, Nootkan, p. 113.
Halocline Shell Ornament and Large Triangular Halocline Necklace Pendant Probably Cut From a Monterey Bay Shell.
Spanish accounts, concludes his treatise with this remarkable statement:

If we did not have these references which prove the introduction from outside (i.e., by the Spanish) of the Haliotis cracherodii from the California coast . . . . the anthropologist might wonder whether the presence of this southern shell did not indicate prehistoric southern trade connections of the Indians of the Northwest Coast. But with historical documentation there is no problem—the answer was written by the people who themselves imported and traded the shells.\(^1\)

Well might the Anthropologist wonder, for Heizer proves nothing except that the Spanish did bring in some Monterey shells. He offers not the slightest shred of evidence in support of his contention that such shells were unknown and unused by the Northwest Coast tribes prior to that time. Since we know that ancient trade connections were in existence in the intervening area for the transfer of Dentalium pretiosum, it is difficult to believe that H. cracherodii found it impossible to move through the self-same channels.

Canoes.—The famous "Chinook" canoes so widely distributed along the coast were made not by the Chinook but rather by the Nootka on Vancouver Island: mute testimony, perhaps, to the power of middleman propaganda. According to Swan, a major reason was that the cedar on the Island was far superior for the manufacture of the biggest canoes to that found elsewhere; that only there

\(^1\)Heizer, "Monterey Shells," p. 401.
were the trees of sufficient size and quality to permit their utilization for this purpose. Cedar bark from Vancouver Island was everywhere much in demand, as were ceder boards and planks for native houses on the mainland.

**Sea otter** (*Enhydra nereis* Merriam).—Even before the coming of the white fur hunters the distribution of the sea otter was quite limited in this area. The animal appeared in numbers at the mouth of the Columbia River and was abundant on the west side of Vancouver Island. But its main point of concentration, and the only other place where it seems to have frequented the coast in this vicinity, was along the forty-mile stretch between Gray's Harbor and the Quinault River. This was probably due to the fact that the otter required adequate shelter from the severe storms that blow on the coast.

Consequently the Quinault Indians were major producers of the valuable pelts, and the Makah obtained most of their sea otter skins from that tribe. The Quinault were the source of supply for many of the other tribes as well.

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1 Swan, Cape Flattery, pp. 31, 35.
2 Ibid., p. 4.
4 Ibid., p. 31.
Sea otter were extremely shy, but dangerous when attacked, and it took skilled hunters to procure them. Robes required from three to six skins, and were worn only by chiefs. Because of the high value of the pelts they were of considerable importance in intertribal trade.  

Salmon (Oncorhynchus tschawytscha, the Chinook or king salmon; O. nerka, the sockeye or blueback; O. kisutch, the silver salmon; O. keta, the chum or dog salmon; and O. gorbuscha, the pind or humpback salmon). Since the great salmon runs in the Columbia extended the length of the river and fanned out into every tributary save where high falls blocked the way, it might be assumed that there would have been very little bartering of this fish among the Columbia Basin tribes. In actuality, however, there was an extensive trade in salmon, based on a number of factors.

One of the most important arose from the fact that salmon do not feed from the time they enter fresh water until they spawn and die. Energy for the ascent upriver is fueled by the store of oil in their systems; hence some species are richest and most savory at the mouth of the Columbia, and the farther they travel upstream the poorer they become. The fish that reach the ultimate headwaters are sometimes reduced to skin and bones.  

Olson, Quinault, p. 79; Scheffer, Sea Otter, p. 377.
The Lower Columbia natives thus had a monopoly on the most tasty fish, and those which yielded the greatest quantities of the oil that was a major part of the diet of the salmon-eating tribes.¹

Again, there was a sharp difference in methods of preserving salmon between the peoples that lived east and west of the Cascades. The inhabitants of the high, dry plains of the Columbia cured the fish in strips exposed to the action of the sun and air. Below the Cascades the humidity was much too great to permit this. Consequently, the lower river tribes dried the salmon by hanging them in the smoke of fires.² In this district the method appears to have been not too successful. The oiliness of the lower river fish made them difficult to cure, and the extreme dampness of the rainy winter season frequently caused the product to spoil.³ Probably for these reasons the coastal tribes imported large quantities of sun-cured salmon from the upriver tribes.

A third factor was the complete lack of firewood on the plains between Celilo Falls and the mouth of the Smake River. The tribes here required salmon for fuel as well as for food.⁴ Consequently, it may be inferred that

¹Swindell, Report, p. 34.
²Ibid., p. 15.
their per capita consumption was considerably greater than that of the tribes below. At the same time they were less favorably situated with respect to the source of supply, for the salmon constantly decrease in numbers as they progress upstream. The balance, then, if the natives were not to go hungry, had to be made up from other areas.

A fourth factor was that various species of salmon spawned in different sections of the Columbia waters, with the exception of the king salmon, which was common to all. The craving for variety in diet must have stimulated trade and travel among the tribes.

Finally, cultural factors seem to have entered into the equation. The tribes along the stretch of river from above Celilo Falls to the Cascade rapids preserved the salmon by a pounding method which was not in vogue among any of the other Columbia tribes.¹ And this despite the fact that the technique was simple and by all accounts far superior to other methods, both from the standpoint of flavor and of long-term preservation. As a result, great quantities of the pounded salmon were traded by the Dalles Indians to the other tribes, and, as already mentioned, a sizeable portion of this traffic went to the coastal Chinook downstream.²

²Ibid. p. 362.
The writer has never seen any explanation offered for the pounded fish monopoly. Perhaps the salmon, when they reached that area, had attained just the balance between oil and flesh most suited to their preservation by this technique. Probably also the fact that the greatest fisheries along the Columbia were located in the area concerned had a part in it, by providing these people with such an abundance of food as to permit them to devote a large share of their energies to this method of preservation. Such expenditures of time were not possible among less richly endowed tribes, who must move from fishery to fishery in search of subsistence.

Eulachon (Thaleichthys pacificus).—Also known as candle-fish, fathom fish, anchovy. This little fish, which appeared annually for a brief period in enormous numbers along the coast, did much to stimulate intertribal trade, both because of its wealth of oil and delicious flavor and because it spawned only at the entrances of large rivers. The craving for eulachon oil by natives of the interior led to the development of the famous "grease trails" of the north, and it constituted a major item of traffic on the Columbia. The Lower Chinook, situated at the entrance to the largest river of all, were particularly favored in this respect.

1Swindell, Report, p. 33.
2Ibid.
It is said that the eulachon is so filled with oil that it begins to drip the moment it is hung up; and can be burned like a candle for illumination. Clark recorded:

they are so fat that they require no additional sauce, and I think them superior to any fish I ever tasted.... I have heard the fresh anchovy much extroil'd but I hope I shall be pardoned for believeing this quite as good. the bones are so soft and fine that they form no obstruction in eating this fish.

And Lewis added: "they need no previous preparation of gutting &c and will cure in 24 hours"

For marketing purposes they were strung on sinew thread and sold by the fathom.

Dogfish (Acanthias suckleyi).—The liver of this fish is particularly rich in oil, and to secure this both the Makah and the Nootka caught them in quantity. Oddly enough, however, although the dogfish was plentiful all along the coast, the Indians south of Cape Flattery neither fished for them nor knew how to extract the oil, their source of supply for this product being the Makah and Nootka.

Whale (principally Rhachianectes glaucus, the Pacific gray Whale).—Since whaling was a dangerous pursuit, requiring great skill and daring, and since many other types

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1Ross, Oregon Settlers, P. 108.
3Ibid., p. 131.
4Ross, Oregon Settlers, p. 108
5Swan, Cape Flattery, pp. 29, 32.
of food products were available in the area, it is not surprising that few of the tribes here engaged in it to any great extent. The Lower Chinook do not seem to have practiced it, relying instead upon trade with the Makah to secure the prized blubber and oil. All of the natives, of course, made use of stranded whales and of those killed by various other natural causes.

The Makah and the Quinault, and particularly the former, were the great whaling and sealing tribes of this part of the coast. The Makah bartered quantities of blubber and whale oil to the Vancouver Island Indians, to the Klallam and Victoria Indians, and to the Chinook and other tribes south of Cape Flattery. Estimates placed their yearly production of oil at from 5,000 to 16,000 gallons, and this was after the tribe had been decimated by disease. Swan considered the Makah to be the biggest producers of ocean foods of all kinds in the entire territory.

The Lewis and Clark expedition participated in bartering for chunks of a whale that was cast up on the beach at Tillamook Head during their stay at Fort Clatsop.

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1 Ray, Lower Chinook, p. 114.
2 Swan, Cape Flattery, p. 4; Swindell, Report, p. 13.
3 Swan, Ibid., pp. 29-31.
4 Ibid., p. 32.
Clark described the process employed by the natives in trying out the animal:

I . . . found the natives busily engaged boiling the blubber, which they performed in a large Squar wooden trought by means of hot stones: the oil when extracted was secured in bladders and the Guts of the whale; the blubber from which the oil was only partially extracted by this process, was laid by in their cabins in large flickes (flitches) for use; those flickes they usually expose to the fire on a wooden Spit until it is pritty well wormed through and then eate it in the oil.¹

Dried salmon and other dried fish were eminently more palatable when dipped in whale oil.

¹Thwaites, Lewis and Clark, Vol. III, pp 324-325
The Dalles

the villages at the Dalles of the Columbia, situated 200 miles inland where the foothills of the Cascades adjoin the Columbian plains; where Northwest Coast culture meets the culture of the Plateau; and where the Chinookan language group gives way to that of the Sahaptin tongue, formed the greatest trading market in the native Northwest. Here the commodities moving upstream from the coast were exchanged for those brought east from the Great Plains and the Rockies; for those transported downriver from the upper waters of the Columbia to the north; and for still others flowing in from Oregon and California to the south.

Dentalia, haliotis, and olivella shells, native copper, eulachon oil, sturgeon, shellfish, and eels, wappato roots, mats, baskets, and canoes, were here exchanged for pounded fish, buffalo robes, dresses skins and furs, buckskins shirts and leggings, beargrass, venison, camas roots and berries, horses, feathers, silk-grass and chapparel bread, parfleches, mountain sheep horn, native tobacco, slaves, weapons, and tools. Following white contact on the coast, the upriver exchange included beads, trinkets, clothing, blankets, knives, and many other
articles of European manufacture.¹

The month of May, when the winter snows were gone, the spring roots gathered, and the first great salmon run commencing, was the signal for several thousands of natives representing a multitude of tribes, dialects, and tongues, to assemble at the Dalles for trading, visiting, gambling, and festivities.² Groups came and went but the crowd remained. Here the greatest fishery on the Columbia furnished an inexhaustible food supply, obtainable with a minimum of effort, from May until September when the last of the annual salmon runs ended. No other place in the aboriginal Northwest could support so large an assemblage of natives for such a length of time.

The easternmost of the principal mercantile establishments was the village of Wyam (the Eneeshurs of Lewis and Clark) on the Oregon side of the river at the head of Celilo Falls. The inhabitants were Sahaptins, linguistic kin of the tribes upstream. About six miles below, on the Washington side, was the village of Wishram or Nixluidix, situated at the head of the upper Dalles,


²Ross, Oregon Settlers, pp. 129-130
also known as the Long Narrows or Nine Mile Rapids. The
people here were of the Tlakuit tribe of the Chinook (the
Echeloots of Lewis and Clark). Opposite Wishram on the
Oregon side was the Village of Wasco. Also inhabited by a
Chinookan group. And nine miles below, at the lower
Dalles, Also known as the Short Narrows or Five Mile
Rapids, was a village of Chilluckquittequaws, also
Chinookan. Other Villages were located along the same
stretch but those named here were the most important. The
main village, and the one which conducted the major share
of the market trade, was Wishram.¹

Each of these communities dominated a break in
river transportation. A 1200-yard portage was required at
Celilo Falls, and much longer ones at the upper and lower
Dalles. The villagers were thus in a position to bottleneck
all traffic between the lower and middle Columbia, and they
levied tribute accordingly.²

They were by no means entirely middlemen, for they
produced enormous quantities of pounded fish, both for their
own consumption and for the market. Lewis and Clark, on

their downstream voyage in 1805, estimated that these people annually prepared about 30,000 pounds of pounded salmon for barter.\(^1\) Swindell, on the basis of data obtained from aged informants, states that the average Dalles Indian family cured and stored for their own use about thirty sacks of fish, each sack containing ten to twelve salmon which weighed in the aggregate one hundred pounds; and that each family prepared an additional ten sacks of fish for purposes of trade.\(^2\) This amounts to 4,000 pounds per family for the several hundred people that had permanent residence here. In view of this, the Lewis and Clark estimate of the amount prepared for trade must be far too low. This can readily be demonstrated from their own observations.

On October 22, 1805, while at Celilo Falls, Clark recorded that:

their common custom is to Set 7 (baskets of salmon) as close as they can Stand and 5 on the top of them, and secure them with mats which is raped around them and made fast with cords and covered also with mats, those 12 baskets of from 90 to 100 lbs. each form a Stack.\(^3\)

Two days later, having descended to the Short Narrows, he wrote:

I counted 107 stacks of dried pounded fish

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\(^4\)Ibid., p. 155.
in different places on those rocks which must have contained 10,000 lbs of net fish.  

On the basis of his own previous statement as to what constitutes a stack, we actually have here between 115,000 and 128,000 pounds of dried and basketed salmon.

That this is not unreasonable may be deduced from the following. At least four hundred natives, or eighty families, lived the year around at Wishram alone. Using Swindell's information, that each family annually prepared ten baskets or one thousand pounds of fish for barter, we see that the village of Wishram must have annually produced about 320,000 pounds of salmon for intertribal trade, entirely aside from that required for the own consumption. And if we take the five thousand persons or one thousand families estimated to have been in permanent residence along the Columbia from Rock Creek above Celilo Falls down to the Cascades in the year 1805 — the area which Lewis and Clark designated as comprising the pounded fish industry — we have the enormous total of one million pounds of Dalles area salmon prepared annually for trade. It may be remarked that this is not out of line with Swindell's estimate that the aboriginal catch of salmon in the Columbia Basin.

1 Thwaites, Lewis And Clark, Vol. III, p. 155  
3 Spier and Sapir, pp. 169-171.  
5 Swindell, p. 13.
amounted annually to about eighteen million pounds.

The initial processing of the fish was described by Wilkes, who visited the Dalles about 1840:

The men are engaged in fishing, and do nothing else. On the women falls all the work of skinning, cleaning, and drying the fish for their winter stores. As soon as the fish are caught, they are laid for a few hours on the rocks, in the hot sun, which permits the skins to be taken off with greater ease; the flesh is then stripped off the bones, masked and pounded as fine as possible; it is then spread out on mats, and placed upon frames to dry in the sun and wind, which effectually cured it; indeed, it is said that meat of any kind dried in this climate never becomes putrid. Three or four days are sufficient to dry a large matfull, four inches deep. The cured fish is then pounded into a long basket, which will contain about eighty pounds; put up in this way, if kept dry, it will keep for three years.

During the fishing season, the Indians live entirely on the heads, hearts, and offal of the salmon, which they string on sticks, and roast over a small fire.

The fishing here is very much after the manner of that at Willamette Falls, except that there is no necessity for planks to stand on, as there are great conveniences at the Dalles for pursuing this fishery... The Indians are seen standing along the walls of the canals in great numbers, fishing, and it is not uncommon for them to take twenty to twenty-five salmon in an hour. ¹

Clark in 1805 recorded further details:

On those Islands of rocks as well as at and about their Lodges I observe great numbers of Stacks of pounded Salmon neatly preserved in the following manner, i.e. after (being) sufficiently Dried it is pounded between two Stones fine, and put into a species of basket neatly made of grass and rushes better than two feet long and one foot Diameter, which basket is lined with the Skin of

Salmon stretched and dried for the purpose, in this it is pressed down as hard as is possible, when full they secure the open part with the fish skins across which they fasten the loops of the basket that part very securely, and then on a dry situation they set those baskets the corded part up, ... thus preserved those fish may be kept sound and sweet several years, as those people inform me.¹

During non-trading seasons the salmon were "warehoused" in the big wooden dwellings of the inhabitants, one-half of each house being reserved for such storage, and the other half for occupation by the families.²

¹ Thwaites, Lewis and Clark, Vol III, p. 148
² Ibid., pp. 154-155
The Plateau

The tribes of the Plateau, consisting principally of the Sahaptin-speaking groups along the Middle Columbia and south to the Great Basin, and the interior Salish on the Upper Columbia to the north and east, were the carriers by whom Plains commodities reached the Dalles and Coastal commodities reached the Plains. The bulk of this traffic developed after the introduction of the horse, when the easternmost Plateau peoples began to make annual expeditions to the buffalo country. The Nez Perce were the most active of the Middle Columbia tribes in this regard, as were the Flathead, Pend D'Oreille, and Coeur d'Alene among Upper Columbia tribes. However of these only the Nez Perce maintained direct contact both with the Dalles and with the natives of the Plains.

Three major trails led east through the Coeur d'Alene and Bitterroot Mountains. The one farthest north sometimes known as the Pend d'Oreille Trail, ran from Spokane territory to Pend d'Oreille Lake, then followed up the Clark Fork to the Flathead country. The trail passed by Coeur d'Alene Lake and crossed the Bitterroots near the headwaters of the St. Joe River. The southern route, the Lolo Trail of Lewis and Clark
fame, used regularly by the Nez Perce, crossed over the
mountains from the North Fork of the Clearwater River.¹

The main trade on the Plains was with the Crows
and Blackfoot, and was frequently interrupted by way. The
Plateau tribes carried eastward such coastal commodities
as dentalia, haliotis, and olivella shells; Columbian
products such as salmon pemmican and salmon oil sealed in
fish-skin, and woven bags; and a variety of intermountain
articles, including horn bows, wooden bows, greenstone
pipes, lodgepoles, wild hemp, berry, camas, and cowse
cakes, dressed moose skin, spoons and bowls made of
mountain sheep horn, coiled baskets, and eagle-tail feathers.

Horses were a major Plateau trade item. The
Flatheads, Cayuse, and Nez Perce had many more of these
than did the tribes of the Plains. Often they drove extra
horses along on their buffalo-hunting expeditions for the
express purpose of trade. In return they received tanned
and ornamented buffalo robes, which the Plains tribes, and
particularly the Crow, were more adept at preparing than
themselves; Feather bonnets, of which the best were made
by the Sioux and obtained through the Crow; catlinite and

¹James A. Teit. "The Salishan Tribes of the
Western Plateaus." 45th Annual Report, Bureau of American
Ethnology, Washington, D.C., 1930, p. 252; Herbert J.
Spinden. The Nez Perce Indians. Memoirs of the American
catlinite pipes; obsidian for arrowheads and tools (Plate III); buffalo horn and buggalo bone beads. A considerable exchange also took places of paint, stone implements, skins, and buckskin clothes, and occasionally of horse equipment.\(^1\)

Articles of European manufacture traded included blue and white beads and copper and brass trinkets from the coast, and knoves, hatchets, metal arrowheads, and the like carried westward by the Crows from the Missouri village tribes\(^2\).

In addition to this east-west traffic, the Upper Columbia groups traded north with the Shuswap and Thompson in the Frazer River drainage, while the Middle Columbia tribes engaged in some exchange of goods with the Shoshone-speaking peoples of the Great Basin. The northern trade routes ran from Kettle Falls in Colville territory and from Okanagon Falls in Okanagon Country. These Communication lines along which commodities from the Dalles moved into British Columbia, were of ancient origin, for the waterways provided transportation before the introduction of the horse.\(^3\)

The Great Basin trade, usually carried on at the

\(^3\)Teit, Ibid., pp. 250-251.
Obsidian Core Tool, Such As Used In Trade
Grande Ronde in southeastern Oregon between the Nez Perce, Cayuse, and Walla Walla tribes on the one hand and the Snakes on the other, appears to have been of very recent origin, at least in that locality. Wilkes relates in this connection:

Mr. Drayton met with an old Indian at Waiilaptu, who was pointed out as the man who took the first flag that was ever seen in the country to the Grande Ronde, as the emblem of peace. Lewis and Clark, when in this country, presented an American flag to the Cayuse tribe, calling it a flag of peace; this tribe, in alliance with the Wallawallas, had up to that time been always at war with the Shoshones or Snakes. After it became known among the Snakes that such a flag existed, a party of Cayuse and Wallawallas took the flag and planted it at the Grande Ronde, the old man above spoke of being the bearer. The result has been, that these two tribes have ever since been at peace with the Snakes, and all three have met annually in this place to trade.¹

In these exchanges buffalo and elk meat, skin lodges, and roots were bartered by the Snakes for salmon and horses.²

Occasionally the Walla Wallas undertook excursions as far south as California to exchange beaver pelts and horses with the Shasta tribes for beads, blankets, powder and ball.³ Very likely this is one of the means by which Monterey shells were obtained by the Plateau tribes.

A brisk interior trade also existed in the Plateau. Frequent exchanges took place between the Flatheads, residing east of the mountains, and the Nez Perce and

¹Wilkes, Expedition, pp. 394-398.
²Ibid.
³Ibid.
Coeur d'Alene west of the mountains. The former had greater access to Plains commodities, being stationed on the frontier of the region. When, for example, the Coeur d'Alene did not go to buffalo, they bartered robes and hides from the Flatheads through the Pend d'Oreille.¹

A further stimulus to interior trade arose from the localization of natural resources. The Coeur d'Alene traded for bitterroot and salmon with the Spokane, because these food staples were lacking in their own territory.²

Custom also entered in. The Coeur d'Alene imported native tobacco from the Spokane because they themselves did not grow the plant; and they imported dentalia and abalone from the Nez Perce rather than travel to the Dalles.³

The Colville and the Okanagon were the principal traders among the central tribes, the former bartering north and south and the latter east and west. Colville territory, through which the Pend d'Oreille Trail passed, was the major trading center for the interior Salish.⁴

Typical of the Columbian groups was the holding of annual trade fairs and festivals featuring intertribal dances, gambling, horse-racing, and various public

¹Teit, "Salishan," p. 112.
²Ibid., p. 852. 112
³Ibid., p. 252.
⁴Ibid., p. 252.
ceremonies. Traditional localities were Okanagon Falls, Kettle Falls, the Yakima Valley, and the junction of theSnake and Columbia Rivers. The last two were favorite rendezvous where Umatilla, Yakima, Nez Perce, Walla Walla, and other Sahaptin-speaking tribes gathered by the thousands at particular times.¹

The Northern Plains

In 1738, when the elder Verendrye visited the village tribes on the Missouri from his trading post at Fort La Reine, the Mandans were already receiving a trickle of Hudson's Bay muskets, powder, balls, axes, kettles, and knives through trade with the Assiniboins, and the frontier of horse diffusion from the Spanish Southwest had reached the Indians in the Black Hills. Sixty years later British traders were in residence with the Mandans, the horse revolution had swept the Northern Plains, and the Blackfoot, Sarsi, Atsina, Cheyenne, Crow, Teton Dakota, and Assiniboins had assumed the climax pattern of Plains Indian existence, that of the mounted, bison-hunting nomad.

Along with these developments the equestrian middleman came into being, trafficking between the Missouri village tribes and those of the Rockies and the southwestern Plains. In this complex the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara served as a center of supply for both aboriginal vegetable products and European trade goods.

The Cheyenne were the carriers for the Kiowa, Arapaho, and Comanche south of the Platte, while the Crow operated westward to the Shoshoni, Nez Perce, and Flathead on the rim of the Plateau. Of signal importance in the creation of this trade pattern was the fact that these two groups formed the two great lines of distribution by which horses reached the Northwest from their source of supply at Santa Fe. At the heads of these routes, the middleman tribes—the Crow and the Cheyenne—obtained the immense surplus stock they needed for purposes of exchange by alternately raiding and trading back along the lines of supply. In turn the more northerly Plains groups, consisting of the Blackfoot, Atsina, Assiniboine, and Sioux, obtained many of their mounts by raiding the horse-rich Crow and Cheyenne.

The horse, then, was the standard of wealth in the Northern Plains at the opening of the 19th Century and one of the most important commodities of trade between the equestrian nomads and the stationary village tribes. Horses were bartered by the former to the latter primarily in exchange for articles of European make, such as guns.

ammunition, tobacco, steel arrowheads, tomahawks, bladed war clubs, and scalping knives. And the surplus of the horses thus acquired were used by the Mandans and Hidatsa to purchase additional European trade supplies from the Cree Ojibway Assiniboine, and Canadians. During the period concerned, all other trade between the villagers and the roving horse tribes consisted of an exchange of items of native production.

The nomads gave dried meat, fat, prairie-turnip flour (a commodity highly prized by the village people), buffalo robes, grizzly bear hides, furs, dressed skins, buckskin shirts and legging moccasins, leather tents, elkhorn, quill work, dyes, obsidian. The Crows also traded dentalium abalone and other shells from the Pacific (Plate IV), bone and horn bown from the Plateau. The Teton Dalota brought in lodgepoles from the Black Hills, and catlinite pipes from the lower Missouri.

In return they secured corn, beans, pumpkins, squashes, sunflower seeds, tobacco, dyed plumes, eagle tail-feathers, and the like.

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3 Ibid.
Marine Shell Pendant or Gorget and Portrait By Catlin On The Upper Missouri Showing Manner of Wearing Such Shells.
The Mandans passed on many of the robes and furs received to Hudson's Bay and the North West Company, acting as a clearinghouse for these articles, which they themselves because of their sedentary position did not produce in any appreciable quantity. And the fur companies preferred initially to deal through the stationary villagers rather than with the unreliable nomadic tribes. On their part the interior Indians distrusted the whites and at this stage in the development of the Northwest fur trade much preferred to deal with other Indians for European goods. The village tribes, having a vested interest in the matter, did all they could to foster such sentiments on both sides.¹

As has been indicated, the Crow and Cheyenne were as often as not at war with their customers west and south. A compelling economic motive was the need to maintain a surplus of riding stock for trade. In this connection Mishkin finds a correlation between horse surpluses, trading, and raiding among Plains tribes.

These three factors describe a circular course each maintaining and accelerating the other. Thus those tribes that owned surpluses were naturally the most active traders and in turn were compelled to be the most active raiders in order to replenish their surpluses for future trading.²

¹Jablow, Cheyenne, pp. 21, 28, 37-39, 59-60; Masimilian, Travels, pp. 274, 277.  
Nevertheless the resulting hostilities were rarely permitted to interfere with exchange where there were mutual advantages for both sides. Thus the Blackfoot, although inveterate enemies of the Kutenai, relied upon the latter for a number of needed articles: dentalium; steatite; black pipestone; a highly-valued species of sweet-scented roots, which were cut into cylinders and strung for necklaces; and cougar skins, which the Blackfoot were particularly fond of using as saddle pads, covers, and for quivers, and for each of which they sometimes gave one or more good horses. Likewise from the Crows their beautifully ornamented shields.\(^1\) With respect to Blackfoot weapons, Maximilian wrote:

The weapons of the Blackfeet do not much differ from those of the other Indians on the Missouri; but they are not so handsome and well made as those of the Crows, Manitaries and Mandans. They do not themselves make bows of the horn of the elk, or of the mountain sheep, which are consequently not common among them, their country does not produce any wood suitable for bows; and they endeavour to obtain, by barter, the bow wood, or yellow wood (\textit{Maclura aurantiaca.}) from the River Arkanasas.\(^2\)

War and trading parties from the Piegan bands of the Blackfoot, and from the Crow and Flathead tribes as well, occasionally made long journeys southward, going even as far as the Spanish settlements in the Southwest. Such expeditions would sometimes be gone as

\(^1\)Maximilian, Travels, pp. 98, 100, 107, 118, 119.
\(^2\)Ibid., p. 119.
long as two or three years.

While David Thompson was with the Piegan in 1787 a war party of about two hundred and fifty men returned from one of these treks. They had reached the Spanish mines in latitude 32° North, a distance of 1500 miles from their home territory, and had captured a large Spanish pack train loaded with silver. They threw the bags of silver away, but brought the horses, mules, saddles, and bits north with them. Thompson saw some of the horses; from his description they were Arabian.¹

The Crow and the Flathead travelled south more with the intention of trade than of war, though such excursions almost inevitably involved the latter as well.

CHAPTER II

VALUES AND VALUE SYSTEMS

Since exchanges of commodities involve exchanges of values in terms of other goods or of money tokens, a discussion of trade patterns in any particular area would be incomplete without some consideration of what equivalents were used in the trade. The available data with regard to the aboriginal Northwest is so fragmentary and scattered, however, that only the most superficial treatment can be accorded the subject here.

One of the most erroneous misconceptions that has ever been perpetuated is that the aboriginal Indian had no sense of values. This opinion was particularly cherished on the Northwest Coast, where the earliest white traders were delightfully shocked at the amazing bargains that they made with the natives. One American in 1788 obtained from a single tribe, at the cost of one twenty-five cent chisel, two hundred sea otter pelts worth from twelve thousand dollars up in China.\(^1\) Wrote another trader, with regard to a group of Indians in the same general area:

"Such as were dressed in furs instantly stripped themselves, and for a moderate quantity of large spike nails, we

received sixty fine skins."¹ Even before this the Spaniards had discovered that Monterey shells would buy not only any kind of furs, but also the choicest of European articles for which the furs had been bartered.²

Nor were subsequent experiences calculated to revise this impression. Haswell while at Barrell Sound recorded:

We purchased a number of otter skins for knives, axes, adzes, etc.; but had we had copper, a piece two or three inches square would have been far more valuable to them.³

Dixon offered an old woman axes or anything else for a curious lip ornament. She contemptuously refused all these, but yielded when he brought out some buttons.⁴

A cause of much confusion and complaint among the early traders was the extreme variation in preferences that existed among the natives in different localities and at different times. At one place they desired only pans and tin kettles, while a neighboring village might accept only clothes. A third place would reject all pieces of iron that did not exceed eight inches in length. At a fourth, nothing but beads could purchase their finest

furs. On a return visit to the same village, as often as not something different than the inhabitants had before insisted upon would now be in vogue, and traffic would be suspended until this want was supplied.¹

The whites, of course, judged the situation solely on the basis of their own tradition of values, evolved in a utilitarian world that was perfectly at home in the age of metal and glass. Viewed objectively, aboriginal reaction to first contacts with European trade goods was not particularly strange after all. From a practical standpoint, the first iron tool obtained by a village was worth more to the inhabitants than any number of furs. Furs could be replenished by their own efforts at any time, but an object of iron never. In this sense native-white contact was a meeting of opposites. Each highly valued what the other possessed, and neither much valued what the other desired. As soon, however, as the coastal Indians became aware of the quantity and variety of goods that the whites had at their command, and the great value that the latter ascribed to furs, then just as quickly they took advantage of the situation—advantage, that is, from their own point of view.

Naturally enough, the natives bargained in terms of the traditional values of their culture. And fortunately

for the profits of the fur trade, these cultural values were nonutilitarian in many respects. A small sheet of copper, for example, make the possessor immeasurably more wealthy in the eyes of his neighbors than did an axe. Certain shells and various other objects of ornamentation were also symbols of wealth and distinction; and so, by a process of substitution, were the cheap glass beads and other trinkets vended by the whites.

Coast Indian values occasioned frequent comment by Lewis and Clark:

They are nearly necked preferring beads to any thing. ¹

They prefer beads to any thing, and will part with the last mouthfull or articles of clothing they have for a few of those beads. ²

. . . . their dispositions invariable lead them to give whatever they are possessed of no matter how useful or valuable, for a bauble which pleases their fancy, without consulting it's usefulness or value.

Clark, however, perceived some method to their madness: "Those Beads they traffic with Indians still higher up this river for skins robes & ³ & ⁴

Lewis found the Nez Perce, on the western flank of the Rockies, much more "practical" than the Lower Columbia Indians, but still it was necessary for to qualify his

they do not appear to be so much devoted to baubles as most of the nations we have met with, but seem anxious always to obtain articles of utility, such as knives, axes, tomahawks, kettles, blankets and mockersonalls (awls). Blue beads, however may form an exception to this remark.

Farther south, among the Shoshoni, Peter Skene Ogden noted twenty years later:

In regard to Trade little or none is carried on by us with the Snakes. On our goods with the exception of Knives they set little or no value. Our trade with them is very trifling.

And in 1806, while on a visit to the Missouri village tribes, Alexander Henry wrote of the Hidatsa:

Though so changeable in dealing for horses and trifles, they are quite the reverse in trading for buffalo robes, wolves, foxes, etc. They put little value on any of those skins, and cannot imagine what use we make of such trash, as they call it. They kill some beavers and a few grizzly bears, all of which they dispose of, and call the whites fools for giving them valuable articles for such useless skins. Were it not for the H. B. Co.'s servants, who have spoiled the natives by giving good prices for summer wolves, and other rubbish, we might carry on a very advantageous trade with these people as the articles they require are of little real value to us.

The Indian, then, not only possessed different sets of values than the white man, but in many instances

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1 Thwaites, Lewis and Clark, Vol. V, p. 30
he clung to these tenaciously, long after the raison d'être had ceased to exist. It will be instructive in this connection to examine the values attached to some of the standard exchange media and wealth goods in circulation among the tribes of the Northwest in the early part of the nineteenth century.

**Dentalium shell money.**—Much controversy has gone on between economists and anthropologists, and within each group as well, with respect to what constitutes money in nonliterate societies. The use of the term in this paper follows Herskovitz' definition:

> If they (any objects in the economic system) are measures of value, exchangeable for goods, or given in payment of services, they must be thought of as money, whether or not they serve in all situations as symbols expressing value, or are put to magical uses, or are worn as ornaments.

> . . . . we shall accept as money any kind of least common denominator of value, whether it be of metal, shell, stone, or other material, or, indeed, even if it itself is a consumption good, so long as it is regarded as a part of a system of graded equivalents, and is used in payment for goods and services.

The dentalium in circulation in the Northwest satisfied every requirement of a good money base. It was scarce; it required a considerable expenditure of labor to produce it from the underwater beds; it was portable, durable and extremely divisible. Unlike the wampum shells

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of the Atlantic coast, which were laboriously ground and drilled before being placed in circulation,\(^1\) dentalium required no preparation after procurement. The two differed also in the fact that the value of wampum was determined by its color,\(^2\) while the value of dentalium was determined by its length.

Ross gives a good account of the system of valuing these shells among the Chinook in 1811:

The circulating medium in use among these people is a small white shell called higua.\(^3\) The higua may be found of all lengths, between three inches down to one-fourth of an inch, and increases or decreases in value according to the number required to make a fathom, by which measure they are invariably sold. Thirty to a fathom are held equal in value to three fathoms of forty, to four of fifty, and so on. So high are the higua prized, that I have seen six of \(2\frac{1}{2}\) inches long refused for a new gun.\(^4\)

Franchere adds, for the same period:

The price of all commodities is reckoned in these shells; a fathom string of the largest of them is worth about ten beaver skins.\(^5\)

The shells placed in any one string were as nearly as possible of the same size. Shells of the largest size were by far the most scarce. Those of small size must have been plentiful, judging by the abrupt decrease in

\(^{2}\)Britannica, Wampum, p. 319; and Orchard, Beads, pp. 62-63.
\(^{3}\)Ross, Oregon Settlers, p. 109
\(^{4}\)Franchere, Narrative, p. 326
the values of strings of the smaller shells.

Among the Nootka on Vancouver Island, who were the producers of this money, five fathoms were required to purchase a slave.\(^1\) Proceeding southward along the line of dentalia distribution, we find the Chinook using one fathom of forty for a slave.\(^2\) Much farther south, among the Yurok of Northern California, a slave was also rated at a string, but the Yurok strings were only twenty-seven and one half inches long, or the distance from an average man's thumbnail to the point of his shoulder.\(^3\)

Whereas among the Chinook thirty shells to a string were equal to three strings of forty shells each,\(^4\) among the Yurok "an increase in length of shell sufficient to reduce by one the number of pieces required to fill a standard string about doubled its value.\(^5\)

Again, the Chinook treated a string of dentalia as a unit, but the Yurok graded the shells individually and with great care.\(^6\) The Hupa of California were even more extreme, employing only decorated dentalium shells as units of value:

The individual shells were measured and their value determined by the creases on the left hand.\(^7\)

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\(^1\) Franchere, Narrative, p. 326.
\(^2\) Kroeter, Handbook, p. 23.
\(^3\) Hodge, Handbook, Part 1, p. 446.
\(^4\) Kroeter, Handbook, p. 23.
\(^5\) Ross, Oregon Settlers, p. 109.
\(^6\) Kroeter, Handbook, p. 23.
\(^7\) For measuring the strings the men had a set...
of lines tattooed on the inner side of the left forearm to indicate the length of five shells of the several standards.  

It is clear from the above that the value of dentalia progressively increased the greater the distance southward along the coast from the source of supply on Vancouver Island. However, the same was not true to the north of Vancouver. The standard strings among the northern tribes were seven feet long, and were mainly used for trade with the interior. The Queen Charlotte Islands were probably the source of supply for much of this area.

It is of interest to note that the longest individual dentalia shells—i.e., those of greatest value—among the Chinook reached a length of four inches, while the very longest shells reported in the possession of the California tribes did not exceed two and one-half inches. This suggests that the Chinook in their capacity as middlemen for dentalia distribution to the south practised artificial scarcity, and at the same time were careful to retain the most valued articles for themselves.

For some reason the use of dentalia money extended no farther south than northern California, though the tribes beyond employed token money too, in the form of locally

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2Hodge, Handbook, Part I, p. 446  
3Franchere, Narrative, p. 326.  
available clam-shell disks.¹ Possibly they were too poor to purchase dentalia from their wealthy northern neighbors, and so merely imitated them as best they could.

With the arrival of the whites in Chinook territory, new media of exchange competed with dentalia in the economy of the natives. Ross wrote, in 1811:

... of late, since the whites came among them, the beaver skin called enna, has been added to the currency; so that, by these two articles (i.e., higua or dentalia strings and beaver skins), which form the medium of trade, all property is valued, and all exchange fixed and determined. As Indian, in buying an article, invariably asks the question, Queentshich higua? or, Queenshich enna? That is, how many higua? or how many beaver skins is it?

Shortly after this, Hudson's Bay blankets were accepted by the Indians as still another medium of exchange, the four-point blanket being the most valued, and the one-point the least.³ Yet despite the competition of these other indices of value and the increased availability of shell-money through its procurement for the Indian trade by whites, dentalia continued to function as money among the coastal tribes for many years.

Eastward up the Columbia River we find that the consistent use of dentalia as money faded out at the Dalles. This boundary coincided with the eastern limits of Chinookan territory and of the Northwest Coast cultural

¹Hodge, handbook, Part 1, p. 447.
area. Beyond here, although the traffic in dentalia was still immense, the shells were used primarily as wealth tokens and for ornamentation, and only incidentally as media of exchange.

The use of the dentalium shell as a pierced nose ornament for the male extended from the mouth of the Columbia to the western base of the Rockies. The Lower Chinook inserted only one of these shells through the nose, but some of the Middle Columbia tribes employed two. Most of the Upper Columbia Salishan groups engaged in the practice, but it was not done by either the Flatheads or the Pend d'Oreille. The Spokane, who wore nose pins only rarely, together with the Sahaptin-speaking Nez Percé represented the easternmost diffusion of this method of ornamentation.

1 Wealth tokens, in the sense used here, are aboriginal depositaries of value comparable to jewels in our society. The distinction between these treasures and "money" lies in the fact that wealth goods were not used as least common denominators in the purchase and disposal of other commodities and services. They were indicators of wealth and prestige rather than media of exchange (Herskovitz, Economic Anthropology, pp 244-246). The coppers so prized by the Kwakiutl are a good example of this. However, the distinction is in many cases a vague one, particularly in the case of dentalia, which shared the attributes of both. The subject will not, therefore, be further belabored here. The use of wealth goods in adornment served not only to indicate status and to satisfy the individual's esthetic needs. It was also in ceremonial distinction.

2 Spier, South Okanag, 77; Teit, Salishan Tribes, 340; Thwaites L & C IV, 187, 371-372.
Among the Nez Perce the practice must have been abruptly extinguished soon after the period of first white contact, for many of the later fur traders made a point of citing the tribal name as a rank misnomer, and the conception had so come down to the present day. However, the Lewis and Clark journals are explicit concerning the presence of this trait among the Nez Perce at the time of their expedition. On May 7, 1806, near the junction of the Clearwater River with the Snake, which was well within Nez Perce territory, Clark recorded: "The ornaments worn by the Chopunnish are, in their nose a single shell of Wampom (dentalium) . . . ."¹ And again on May 13, 1806, chile encamped with the Nez Perce near Lawyer's Canyon Creek on the upper Clearwater, Lewis wrote, in describing the ornamentation of these people: "The ornament of the nose is a single shell of the wampum."² Nez Perce Men also wore dentalia, beads, pieces of haliotis shell, and other articles of great value on a strip of otterskin which was suspended from the neck and hung down over the front of the body, the tail of the animal reaching to the knees.³

South and east of the Nez Perce the Shoshoni groups encountered by Lewis and Clark did not pierce the nose, confining their ornamentation to the ears, the hair, and

¹Thwaites, Lewis and Clark, Vol. IV, pp. 371-372
²Ibid; Vol. V, p. 30
³Ibid., Vol. V, pp. 30-31
to long collars of skin similar to those of the Nez Perce.¹

The use of dentalia as ornamental wealth tokens and incidentally as a medium of exchange was widespread among the Northern Plains tribes. Blackfoot, Crow, Mandan, and Hidatsa men wore them as decorations on their skin breast-collars, in their ears, their hair, on their headdresses, and combined them with beads in long necklace strings. Young Crow and Blackfoot women frequently wore 300 to 400 of these shells on their finest dresses. The Blackfoot obtained them through trade with the Kutenai and with certain groups of Salish and Shoshoni. The Crow used both these sources and the Nez Perce, and were the principal carriers of dentalia to the Missouri village tribes.²

Formerly two or three dentalia shells of inferior size among the tribes of the upper Missouri were worth a buffalo robe. In 1833 a handful of the shells would purchase a horse. In the 1850's ten shells were worth three dollars or a good buffalo robe.³ At this rate a woman's dress decorated with four hundred dentalia would

¹Thwaites, Lewis and Clark, Vol. III, p. 5----
³Matthews, Hidatsa, p. 28; Maximilian, Travels, Vol. XXIII, p. 289; Denig, Upper Missouri, p. 591.
BLACKFOOT "KISSING STONE" BELIEVED TO BE THE GLIIZARD STONE OF A DINOSAUR, ORNAMENTED WITH BLUE AND WHITE BEADS, DENTALIA, AND HALLIOTIS SHELLS
be worth twelve hundred dollars in shells alone.

By the 1850's white traders, having noted the great value which the Northern Plains Indians attached to dentalia, were importing the shells to the Mandan villages from the eastern states under the name of "Iroquois." Oddly enough, Matthews found that these traders were not aware of the origin of the dentalia, but assumed that they were procured from the Great Lakes or the Atlantic coast; hence the name "Iroquois."\(^1\)

Actually, the shells must have been brought by ship from the Northwest Pacific Coast around Cape Horn to the Atlantic seaboard for trans-shipment inland to the Great Plains—all in the interests of the Indian trade. Apparently the whites were unable to saturate the market, though, for Matthews reported that "As late as 1866, ten of these shells, of inferior size, costing the traders only a sent apiece, would buy a superior buffalo robe....."\(^2\)

The wampum shell money of the Atlantic coast never did come into use on the upper Missouri. Catlin noted a few strings among the Missouri Sioux in 1833, but none whatever north and west of them. By that time the tribes east of the Sioux had been flooded by imitation wampum of white manufacture, which consequently had little value;

\(^1\)Matthews, Hidatsa, p. 28.
\(^2\)Ibid.
and a genuine string could hardly be found.\(^1\)

Haliotis, abalone, or mother-of-pearl shells.--These too were highly prized by the Indians, and were as widely distributed in the Northwest as were dentalia. Haliotis, however, were clearly in the category of wealth goods. They were not used as a medium of circulation.

The Cape Flattery Indians on the Northwest Coast used pieces of haliotis in place of dentalia as nose ornaments, though both types of shell were attached to the ears. Swan has described these:

The pieces worn in the nose are of various shapes, circular, oval, or triangular, and hang pendent by means of a string; others are cut in the form of rings, with a small opening on one side, so they can be inserted or removed at pleasure; the size varies from a dime to a quarter of a dollar. Some of the ear ornaments, however, and particularly those worn by children, are much larger—not infrequently two inches square. These are fastened to the rim of the ear by strings.\(^1\)

Very likely the largest pieces were from the Monterey shells of California. It will be noted that unlike dentalia, haliotis shells were cut and worked into various shapes, and that all sizes were prized. Other things being equal, the largest, of course, possessed the greatest value.

\(^1\)George Catlin. The Manners, Customs, and Condition of the North American Indians, Written During Eight Years Travel ... in North America, 1832-39. ... London, 1841, Vol. I, p. 223.

Swan, Cape Flattery, p. 47.
Lewis and Clark noticed mother-of-pearl in use among the Nez Perce and Shoshoni as ear ornaments and as decoration on their otter-skin collars. With reference to the Lemhi Shoshoni, Lewis wrote:

they have a variety of small sea shells of which they form collars worn indiscriminately by both sexes. These as well as the shell of the pearl-oyster (haliotis) they value very highly and inform us that they obtain them from their friends and relations who live beyond the barren plain towards the Ocean in a South-Westerly direction.

Clark added that the mother-of-pearl was "the most sacred of all the ornaments of this nation" and that the place where the Shoshoni obtained them required fifteen or twenty days of travel through barren and waterless plains.

Ogden's Snake Country Journals provide a clue in this connection, for in 1826, while in the same general area, he encountered ten Shoshoni who had just returned from a difficult journey to the Klamath Indians near the Oregon-California border. The Shoshoni had a quantity of goods that they had procured from the Spanish on this trip, in exchange for articles of leather; and they stated that they were accustomed to making annual visits to the Klamath country for this purpose.

In view of this, and of the fact that the Shoshoni

1Thwaites, Lewis and Clark, Vol. III, p. 5.
3Odgen, Snake Country, p. 178.
had been at war with the Nez Perce and the Columbia River tribes for many years before Lewis and Clark, it is more than likely that their main sources of supply for the haliotis shells they so greatly prized were the Spanards and the Klamath Indians. It is also quite likely that many of these were Monterey shells, and that it was largely through the Shoshoni that they reached the Northern Plains.

David Thompson noted the use of haliotis shells as a badge of great prestige among the Piegan in the 1780's:

They have a civil and military Chief. The first was called Sakatow, the orator. He was always well dressed, and his insignia of office, was the backs of two fine Otter skins covered with mother of pearl, which from behind his neck hung down his breast to below the belt; When his son acted for him, he always had this ornament on him.¹

Dening, writing in the 1850's, indicates that Monterey shells were in possession of the Northern Plains tribes in early times, and reveals that, as was the case with dentalia, white traders later imported the shells.

The large blue or pearl California shell was once very valuable and still is partially so. It is shaped like an oyster shell and handsomely tinted with blue, green, and golden colors in the inside. One of these used to be worth $20, but of late years, owing to the quantity being introduced by the traders, the price has depreciated to about half that amount. These shells they cut in triangular pieces and wear them as ear pendants.²

²Denig, Upper Missouri, p. 591.
Dentalium Necklace With Probable Monterey Bay Shell Pendant
Apparently white traders did not begin to traffic in Monterey shells until the late 1830's or the 1840's. Even so, an unpolished shell was still equal in value to a good buffalo robe in the latter period.\(^1\)

**European trade beads.**—While crossing the Rocky Mountains and descending the Columbia River in the year 1805 the Lewis and Clark expedition noticed that, although very few of the Indians along their route had ever seen a white man before, almost all of them were in possession of European trade beads. Arrived at the Cascades on November 1, Clark remarked a preference among the natives in this respect that was to plague the expedition endlessly in the months to come: "they are all fond of (European) clothes but more so of Beads particularly blue and white beads."\(^2\)

As luck would have it the expedition had brought only a few beads of these colors with them, though they had an ample stock of the other hues. They soon found to their astonishment and chagrin that the latter were absolutely unacceptable to the Lower Chinook, among whom they passed the winter on the coast.

I attempted to purchase some few roots which I offered red beads for, they would give scarcely anything for Beads of that colour, I then offered small fish hooks which they were fond of and gave me some roots for them.\(^3\)

\(^1\) Matthews, *Hidatsa*, p. 28.


\(^3\) *Ibid*, p. 275.
I attempted to purchase a Small Sea otter Skin for red (red) beads which I had in my pockets, they would not trade for those beads, not prizeing any other Colour than Blue or White.

Value Blue beads highly, white they also prize but not other Colour do they Value in the least.

This morning we were visited by Comowool and 7 of the Clatsops our nearest neighbours. One of the party was dressed in three very elegant Sea Otter skins which we much wanted; for these we offered him many articles but he would not dispose of them for any other consideration but blue beads, of these we had only six fathoms left, which being 4 less than his price for each skin he would not exchange nor would a knife or an equivalent in beads of any other colour answer his purposes, these coarse blue beads are their favorite merchandize, and are called by them tia Commashuck or Chief's beads. The beat wampum (i.e., the largest dentalium shells) is not so much esteemed by them as the most inferior beads.

Lewis and Clark began to call these cut-glass trade items "wampum" beads and in several comments make clear that the blue variety had largely supplanted the traditional dentalium shells in the money economy of the Lower Columbia.

The natives are extravagantly fond of the most common cheap blue and white beads, of moderate size, or such that from 50. to 70. will weigh one pennyweight. The blue is usually

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1bid., p. 277
2bid., p. 278-279.
3bid., pp. 352-353.
Preferred to the white; these beads constitute the principal circulating medium with all the Indian tribes on this river; for these beads they will dispose (of) any article they possess. The beads are strung on strands of a fathom in length and in that manner sold by the breadth or yard.

... *

Those beads they trafick with Indians Still higher up this river for robes, skins, cha-lel-el bread, beargrass &c. who in their turn trafick with those under the rokey mountains for Beargrass, quarmash (Pashico) roots & robes &c.

It will be noted that the beads were strung and exchanged in the same general fashion as dentalia. Like dentalia also, the Chinook employed them lavishly in ornamentation:

The favorite ornament of both sexes are the common coarse blue and white beads which the men wear tightly wound around their wrists and ankles many times until they obtain the width of three or more inches. They also wear them in large rolls loosely around the neck or pendulous from the cartilage of the nose or rims of the ears which are purforated for the purpose. The women wear them in a similar manner except in the nose which they never purforate.

The Chinook did not completely neglect dentalia during this period, however, for Lewis and Clark referred to the shells as wampum also, and noted that they were worn in the same manner as the beads. It is obvious, though, that at this stage in the acquisition of European articles the Chinook vastly preferred the blue beads as a medium of exchange.

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1. Ibid., p. 328. Italics are mine.
2. Ibid., p. 186.
Blue, White, Red, and Transparent Trade Beads of Type in Use in the Northwest About 1800. From the Property of Peter Skene Ogden.
We may infer that between 1806 and 1811 the coastal traders overstocked the Chinook blue bead market, for the journals of the Astorians and of later fur traders in the region make no mention of beads being used as money. Instead, the dentalium shell receives prominent mention as the medium of circulation. Apparently then, after the period of novelty and scarcity had passed, the Chinook dropped trade beads from their currency scheme, though retaining them as valued objects of decoration, and reverted to their traditional tusk-shell money.

The Chinook were not alone in their fondness for these two color varieties. Then and for decades after, blue beads and white beads were the favorite choice among the Indians from the Columbia Basin to the Northern Plains, both as concomitants to wealth goods and for esthetic display. Lewis and Clark noticed this among the Columbia River tribes, the Nez Perce, and the Flatheads, and Maximilian called attention to the same phenomenon among the Blackfoot and the Mandans in 1833.

During the expedition's stay with the Nez Perce in the spring of 1806 Lewis wrote that "blue beads . . . . among all the nations of this country may be justly compared to gold or silver among civilized nations."\(^1\) The Nez Perce wore them "around their wrists, necks and over their shoulders crosswise in the form of a double

\(^{1}\)Thwaites, Lewis and Clark. Vol. V. p. 30
They also combined them with the treasured halictus shells as earpieces, and sewed them on the men's otterskin frontlets.

The Shoshoni, except for bead necklaces, which they seldom wore, ornamented themselves in much the same way. However, Lewis and Clark do not state what colors in beads the Shoshoni possessed, stating only that "they are remarkably fond of beads."\(^2\) The explorers did note that the beads decorating Flathead clothes were principally blue and white.\(^3\)

Among the Blackfoot on the Marias River in 1833 Maximilian observed that:

The women ornament their best dresses, both on the hem and sleeves, with dyed porcupine quills and thin leather strips, with broad diversified stripes of sky-blue and white glass beads.\(^4\)

With reference to the costume of the Mandans the same traveller wrote:

The chief article of their dress is the ample buffalo robe... which is often very elaborate and valuable... They are tanned on the fleshy side, and painted either white or reddish-brown, and ornamented with a transverse band of blue or white glass beads, and three large rosettes of the same beads, often of very tasteful patterns, at regular intervals. The centre is frequently red, surrounded with sky blue, embroidered with white figures, or sometimes the reverse. The transverse band is worked

\(^1\)Ibid.
\(^2\)Ibid., Vol. III pp. 4-5, 92.
\(^3\)Ibid., p. 78
\(^4\)Maximilian, Travels. Vol. XXIII, p. 103
with variously dyed porcupine quills, and is then narrower. This, however, is now old-fashioned, and was worn before the coloured glass beads were obtained in such numbers from the Whites.  

Their leggins are embroidered at the outer seam with stripes, one or two inches in breadth, of porcupine quills, of beautiful various colours, and often with blue and white beads, and long leathern fringes.

by far the greatest attention is paid to the head-dress. To these plaits they attach two strips of leather or cloth closely embroidered with white or azure ornament is red or blue, it is studded with white beads, and if the ground is white the beads are blue. They put this ornament in their hair and pull it over the temples; a long string is fastened to the underpart, which reaches to the waist, and is adorned with alternate rows of blue beads and white dentalium shells.

At this late date we can only speculate on the factors that determined this wide-spread preference among the Indians of the Northwest for blue and white beads. Perhaps, as might be implied by the Chinook designation for them, the coastal traders promoted these varieties as "chief's beads," and from the Chinook via intertribal intercourse and trade this artfully-created valuation diffused eastward across the Plateau and the Northern Plains. On the other hand, the esthetic factor certainly played a major role in the aboriginal preference for blue beads.

1 Ibid., p. 263.
2 Ibid., p. 264.
3 Ibid., p. 259.
The Indians do not like beads of other colours, for instance, red, next the skin; and their taste in the contrast of colours is very correct, for in their black hair they generally wear red, and on their brown skins, sky-blue, white, or yellow.¹

Elk teeth:--The teeth of a number of animals, including those of buffalo and horses, were used by the Indians of the Northwest for ornamental purposes. However, elk teeth were considered to be by far the most valuable. Lewis and Clark noted that even at the mouth of the Columbia, where such a variety of shells were available for adornment, Lower Chinook women and children sometimes wore elk teeth around their necks and arms.² This and the occasional use of bear claw collars by Lower Chinook men probably represents a trait diffusion from the Northern Plains, where the practice attained its greatest vogue.

Usually only the two "tusks" of the elk were used, as these were the only teeth well-suited to the purpose.³

¹Thwaites, p. 103.
³Hodge Handbook, Part I, p. 17, states only that the milk teeth of the elk were used. Hewitt, Kurz, pp 80, 251, says that the six lower incisors of the elk were used. Actually, the elk has eight lower incisors, so Kurz wasn't too well versed on this subject. Assuming that incisors and milk teeth were used to some extent as well as tusks, they must have been regarded as inferior substitutes not to be considered for a costly garment. The writer's authority for the statement that only the tusks of the elk were suitable for ornamentation is Denig, who lived twenty-one years among the upper Missouri tribes as a representative of the American Fur Company.
Plains Woman's Smock Decorated With Elk Tusks. (Crow Indian)
The tusks are the rudimentary canines, found in both sexes, but much smaller in the female. Not all elk have them. Hence the factor of scarcity did much to enhance their value. Furthermore, because of the habits and range of the animal, no one hunter could kill great numbers of elk. Consequently, much trade and bargaining were required to collect 300 tusks, which was the usual number displayed on a Crow woman's dress.¹

The Crow were the biggest "consumers" of elk teeth. As late as 1901, a visitor to the Crow Reservation in southern Montana estimated that the inhabitants had 20,000 tusks in their possession, and these were still valued so highly that they could seldom be purchased. One woman had some 1,500 of the teeth on her dresses. If these were all of the best quality, at least 800 bull elk must have been required to produce them.²

The tusks were particularly used to trim the garments of women and children, being attached in horizontal rows across the front and back of smocks and dress shirts. Elk tusks were clearly wealth goods. The standard exchange value was one hundred elk teeth for a good horse or its equivalent. This seems not to have been subject to much if any fluctuation, for Maximilian, Denig, and Kurz all give the same price for different periods.³

CHAPTER III
PATTERNS OF EXCHANGE

The Lower Columbia

While encamped for the winter of 1805-06 at Fort Clatsop near the mouth of the Columbia, the Lewis and Clark expedition had innumerable dealings with the Chinnok in the vicinity. Because of the scarcity of game, the party was dependent upon barter with the Indians for much of their daily food.

The expedition had been in camp about a month when Clark recorded in his journal:

I can readily discover that they are close dealers, & Stickle for a very little, never close a bargain except they think they have the advantage. . . .

Lewis heartily agreed:

they are great higlers in trade and if they conceive you anxious to purchase will be a whole day bargaining for a handful of roots; . . . . they invariable refuse the price first offered them . . . . I therefore believe this trait in their character proceeds from an avaricious all grasping disposition.2

Five years later Alexander Ross characterized them this way:

\[2\] Ibid., p. 311.
The Chinooks are crafty and intriguing, and have probably learned the arts of cheating, flattery, and dissimulation in the course of their traffic with the coasting traders; for, 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.

The same refrain is to be found throughout the accounts of the Columbian fur trade: first the unhappy recognition that the Chinook had an infinite capacity for "higgling;" and second the vague but certain assurance that at least they had learned all their "shifts of bargaining" from the whites.

The writer is of the opinion that the latter assumption is entirely unwarranted, and that in actual fact the arts of bartering and commercial duplicity were as much a part of aboriginal Chinook culture as was their superb canoe-smanship. The point cannot be proved, however, by reference to earlier eyewitness accounts than those of Lewis and Clark. There are none for the Chinook. The Swiptons and the Mr. Haleys that periodically visited the mouth of the Columbia and the inlets to the north in the last decade of the eighteenth century left no records of their business contacts in pursuit of the fur trade. And aside from some brief notations in the ship's log, neither did Captain Robert Gray, the first white man to enter the river and barter with the Chinook. The Columbia crossed

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1Ross, Oregon Settlers, p. 103.
the bar on the 11th of May, 1792, and remained in the river until the 20th, but apparently all that was recorded with regard to the Chinook was that in the course of his reconnaissance Gray landed near one of their villages, was greeted by many of the inhabitants in their canoes, and obtained a number of sea otter skins and land-furs.¹

However, the journals of a number of voyagers who were plying the waters of the Northwest Coast in the 1780's and 1790's contain brief reports of their dealings with other natives from Tillamook Bay to Vancouver Island. Since these Indians were trading associates of the Chinook, and shared the same homogeneous culture, the patterns of trade they revealed during their earliest contacts with the whites may be justly applied to the Chinook as well.

Meares' complaint at Clayoquot in 1788 not only has a familiar ring but implies that the whites were the amateurs at this sort of game:

In all our commercial transactions with this people we are more or less the dupes of their cunning; and with such peculiar artifice did they sometimes conduct themselves, that all the precaution we could employ was not sufficient to prevent our being over-reached by them. The women, in particular, would play us a thousand tricks, and treat the discovery of their finesse with an arch kind of pleasantry that baffled reproach.²

Nor does the haggling of the 1780's seem any

than that of the 1810's:

To avoid trouble, which would certainly follow if he yielded in a single instance, he had found it necessary to waste hours in a contest with a woman about articles of no greater value than a skein of thread.¹

Other aboriginal talents were equally well developed at that time:

The natives now favoured us with their daily visits, and never failed to exert their extraordinary talents in the art of thievery. They would employ such a slight of hand in getting iron materials of any kind as is hardly to be conceived. It has often been observed when the head of a nail either in the ship or boats stood a little without the wood, that they would apply their teeth in order to pull it out.²

The employment by the Indians of the system of gift exchange in their first contacts with the whites was undoubtedly a major factor in perpetuating the myth that the Indian was unversed in the mechanics of bartering. Many of the whites did not at first understand that the act of tendering such "presents" carried with it the obligation of an equivalent or increased return. Instead they were incredulous, and marvelled at the simplicity of these "children of nature." Thus Haswell, second mate of the Lady Washington that accompanied Gray's Columbia on its first voyage to the Northwest Coast, recorded that

³Haswell, Voyage, p. 706.
Each canoe brought large quantities of berries, and crabs ready boiled. These they handed on board as presents, seemingly without an idea of payment. ¹

It did not, of course, take the whites long to discover the purpose of these offerings.

On our arrival at the habitation of the chiefs, where a great number of spectators attended to see the ceremony, the sea-otter skins were produced with great shoutings and gestures of exultation, and then laid at our feet. The silence of expectation the succeeded among them, and their most eager attention was employed on the returns we should make.²

Haswell speedily took advantage of such situations, obtaining at one village two hundred skins for a single chisel.³ The system of mutual gift-giving often ended up by the whites seizing everything at hand and giving the natives trifles in return. Resentment at this treatment led to many of the episodes of bloodshed that marked the early traffic along the coast.⁴

An examination of the accounts of the period make clear that both barter and gifting were integral elements in the native patterns of exchange along the Northwest Coast, and that the inhabitants shifted instantly to the bartering method whenever it seemed from their point of view that gift exchange was being manipulated by the whites to their disadvantage.

¹ Haswell, Voyage, p. 706.
² Meares, Voyage, p. 120 (quoted in Bancroft, Coast, Vol. I, p. 369).
³ Haswell Voyage, p. 719.
Gift exchange was employed by these Indians in their initial contacts with the whites not because they were unaware of the system of barter, but rather because it was their custom to engage in ceremonial gifting with other groups of people both as a ritualized preliminary to bartering and as a means of signifying the peaceful intentions of the participants. Conversely, the rejection of exchange overtures was often interpreted by them, particularly on the occasion of first contacts, as an act of hostility. In this connection one of the early coastal traders wrote:

When offering objects for sale they are very sulky if their tender is not responded to . . . . Upon mature consideration of what I have seen and heard . . . . I think many of the unprovoked attacks . . . . have originated in some transaction of this nature—refusal to trade being deemed almost a declaration of war.  

This did not apply, of course, to individual gifting, which was much more openly commercial. Lewis and Clark had many unhappy encounters with this practice in their intercourse with the Chinook. Wrote Clark, two weeks after arriving in Lower Chinook territory:

It is a bad practice to receive a present from those Indians as they are never satisfied for what they receive in return if ten time the value of the articles they gave.  

And again:

Cuascalah the Indian who had treated me so politely when I was at the Clatsops Village, come up in a canoe with his young brother & 2 Squars he laid before Capt. Lewis and my self each a mat and a parcel of roots. Some time in the evening two files was demanded for the presents of mats and roots, as we had no files to part with, we each returned the present which we had received, which displeased Cuascalah a little. He then offered a woman to each of us which we also declined excepting of, which displeased the whole party very much—the female part appeared to be highly disgusted at our refusing to except of their favours &c.

That the pre-contact Indians were no strangers to bargaining may also be seen in the fact that attempts by the earliest whites to impose fixed prices of their own on goods were frequently rejected.

It is of interest to note the degree to which the fur-seeking whites accommodated themselves to Indian custom, and the particular items of trade that the latter matched against their own compared with those they regarded as only suitable for gifts. Partlock wrote:

The articles we bartered with were the light-horsemen's caps, striped woollen blankets, towels 18 or 20 inches long, buckles, buttons, and beads. However I could not procure even a piece of skin with any of the latter articles; they were only given by way of concluding a bargain, as were tin kettles, brass pans, and pewter basons; but hatchets, adzes, trowels, they would scarcely take for anything whatever.

It is the usage of the natives," added another trader, "to terminate no bargain without demanding a

present . . . ."¹ And a third concluded: "Several smaller articles were given as presents nominally, but in reality formed part of the price."²

Even in barter, then, the natives insisted upon the inclusion of an element of gift exchange.

Conducting trade afloat, in canoes, was a common custom of the coast Indians, and the whites found it to their own advantage, being more convenient and rendering them less open to attack than if they had landed in small boats with their wares. Thus practically all European trade along the Northwest Coast up to the establishment of Astoria in 1811 was conducted alongside or aboard ship while the vessels rode at anchor.

Similarly much intertribal river trade was accomplished from canoes. While travelling on the lower Columbia the Lewis and Clark expedition was frequently intercepted by canoe-loads of Indians, eager to hawk their wares.

The coastal Indians had developed a number of signs in connection with this practice. Thus, casting feathers on the water as they approached was a sign of peace and friendship. Juan Perez was greeted in this manner when he discovered Nootka Sound in 1773, and Captain Cook was received in the same fashion there in 1778.³

Laying down their paddles and holding furs or other articles over their heads signified a wish to trade. The Indians that massacred the crew of the Tonquin and plundred the vessel in 1811 used this sign as a means of deception by which to gain unhindered access to the ship.¹

Ceremonial canoe parades and singing often preceded a trade. Haswell recorded that at Barrell Sound the Indians "launched 20 or 30 very large canoes, and came off in great parade, singing a very agreeable air."²

Again, at Vancouver Island in 1788:

We were visited by 3 canoes containing 46 people from among the islands in Company's Bay. As soon as they came within musket-shot of us they paddled with exceeding great haste, singing the tune, and at the end of every cadence altogether would point their paddles first aft and then forward, first whooping shrill and then hoarse. Three times they went round the vessel performing this exercise, and then without further ceremony came alongside. The chiefs came on board at the first invitation . . . . consequence of which but little trading took place. It was late in the afternoon when they departed, and they first sang a very agreeable song.

The authority of the coastal village chiefs in matters of trade was considerable but not authoritarian.

At one place Dixon noted that:

The chief usually trades for the whole tribe; but I have sometimes observed that when his method of barter has been disapproved of, each separate family has claimed a right to dispose of

¹ Bancroft, Coast, Vol. I, pp. 165-
² Haswell, Voyage, p. 719.
³ Ibid., pp. 708-709.
their own furs, and the chief always complied with this request.\(^1\)

And Haswell wrote that at Barrell Sound "A brisk trade was set on foot by Goya, the chief, who bartered for all his subjects.\(^2\)

This pattern applied only to trade between large groups, however, for individual barter was constantly carried on at their own initiative between members of different villages.

Outstanding chiefs had an influence on intertribal trade that extended far beyond their own areas, and not infrequently they exhibited an audacity and enterprise that would have done justice to a business tycoon. In 1789 while coasting off Cape Flattery Haswell reported that a large canoe came up, but "They had no skins for us, and said there were none in the straits; that the chief of Clahaset had purchased them all."\(^3\) Apparently he was getting a corner on the fur market, to improve his trading position with the whites.

The celebrated Concomly, village chief of the Chinook proper at the mouth of the Columbia, made occasional trading excursions as far north as the Nootka on Vancouver Island, though by custom the coastal tribes

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\(^2\)Haswell, *Voyage*, p. 719.

\(^3\)Haswell, *Voyage*, p. 716
did not go beyond Cape Flattery, where they traded through the Makah. Likewise certain Nootka did not go farther south than the same cape.\(^1\)

Concomly virtually monopolized the regional traffic in European goods following the establishment of Astoria as a trading post near the mouth of the Columbia in 1811. Not until 1847, when the Hudson's Bay Company shifted its headquarters from Fort Vancouver on the Columbia to Victoria on Vancouver Island, were in Island and Cape Flattery Indians able to receive such goods without dealing through the Chinook as middlemen. Concomly's monopoly excluded other coastal Chinook groups as well. The Clatsop were so resentful that they threatened war on several occasions, but because of the number of warriors at Concomly's command they never dared to act. According to Ray, Concomly pointed to a great rock at the summit of Scarborough Hill overlooking his village and declared: "As long as that rock remains in place no one shall question the power of me or my people!" It remained undisturbed throughout his life and that of his son. On the death of the latter a party of Clatsop and Tillamook wrested the stone from its position and sent it crashing down the hill.\(^2\)

One of the most striking aspects of coastal

\(^1\) Swan, Cape Flattery, p. 31
\(^2\) Swan, Cape Flattery, p. 31; Ray, Lower Chinook, p. 58; Bancroft, Coast, Vol. I, p. 488.
exchange was the authority of women in such matters. Meares reported that one village would not sell a single fur until the women permitted it. Haswell recorded that "Cunnea, the chief of Tadenta, came off, accompanied by his wife (who is the superior officer). They sold us many skins . . . ." Ross stated with reference to the Lower Chinook:

A Chinook matron is constantly attended by two, three, or more slaves, who are on all occasions obsequious to her will. In trade and barter the women are as actively employed as the men, and it is as common to see the wife, followed by a train of slaves, trading at the factory, as her husband.

Captain Meriwether Lewis made some astute observations on the role of women among the Clatsop, Chinook proper, Killamuck and neighboring tribes:

In common with other savage nations they make their women perform every species of domestic drudgery. But in almost every species of this drudgery the men also participate, their women are also compelled to gather roots, and assist them in taking fish, which articles form much the greatest part of their subsistence; notwithstanding the servile manner in which they treat their women they pay much more respects than most Indian nations; their women are permitted to speak freely before them, and sometimes appear to command with a tone of authority; they generally consult them in their traffic and act in conformity to their opinions.

I think it may be established as a general maxim that those nations treat their old people and women with most deference (deference) and respect where they subsist principally on such

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2 Haswell Voyage, p. 718
3 Ross, Oregon Settlers, p. 107
articles that these can participate with the men in botalning them; and that, that part of the community are treated with least attention, when the act of procuring subsistence, devolves entirely on the men in the vigor of life.¹

The coastal Indians did not employ the pipe in trade ceremonies or other rituals, and the calumet of the tribes east of the Rockies was unknown.² Linton states that smoking was not practised by the Northwest Coast natives in ancient times, though some groups chewed a mixture of tobacco and powdered lime. The elbow pipe was introduced to this area after the discovery of America.³ Broughton reported in 1792 that the Lower Chinook were "universally addicted to smoking." Apparently by that time they were planting and cultivating a native species of tobacco, which they smoked as a stimulant with the dried leaves of the bearberry.⁴ To the north the Makah smoked only occasionally, taking a few puffs after eating or after fishing in their canoes.⁵ Beyond them the Nootka neither smoked nor chewed.⁶ This indicates that the practice reached the coast in this region via the Chinook and the Columbia River in late prehistoric times.

Captain Lewis described the smoking habits of the Lower Chinook in 1805-06:

²Swan, Cape Flattery, p. 27
⁴Ray, Lower Chinook, pp. 97-98
⁵Swan, Cape Flattery, p. 27.
⁶Drucker, Nootka Indians, p. 108.
The Clatsops Chinooks and others inhabiting the coast and country in this neighbourhood, are excessively fond of smoking tobacco. In the act of smoking they appear to swallow it as they draw it from the pipe, and for many draughts together you will not perceive the smoke which they take from the pipe; in the same manner also they inhale it in their lungs until they become surcharged with this vapour when they puff it out to a great distance through their nostrils and mouth; I have no doubt the smoke of the tobacco in this manner becomes much more intoxicating and that they do possess themselves of all its virtues in their fullest extent; they frequently give us sounding proofs of its creating a dismorrality of order in the abdomen, nor are those light matters thought indelicate in either sex, but all take the liberty of obeying the dictates of nature without reserve.  

The absence of ceremonial smoking among the Lower Chinook was but part of a general absence of any ceremonies in the usual conduct of trade. This is clear from the Lewis and Clark accounts. Groups of Indians appeared, traded, and departed. Bargaining was begun at once, without preliminaries. Chinook enthusiasm for haggling was too great to permit time being wasted otherwise.

One of the most important events of coastal life was the stranding of a whale, which invariably served as a potent stimulus to intertribal trade. One of the huge animals was washed ashore in Killamook territory near Tillamook Head while the Lewis and Clark expedition was in winter quarters at Fort Clatsop. Immediately a vast bustle arose among the neighboring tribes, and parties of men and women were dispatched overland a distance of 35 miles to trade for blubber and oil.

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According to native property concepts the whale belonged to the Killamook. That village slaughtered the beast and exchanged the surplus products right and left with their swarming neighbors in exchange for beads, wappato roots, and other commodities. The Clatsop obtained first call on the supply, giving mainly beads for blubber. They in turn were visited by tribal detachments from higher up the Columbia, whose principal stock in trade was wappato; and these vended the remaining surplus in whale meat and oil to villages still farther upstream in exchange for inland skins and furs. Thus the process continued until the last scrap had reached its ultimate consumer.¹

Hoping to replenish the expedition's low food supplies, Clark and twelve of the men struck out for the whale market. To reach the area it was necessary to climb by a small Indian path over Tillamook Head, an "emence mountain the top of which was obscured in the clouds."² Clark wrote later:

I soon found that the (path) become much worst as I assended, and at one place we were obliged to support and draw our selves up by the bushes & roots for near 100 feat, and after about 2 hours labour and fatigue we reached the top of this high mountain, from the top of which I looked down with astonishment to behold the hight which we had assended,

which appeared to be 10 or 12 hundred feet up a mountain which appeared to be almost perpendicular.\(^1\)

Here they encountered fourteen Indian men and women, each of whom to his amazement was bearing a load of more than one hundred pounds of whale meat over this same precarious trail. They continued to encounter groups similarly laden as they made the descent to the ocean. Clark's account does not make clear why the Chinook adopted this fatiguing mode of transportation rather than employing their big canoes by way of the coast. In all probability, though, the sea was too rough to permit the voyage.

Arrived at the Killamooks the expedition found to its dismay that nothing remained but the skeleton of the whale, a monster over one hundred feet long, and the residents, apparently warn to a frazzle by the strain of trading and efforts to hold on to some of the products for themselves, were not inclined to barter any more.

The Killamooks although they possessed large quantities of this blubber and oil were so prernurious that they disposed of it with great reluctance and in small quantities only; inso-much that my utmost exertion aided by the party with the Small Stock of merchindize I had taken with me were mot able to precure more blubber than about 300 lb. and a fiew gallons of oils; Small as this stock is I prize it highly. . . . 2

Caption Clark found whale blubber quite appetizing.

it was white & hot unlike the fat of Poork, tho' the texture was more spongey and somewhat coarser. I had a part of it cooked and found it

\(^2\)Ibid. & pp. 321-313.
very palatable and tender, it resembled the beaver or the dog in flavour.

So much for whale.

Inter-village hostilities among the Lower Chinook and warfare with other coastal peoples did not halt the flow of goods between the groups involved. It merely interposed more middlemen in the process. Many of the feuds were economically motivated, arising from disputes over a barter or over thefts of slaves and canoes. Until the matter was settled, trade between the antagonists would be carried on through other tribes. Thus, the Chinook usually travelled to Cape Flattery to trade with the Makah for Vancouver Island commodities. But when ruptures occurred between the two tribes the Chinook would switch their traffic to the intermediate Chehalis or Quinault; these in turn would carter the goods along to the Quileute farther north; and the Quileute would pass them on to the waiting Makah.

Similarly when disputes occurred between the Chinook proper on the coast and their Skilloot kinsmen upriver, the Clatsop and other Chinookan groups were called in to maintain the trade between the two.

The skilloot were a numerous band of freebooting river pirates, scattered along both banks of the Columbia

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1Thwaites, Lewis and Clark, Vol. III, pp 312-312
2Swan, Cape Flattery, pp. 30-31
3Thwaites, Lewis and Clark, Vol. IV, p. 206
from the mouth of the Cowlitz River to the Casades. As the principal intermediate carriers between the coast and the Dalles, they handled most of the commodities that passed between these two points. When travelling to the Dalles they would leave their canoes at the foot of the Cascades, walk the portage with their wares and embark in other canoes for the remainder of the voyage upstream. Whether these were maintained there by themselves or hired from the Cascade Indians is not clear, but the system greatly facilitated their commerce.¹

Apparently the Skilloot were at times a major thorn in the side of the coastal Chinook. Their main village was a few miles up the Cowlitz River, which heads near streams flowing into Puget Sound. White traders and Sound Indians alike used this overland passage to traffic with the Skilloot and at the Cascades, thus bypassing the avaricious middlemen at the mouth of the Columbia.²

The Dalles

The Lewis and Clark expedition had been fortunate when going down the Columbia in 1805. Many of the natives of the Dalles and the Cascades were absent hunting in the mountains at the time, and the remaining inhabitants had been so astonished at seeing the whites that before they could collect their wits the party had gone on.

Making their tedious way upstream in 1806 was a different story. At almost every step of the way along the portages of the Cascades and the Dalles they were insulted and threatened, and equipment seemingly vanished before their eyes. Only the size of the expedition and its careful guard prevented it from being plundered.¹

Lewis wrote that this stretch of the river contained the greatest thieves and scoundrels the party had met in its entire transcontinental journey.² Nevertheless the expedition was badly in need of horses to hasten their travel through the Columbian plains and to transport necessary food supplies. To this end, Clark visited the

¹ Thwaites, Lewis and Clark, Vol. IV, pp. 266-267
² Ibid., p. 266
Wishram village\(^1\) situated at the head of the Long Narrows:

I rose early . . . . and took my merchindize to a rock which afforded an eligable situation for my purpose, and at a short distance from the houses, and divided the articles of merchindize into parsels of such articles as I thought best calculated to please the Indians. and in each parcel I put as many articles as we could afford to give, and thus exposed them to view, informing the Indians that each parcel was intended for a horse. they tanterlised me the greater part of the day, saying that they had sent out for their horses and would trade as soon as they came. Several parcels of merchindize was laid by for which they told me they would bring horses. I made a bargin with the chief for 2 horses, about an hour after he canceled the bargin and we again bargained for 3 horses which were brought forward, only one of the 3 could be possible used the other two had such intolerable backs as to render them entirely unfit for service. I refused to take two of them which dis pleased him and he refused to part with the 3rd. I then packed up the articles and was about setting out for the village above when a man came and sold me two horses, and another man sold me one horse, . . . . Many of the natives from different villages on the Columbia above offered to trade, but asked such things as we had not and double as much of the articles which I had as we could afford to give.\(^2\)

Toward evening the chief of the Sahaptin-speaking Eneeshur village at the head of Celilo Falls visited Clark with a group of his people and promised that if Clark would

\(^1\)Lewis and Clark have caused much confusion by miscalling these people "Skilllutes" in their journals for this period, although they had mentioned only Echeloots at this location the fall before. That the explorers actually refer to the Echeloot or Wishram is to be seen in Lewis's notation that "the present Skill-lute village . . . . has been removed a few hundred yards lower down the river than . . . . last fall . . . ." (Thaites, Lewis and Clark, Vol. IV, p. 300). See also Soier and Sapir, Wishram Ethnography, p. 203

\(^2\)Thwaites, Lewis and Clark, Vol. IV, pp. 292-293.
add various articles to those previously offered they would deliver horses to him the following morning. Clark did so, the approved trade bundles were set aside, and the Enneeshurs departed. Clark's account continues the following day:

about 10 A. M. the Indians came down from the Enneesher Villages and I expected would take the articles which they had laid by yesterday. but to my astonishment not one would make the exchange to day. two other parcels of goods were laid by, and the horses promised at 2 P. M. I payed but little attention to this bargain, however suffered the bundles to lye.

In desperation, he resorted to another stratagem. De dressed the sores of the principal chief, gane some things to his children, and rubbed camphor on his wife's back, "a sulky Bitch" who complained of pains. Grudgingly impressed by this treatment, the chief, who "had more horses than all the nation besides," finally sold him two of the animals. In the course of the day many Indians from different villages came up, but none would barter their horses.

The next evening Clark and several of the men went up to the Enneeshur village at the falls in a last attempt to secure more horses. The rest of the expedition remained at Wishram where Lewis commented in his journal that the inhabitants were "dirty, proud, haughty, inhospitable,

1Thwaites, Lewis and Clark, Vol. IV. pp. 293-294
2Ibid. p. 295
3Ibid. p. 298
parsimonious and faithless in every respect. Nothing but our numbers I believe prevents their attempting to murder us at this moment.  

The next morning he discovered that the natives had stolen six tomahawks and a knife from the party

I spoke to the chief on this subject. He appeared angry with his people and addressed them but the property was not restored. One horse which I had purchased and paid for yesterday I was now informed had been gambled away by the rascal who had sold it to me and had been taken away by a man of another nation. I therefore took the goods back from this fellow . . . . In the course of the day I obtained two other indifferent horses for which I gave an extravagant price . . . . These people have yet a large quantity of dried fish on hand yet they will not let us have any but for an exorbitant price . . . . I ordered the Indians from our camp this evening and informed them that if I caught them attempting to pilfer any article from us I would beat them severely. They went off in rather a bad humour and I directed the party to examine their arms and be on their guard.

In the meantime Clark was having his own difficulties at the Eneeshur village of Wyam:

I shewed the Eneeshers the articles I had to give for their horses. They without hesitation informed me they would not sell me any for the articles I had, if I would give them Kettles they would let me have horses, and not without that their horses were at a long ways off in the plains and they would not send for them &c. My offer was a blue robe, a callico Shirt, a Silk handkerchief, 5 parcels of paint, a knife, a Wampom moon, 8 yards of ribbon, several pieces of Brass, a Mockerson awl and 6 braces of yellow beads; and to that amount for each horse which is more than double what we gave either the Shosohne

1 Thwaites, Lewis and Clark, Vol. IV, p. 304
2 Ibid., p. 304-305
or first flatheads we met with on Clarks river
I also offered my large blue blanket, my coat
sword & plume none of which seemed to entice those
people to sell their horses. notwithstanding
every exertion not a single horse could be
precured of those people in the course of the day.¹

As an afterthought, he added: "Those people are
great jokers and deceitful in trade . . . ²

The next day Lewis brought the remainder of the
expedition up to the falls. Convinced that it was useless
to attempt any further trading at the Dalles, they pro­
ceeded on up the Columbia, some by horse, some on foot; and
some by canoe. Two days later they managed to purchase
three more horses at a village, and to sell their canoes
for some strings of beads. But not without a struggle:

the natives had tantalized us with an exchange
of horses for our canoes in the first instance, but
then they found that we had made our arrangements
to travel by land they would give us nothing for
them I determined to cut them in peices sooner
than leave them on those terms, Drewyer struck one
of the canoes . . . with his tommahawk, they
discovered us determined on this subject and offered
us several strands of beads for each which were
accepted . . . ³

A number of aspects of exchange behavior emerge
from the foregoing. No elements of gifting are apparent
in the transactions; the natives were determined to get
by far the best of the bargains or conclude no bargains
at all. In this respect they were much more commercial
than their kinsmen on the coast. Like the latter they

²Ibid., p. 308
³Ibid., p. 319.
made exorbitant demands at the onset of bartering, but were unlike in that they did not retreat from this position later on.

They also made extravagant use of procedures for rescinding or revising a bargain. As Lewis complained, "they frequently receive the merchandize in exchange for their horses and after some hours insist on some additional article being given them or revoke the exchange." ¹

The sharp practice of "packaging" unacceptable with acceptable items and insisting that the sujector purchase all or get none is to be seen in the Wishram chief'd refusal to barter one good horse unless Clark also bought two useless ones.

The incessant thievery, the faithless promises, and the arrogant hostility of the Dalles Indians contrasted decidedly with the cordial treatment given the expedition the year before by the Walla Walla and Nez Perce farther upstream.

Of particular interest is the fact that the Sahaptin-speaking Eneeshur at Celilo Falls exhibited the same traits as the Chinookan-speaking Wishram at the Long Narrows. The former may have been strongly influenced by their proximity to the Upper Chinook, or they may have acquired these characteristics through

their similarly dominating position at a break in transportation. Thwaites points out in this connection that a tribe located at Allumette Island, in the Ottawa River, where they commanded a similar major break in river navigation, displayed the same piratical characteristics.¹

However that may be, both Dalles groups, as well as the Chinookan Indians at the Cascades, were Notorious throughout their known history for their thievish, roguish, and murderous dispositions, particularly toward the whites, but also toward various other groups of Indians. Every account by white travellers in the region from Lewis and Clark on mentions difficulties with these extortionists. It was a rare party that did not lose some portion of its goods in passing, and not a few lives were lost among the inadequately armed.² This latter behavior had a strong economic motivation, for the Dalles Indians were trying to prevent the destruction of their trade monopoly by the setting up of white posts in the interior.

It seems evident from the Lewis and Clark journals that the village chiefs at the Dalles and Cascades possessed little authority over their people.

¹ Thwaites, Lewis and Clark, Vol IV, p. 301
² Bancroft, Coast, Vol. II, pp. 233-244.
When the expedition was at the Cascades the local chief, despite a series of outrages by the natives under his jurisdiction, still insisted that:

"It was not the wish of the nation by any means to displease us. We told him that we hoped it might be the case, but we should certainly be as good as our words if they persisted in their insolence. . . . The chief appeared mortified at the conduct of his people, and seemed friendly disposed towards us, as he appeared to be a man of consideration and we had reason to believe much respected by the neighbouring tribes we thought it well to bestow a medal of small size upon him. He appeared much gratified with this mark of distinction . . . . I hope that the friendly interposition of this chief may prevent our being compelled to use some violence with these people; our men seem well disposed to kill a few of them."

At the village of Wishram at the Dalles, when Lewis threatened to shoot if there was any more stealing, but explained that it was not his wish to deal severely with the Indians if they let the expedition's property alone, "the chiefs (who) were present hung their heads and said nothing." And when Clark informed the Enneshur chief of the stolen tomahawks and knife, "he appeared angry with his people and addressed them but the property was not restored." In part this may have been dissimulation, but certainly the chiefs could not have relished cutting such poor figures in the eyes of strangers.

The same pattern is apparent in trade situations.

1 Thwaites, Lewis and Clark, Vol. IV. p. 268.
2 Ibid., p. 308.
3 Ibid., p. 304.
Chiefs and commoners alike bartered on an individual basis, each seeking his own advantage. When the Wishram Chief backed out of an exchange with Clark, other natives stepped forward and began to bargain.

This pattern may be linked with the property concepts of the Dalles Indians, whereby each family group possessed by inheritance the exclusive fishing rights to a particular station on the river, and the fish that they caught belonged entirely to them. Since also, as we have already noted, each family put up several sacks of fish per year for purposes of trade, it is probable that bartering at the Dalles was a family concern.

A lack of data makes uncertain what the role of women was in trade at the Dalles. Wilkes gives a clue in his already-quoted statement that men did all the fishing. Thus the women had no part in the procurement of the basic local item of exchange. And Lewis and Clark mention no females among the crowds of villagers with whom they bartered. One would infer from this that the women here had little or no function in intertribal trade.

Apparently no credit system was in operation at the Dalles. Informants state that when members of friendly and related tribes came to the area with nothing to exchange, they were permitted to fish for themselves at some of the stations.

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1 Swindell, Report, p. 151; Spier, Wishram, p. 175
2 Swindell, Report, p. 150
An absence of ceremonial in connection with trade is evident at the Dalles. Bargaining was begun without preliminaries, and ended in the same abrupt way. Pipe-smoking was engaged in only as a social pastime, except by shamans, who used it ritually in curing. Clark, at the Enneeshur village, wrote that in the evening "great numbers of those people gathered around me to smoke. I gave them 2 pipes and lay down in the back part of the house with Sgt. P. & the men . . . . The tobacco used was the strong Shoshoni variety, received through trade. Inhaling was after the fashion of the coastal Chinook, and sometimes caused the smoker to lose consciousness for several minutes.

Special friendships with Indians of other tribes occasionally resulted in the development of a trade friend relationship. In such instances, gift exchange was engaged in.

Perhaps the most unique aspect of Dalles Indian trade, and one which derived from the locality's position as a market center, was the fact that inhabitants almost never travelled elsewhere for purposes of exchange. The other tribes with whom they dealt brought their wares to the Dalles, either directly or through middlemen.

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1Spier, Wishram, p. 269.
2Thwaites, Lewis and Clark, Vol. IV, p. 306
3Spier, Wishram, p. 228
The Plateau

Six days after leaving the villages at the Dalles, travelling east up the north bank of the Columbia River, the Lewis and Clark expedition arrived in Walla Walla territory.¹ Here the cordiality with which they were received was in striking contrast to their hostile reception at the Dalles.

Yellept, the principal Walla Walla chief, invited them to remain with him for several days, and assured them they would be furnished with a stock of food and additional horses to assist them in their journey.

Yellept haranged his village in our favour intreated them to furnish us with fuel and provision and set the example himself by bring us an armfull of wood and a platter of 3 roasted mullets. the others soon followed his example with respect to fuel . . . . we purchased four dogs . . . . ²

Food was scarce at this time of year but custom was the main reason they were required to pay for their provisions. As Clark had noticed among the Nez Perce

¹It should be noted that all of the Columbia River villages in the 250-mile stretch between the Dalles and the big bend of the Columbiz, and beyond it on the Snake River, were located on the north bank during this period and for many years thereafter as a means of protection against Shoshoni raids from the upper waters of the Snake and the Great Basin Country to the southe
the year before, "they expect in return something for
everything give(n) as presents or the survices which they
lo(e) let it be however small . . . ."\(^1\)

At the Walla Walla village, Clark wrote the following day:

The Great Chief Yelleppet brought a very elegant white horse to our camp and presented him to me, signifying his wish to get a little but being informed that we had already disposed of every kittle we could possible spare he said he was content with whatever I thought proper to give him, I gave him my Sword 100 balls & powder and some small articles of which he appeared perfectly satisfied.\(^2\)

It will be recalled that this sword was but one of a large number of items rejected by the Dalles Indians for a mediocer horse. Apparently kettles were much in demand along the Columbia at this time.

During the day the expedition also received two fine horses from inferior chiefs of the Walla Walla, in return for which they gave various articles; and lastly a Nez Perce man gave them a very good horse in exchange for one of their poorest animals.\(^3\)

That evening over one hundred Yakima came in to visit and for the benefit of the expedition "the whole assemblage of indians about 550 men women and children sang and danced . . . ."\(^4\)

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\(^1\)Thwaites, Lewis and Clark, Vol. III, p. 106
\(^2\)Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 332.
\(^3\)Ibid., pp. 339-340.
\(^4\)Ibid., pp. 327-332.
The previous year when the expedition had briefly halted in this area on their way downriver, they had been greeted ceremonially by the Walla Walla.

After we had our camp fixed and fires made, a Chief came from this camp which was about ¼ of a mile up the Columbia river at the head of about 200 men singing and beeting on their drums stick and keeping time to the music, they formed a half circle around us and sung for some time, we gave them all smoke, and spoke to their Chief as well as we could by signs...

It will be noted that the approach was made on foot. According to Clark's observations, the Walla Walla had few horses at this time, depending primarily on canoes for transportation.

Here also, just below the junction of the snake and Columbia, a difference is evident in the significance of the pipe in comparison with tribes to the east. The Walla Walla were not accustomed to smoking, and only did so in formal situations. Below the Walla Walla on the Columbia the meaning of the calumet with respect to peace overtures appears to have been unknown. At the mouth of the Umatilla River Clark recorded that:

I then set my self on a rock and made signs to the men to come and smoke with me not one come out until the canoes arrived with the 2 (Nez Perce) chiefs, one of whom spoke aloud, and as was their custom to all we had passed. The Indians came out & set by me and smoked... as soon as they saw the squaw wife of

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1Thwaites, Lewis and Clark, Vol. III, p. 120.
2Ibid., p. 127.
3Ibid., p. 125.
4Probably a Salishan tribe later known as pishquow.
the interpreter they pointed to her and informed those who continued yet in the same position I first found them, they immediately all came out and appeared to assume new life, the sight of this Indian woman, wife to one of our interpreters confirmed those people of our friendly intentions, as no woman ever accompanies a war party of Indians in this quarter.

This would indicate that the pipe did not play the role in trade among some of the Middle Columbia River tribes that it did in such transactions among the tribes to the east.

Among the Walla Walla both men and women bartered fish and other food, and unlike the Indians to the east the men shared to a considerable extent in the women's labor.

The Nez Perce, inhabiting the region of the lower Snake, the Clearwater, and the lower Salmon Rivers between the Walla Walla and the Rockies, were even more hospitable. Their principal wealth was in horses, individuals possessing as many as from fifty to a hundred head. The chiefs gave the expedition a number of horses for use as food and refused any compensation. However, when it came to securing roots and fish, the expedition was expected to give things in exchange. Having been divested of most of their small stock of merchandise by the Indians at the Dalles, Lewis and Clark resorted to the use of "eyewater" as a trade item. Many of the natives had sore eyes, and

1Thwaites, Lewis and Clark, Vol. III, pp 136-137
2Ibid., pp 123, 126
3Ibid., Vol. V, pp. 15, 29.
they regarded the eyewater as great medicine. "I think it pardonable to continue this deseption," Lewis apologized, "for they will not give us any provision without compensation . . . ."¹

The band chiefs of the Nez Perce had considerable authority, and a council determined intertribal affairs. Ceremonial use of the pipe was well developed.²

The intertribal trade fairs and festivals common among the Nez Perce, Cayuse, Walla Walla, Yakima, Umitilla, and associated tribes of the Columbia Basin, included public ceremonies, rounds of intertribal dancing, horse racing, and gambling. Frequently these coincided with good-gathering activities.³

In 1814 Alexander Ross, attached to the first fur brigade dispatched up the Columbia from Astoria by the Northwest Company, visited one of these fairs in the Yakima Valley to barter for horses. After entering the valley:

we had scarcely advanced three miles when a camp of the true Mameluke style presented itself; a camp of which we could see the beginning but not the end! It could not have contained less than 3,000 men, exclusive of women and children, and treble that number of horses. It was a grand and imposing sight in the wilderness, covering more than six miles in every direction. Councils, root-gathering, hunting, horse-racing, foot-racing, gambling, singing, dancing, drumming, yelling, and a thousand other things which I cannot mention, were going on around us.

³Spinden, Nez Perce, pp. 261-262
The din of men, the noise of women, the screaming of children, the tramping of horses, and howling of dogs, was more than can well be described. Let the reader picture to himself a great city in an uproar—it will afford some idea of our position. In an Indian camp you see life without disguise—the feelings, the passions, the propensities, as they ebb and flow in the savage breast. In this field of savage, glory all was motion and commotion, We advanced through groups of men and bands of horses till there the sight of the chiefs' tents admonished us to dismount and pay them our respects, as we depended on them for our protection.

Later, in company with one of the chiefs, Ross made a night-time tour of the place:

We visited every street, alley hole, and corner of the camp, which we traversed lengthway, crossway, east, west, south, and north . . . . . Here was gambling, there scalp-dancing; laughter in one place, mourning in another. Crowds were passing to and fro, whooping, yelling, dancing, drumming, singing. Men, women, and children were huddled together; flags flying, horses neighing, dogs howling, chained bears, tied wolves grunting and growling, all pell-mell among the tents; . . . .

Unfortunately, however, the author gives no details on matters of trade.

the Sinkaitk or Southern Okanagon, a Salishan-speaking people located north of the Yakima on the Okanagon River, did most of their trading with other Salish groups. They made occasional excursions over the Cascades to the coast to secure sea shells and dentalium for decorative purposes, and also undertook trading expeditions to the Blackfoot country. Apparently their

2Ross, Fur Hunters, p. 13
main source for commodities from the coast, however, was the Wenatchi tribe, another Salish group located between the Okanagon and the Yakima. With the Wenatchi, and with that group only, they maintained trade friend relationships. Individuals of each tribe had special friends in the other with whom they conducted all exchange. Each person had only one such friend in any given locality. If the trade friend was absent when visits were made, his associate was required to depart without trading. Upon the death of a trade friend, the surviving partner would be assisted by his friends in establishing a similar relationship with someone else.\(^1\)

Trading in food was done entirely by the women, since stored food was considered to be exclusively their property.

The occasional trading excursions to the Plains were made through Nez Perce and Flathead territory, and usually involved combined expeditions of Okanagon, Nez Perce, Spokane, Moses Columbia, and Flathead. Such journeys took three months each way. Women and children were taken along, as well as poor men with nothing to trade who cared for the extra horses and were compensated with food and clothing. Trade items taken were horses, salmon, berries, mountain goat hides, camas roots, arm-length bundles of raw hemp, and the like. In exchange for

\(^{1}\text{Spier, Okanagon, pp. 74-75, 77.}\)
\(^{2}\text{Ibid., pp. 75-75.}\)
these they received mainly buffalo meat and hides and buchskin clothes. Five or six buffalo hides were given by the Blackfoot for a good horse.¹

Since the Blackfoot and the Plateau people were usually on hostile terms, it was necessary to precede any trade with arrangements for a truce. This was initiated by making the sign for smoking the pipe. Trade between the two groups was on an individual basis, and women traded with women, men with men. Apparently there was no fraternal mixing, however, the groups camped apart, and "The Blackfoot danced every night with many drums, but the Plateau people did not join them."²

The Kutenai, living just west of the Plains, maintained trade friend relationships primarily between members of their own bands. The hospitality concept was highly developed Visitors from other friendly tribes were lodged and feasted havishly, and upon departure were given many presents of food and clothing by members of the camp. Equivalents were expected, of course, when return visits were made.³

In addition to barter and individual gifts exchange, the Kutenai also engaged in ceremonial exchange

¹Spier, Okanagon, pp. 75-76
²Ibid.,
with other tribes. Members placed all "gifts" in the chief's lodge, and the chief acted for the tribe in the exchange.¹

The Flatheads also located near the Plains, traded with most of the other Salish groups, with the Shoshoni, and with the Crow between wars, but their main traffic was with the Nez Perce. From the latter they obtained products of the Columbia Basin, Nez Perce basketry bags, and camas and bitterroot which were superior in size and flavor in the Nez Perce country to that of their own. In return they gave Plains commodities such as buffalo meat and buffalo hides, and various skins obtained in the mountains.²

Such trading usually took place in the Flathead country, and was followed by feasting, dancing, and gambling. The Flathead would sit outside their lodges with their wares piled before them, while the Nez Perce strolled about the circle with their articles of exchange. The bargaining in these situations was frankly commercial.

However, trade friend relationships also existed between members of the two tribes, and in such instances no haggling accompanied the exchange. The Nez Perce would enter his trade friend's lodge and deposit his offerings.

¹Turney-High, Kutenai, p. 196.
They would smoke and talk, and upon departure the Flathead would present his own gifts. Generosity in such transactions enhanced prestige.  

Father De Smet witnessed a trade between some Flatheads and the Crows in the Yellowstone Valley, at a time when the two tribes were on exceedingly friendly terms. The Flatheads being the visitors, they had been lavishly feasted by the Crows. The latter initiated the trade, inspired by the excellence of the Flathead horses.

This is how a bargain was concluded before my eyes. A young Crow chief, of gigantic stature and covered with his gayest raiment, advanced to the midst of the gathering, leading his horse by the bridle, and placed it in front of the Flathead, as if to offer it in exchange for his. The latter giving no sign of approval, the Crow then laid at his feet his gun, then his scarlet robe, then all his ornaments one after another, then his leggings too, and finally his mocassins. Then the Flathead took the horse by the bridle, picked up the goods, and the bargain was concluded without a word being said. The Crow chief, though despoiled of all his fine clothes and plumage, leaped with joy upon his new courser and ran him around the camp several times, uttering yells of triumph and trying the house at all his gaits.

Horses were the principal wealth of the Flatheads. An indication of the number of these animals they possessed is to be seen in the fact that the Blackfoot managed to steal a thousand head in a single engagement in the Big Hole Country in the 1830's.

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1Turney-High, Flathead, p. 138.
Ceremonial parades and employment of the calumet on occasions of trade were traits of Flathead culture. Warren Ferris, of the American Fur Company, was assigned to trade with the Flatheads in the 1830's. The Flatheads, in company with some Nez Perces and Pend d'Oreilles, had been informed of this, and several of their young men were sent to meet his party in the Jefferson River country, which was the place selected for the rendezvous.

Two or three days after their arrival, the whole village, consisting of fifty lodges of Flatheads, Nez Perces, and Pen-d'Oreilles, came in sight, but unlike all other Indians we have hitherto seen, they advanced to meet us in a slow and orderly manner singing their songs of peace. When they had approached within fifty paces, they discharged their guns in the air, reloaded, and fired them off again in like manner. The salute of course, was returned by our party. The Indians now dismounted, left their arms and horses, and silently advanced in the following order: first came the principle chief, bearing a common English flag, then four subordinate chiefs, then a long line of warriors, then young men and boys who had not yet distinguished themselves in battle, and lastly the women and children, who closed the procession. When the Chief had come up, he grasped the hand of our Partizan, (leader,) raised it as high as his head, and held it in that position while he muttered a prayer of two minutes duration. In the same manner he paid his respects to each of our party, with a prayer of a minute's length. His example was followed by the rest, in the order of rank. The whole ceremony occupied about two hours, at the end of which time each of us had shaken hands with them all. Pipes were then produced, and they seated themselves in a circle on the ground, to hold a council with our leaders respecting trade.¹

¹Ferris, Life, pp. 87-88.
The "other Indians" Ferris refers to are apparently the Shoshoni, for his previous trading experiences had been confined to the vicinity of Green River, Bear River, and the upper Snake.

It is evident that the buffalo-hunting Plateau tribes, such as the Flathead, Nez Perce, and Pend d'Oreille, were strongly influenced by the Plains patterns of exchange discussed below.
The Northern Plains

Warfare among the Northern Plains tribes during late prehistoric and historic times was such a constant factor and was so deeply embedded in their way of life, that any discussion of their patterns of trade must necessarily take this into account. We need not concern ourselves here with such external forces as the introduction of the horse and gun and the pressures of white territorial encroachment that aided in bringing this about, for these long preceded the period under review. The important aspects with regard to trade in the early part of the nineteenth century were those of motivation.

Plains warfare was stimulated from within by three basic considerations: the attainment of rank, the need for blood revenge, and economic requirements. These overlapped, of course, but in any given situation one or the other of the motives was usually predominant.

The primary virtue in Plains society was bravery, exemplified by renown in war, and the male members of a Plains community were ranked according to their attainments in this respect. With the occasional exception of shamans, no man could hope to obtain much standing in his tribe until he had counted coup, successfully stolen horses, or scalped an enemy in battle. Skilled hunters, artists,
horsemen, and the like were accorded recognition on the basis of their special abilities, but a successful warrior always outranked them. Aspirants to the office of chief, regardless of their other virtues, must have distinguished themselves in battle.¹

Blood revenge demanded a life for a life, and often several. If a man were killed on a horse-stealing expedition, for example, his friends and relatives were honor-bound to avenge his death. More often than not, satisfaction was obtained by killing any member of the responsible tribe. In turn the friends and relatives of those thus slain in retaliation took indiscriminate vengeance, and the mutual blows of retribution continued between the tribes long after the original cause of dissension had been forgotten.

Horse stealing is an excellent example of the linking of prestige status acquired through warlike acts and property control. Owners of fine mounts frequently tethered them in front of their tipis at night as a safety precaution. The successful theft of such an animal from an enemy, preferably without detection, rated higher than counting coup among some of the tribes. This provided a swift though dangerous means by which young men could gain rank and wealth simultaneously. It served also, of course, to constantly aggravate relations

between the tribes.

Other economic factors that led to war were the maintenance of monopolies on sources of supply, and utilization of the hunting territories of other tribes.

But regardless of war, trade went on, as has already been noted in the instance of the Plateau peoples and the Blackfoot and Crow. Actually, three avenues were open to hostile tribes wishing to trade: they could accomplish their transactions through middlemen, in which event it mattered little whether they themselves were hostile or not; they could declare a brief truce; or they could conclude a peace settlement (always declared to be lasting, but often of a very temporary nature). All three avenues were employed at one time and another by most of the tribes.

In such a martial atmosphere, with intertribal relations constantly strained by the incentives to engage in war, it is small wonder that Northern Plains trade bore the same general characteristics whether conducted between groups at peace or between hostiles. Mutual suspicion, military display and rivalry, and the mandatory smoking of the calumet as an assurance of peaceful intentions and a renewal of friendly compacts, were essential elements of Plains ceremonial exchange.

Alexander Henry, a fur trader of the Northwest Company, left one of the most detailed accounts extant
of the activities leading up to one of these transactions. Henry visited the Missouri village tribes in July of 1806. Together with Charles McKenzie and two or three other North-westers, he was invited by the principal chief of the Hidatsa, Le Borgne, to accompany the tribe on a peace-making and trading trip to the Cheyenne. The latter were encamped for this occasion two days' travel from the Hidatsa villages.

The initial peace overtures had come from the Cheyenne, and ostensibly the sole purpose of the affair was to terminate hostilities. In reality, however, as Le Borgne made clear to McKenzie in several conversations, the paramount objective in the minds of both groups was the establishment of trade relations. The roving Cheyenne wished to dispose of the horses they acquired in the Southwest for the guns and ammunition that the sedentary Missouri tribes obtained from the British and France; and also to exchange buffalo robes, dried meat, and prairie turnip flour for the agricultural produce that they were particularly fond of, having been at one time in their history horticulturists themselves. Their previous trade for such articles had been with the Arikara village, but the Sioux were now making this connection difficult in order to monopolize the Arikara products themselves.¹

¹Jablow, Cheyenne, p. 49.
The Hidatsa and their neighbors were anxious on their part to secure the excellent horses of the Cheyenne and the other commodities which were not produced by the villages in any quantity.

Despite the fact that the principal traffic between the two groups was to be in the form of a ceremonial exchange of gifts, the Hidatsa had a very clear idea of what they should receive for the goods they were going to offer. "According to our manner of trade," Le Borgne told as we have that number of guns, besides other articles, to put on the Pipe.²

Le Borgne went in advance to the Cheyenne as his son. Such intertribal adoption was common to the Plains area, being considered the most binding way to conclude a treaty of peace and friendship between hostile groups.²

Soon Le Borgne's brother and a Cheyenne arrived at the Hidatsa villages to announce that all was ready for the treaty and trade. Wrote Henry:

the women are invited to accompany the men, and to take with them plenty of corn and beans, to exchange with the Schians for dressed leather, robes, and dried provisions. They have a peculiar art of dressing leather, which the natives of these villages have not, and this is one reason why the latter prefer it to their own. Their robes are also

trimmed and garnished quite in a different manner from those of the Missouri Indians, as they use porcupine-quills, dried straw and feathers, whilst the natives here use nothing of the kind in garnishing their robes, simply painting them black, red, and blue, so that the Schian manufacture is by far the most beautiful.

The village was soon in an uproar, the women meanwhile uncovering their hidden stores of corn, beans, etc.†

The Mandans, too, prepared to join the expedition.

. . . . we observed the women all busy, taking up their hidden treasures and making preparations for the approaching fair. I was surprised to see what quantities they had on hand; I am very confident they had enough to serve them at least 12 months, without a supply of flesh or anything else. We every moment met women and children loaded with produce, as we supposed to exchange with their neighbors, so as to be provided with a variety of articles.‡

The next morning the Hidatsa (variously referred to by Henry as Willow Indians and Gros Ventres or Big Bellies), the Mandans, and a few Arikara, consisting in all of 500 men, 300 women and numerous children, all of them mounted, assembled on a high hill at some distance from the villages. Old Chokecherry, a Hidatsa chief, got them moving. The young men were decked out in their finest war dresses, and heavily armed with guns, spears, battle-axes, and bows. The women, bringing up the rear, "had their horses loaded with corn, beans, etc., themselves and children astraddle over all, like farmers going to the mill."³

†Coues, Henry-Thompson, Vol. I p. 360
‡Ibid., pp. 360-361.
³Ibid., pp. 367-368.
Even now at the start of the journey, two days distant from the Cheyenne, the procession took on a formal air. Two Crows, a Hidatsa chief, took the lead carrying Le Borgne's grand pipe of ceremony. Behind him the young men deployed in ranks of ten to thirty abreast and advanced at a regular pace, singing their war songs, accompanied by rattles. Soon after, military precautions against surprise by an enemy were taken by placing the women with their loaded horses in the center of the procession, surrounded by large groups of warriors in front, on the flanks, and in the rear.¹

That night when they camped, guards were sent out in all directions, and the following morning they formed and marched as before. Henry and his companions wished to push on ahead, but "old general Chokecherry" would not let them, saying that the way was dangerous and the Hidatsa were responsible for their safety. Afterward to his chagrin Henry learned that the real reason was to deny the whites the opportunity of purchasing several famous Cheyenne horses which the chief and his sons intended for themselves.²

The Mandans, too, made an unsuccessful attempt to get to the Cheyenne trade grounds before the Hidatsa. A group of them slipped away from the expedition that morning, circled a hill, and hurried forward. However,

²Ibid., pp. 369-373.
the Hidatsa war chief charged fiercely after them and ordered them back, which they instantly obeyed. Henry noted that the Hidatsa continually asserted dominance over the Mandans during the journey, and ascribed this both to their superior numbers and to their more enterprising and warlike character. Mandan resentment at such treatment might have caused an open rupture between the two but for the presence of the chiefs. For reasons of safety the expedition travelled in a compact body, but at every halt the inhabitants of each village gathered in a separate group, and there was always a space between the Hidatsa and the Mandans.1

Toward noon the expedition was ordered to halt for the purpose of painting and dressing, in anticipation of their arrival at the camp of the Cheyenne.

.... the old man and the principal war chiefs made several rounds on horseback, haranguing their people, and telling the young men to dress themselves in their best, so as to look like such warriors as Willow Indians are known to be. For the first time some of the Mandan chiefs also made the rounds on horseback, haranguing their own people; urging the young men to decorate themselves and appear to the best advantage, to show other nations that the stationary village was as brave a set of warriors as any in the world. It was plain to see the partiality of these people for their own tribe.2

This preparation required two hours, and included daubing the horses with red and white earth, variously applied in the form of striped and patches and prints of the hand. The warriors by now looked "truly hideous" to

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1Couss, Henry-Thompson, Vol. I pp. 372-374
2Ibid., pp. 374-375.
Orders then given to mount and proceed were instantly obeyed, everyone admiring his own ferocious appearance, and careful to keep in the nicest order, without disarranging his dress or daubing. No more races were run; nothing but singing was heard; the young fellows appeared as stiff and proud of their persons as courtiers going to make formal appearance at a grand levee, and scarcely deigned to look at one of us otherwise than with contempt.¹

Two hours later another halt was made in the vicinity of a river where the Cheyenne had promised to meet the expedition. No Cheyenne appeared, however, and the Hidatsa immediately began to suspect some form of perfidy. To forestall an ambush on the part of their erstwhile trading associates they took possession of a high hill and sent their young men ahead to scout the country. "These people," remarked Henry, "are . . . so suspicious that the last sign failure to keep a promise made by a stranger is instantly attributed to treachery, and puts them on their guard accordingly."² But the scouts soon signalled that all was well, and that the Cheyenne camp was near at hand.

After crossing the river, the procession again stopped to adjust their finery and to regroup for a formal approach to the Cheyenne.

In the front was Le Borgne's brother,

²Ibid., 376
attended by two Crows on his left, holding out the stem, and a war chief on his right, supporting an American flag on a long pole. These three great men advanced ten paces; 40 Big Bellies immediately followed and formed abreast, singing and shaking their rattles. To the right and left of these, and somewhat in the rear, two parties, of 30 men each, filed off, singing in the same manner. In the rear of those, again, but in the middle line, was formed another party of 40 young men, also singing. The center of these four squads was a vacant space, into which we were desired to form abreast, in company with some of the most respectable old men. The four squads kept in perfect order, closing and extending their ranks as the very rugged ground required. Behind them and us came small parties of tens, twenties, and thirties, singing and shouting at intervals. The women brought up the rear.

Old Chokecherry and the principal Hidatsa war chief directed this movement while riding through the ranks at full speed. The expedition was now met by an advance detachment of young Cheyenne, who greeted them with handshakes and a few words in their own tongue. Henry marvelled at their horses:

... mostly beautiful, spirited beasts; some were masked in a very singular manner, to imitate the head of a buffalo, red deer, or cabbage; with horns, the mouth and nostril-ornamentation gave them a fierce appearance. They were by far the best built and most active horses I had seen in this country—superior, in every respect, to those we see to the northward.

Escorted by the Cheyenne, the procession continued

1Given to the Hidatsa by Lewis and Clark the year before.


3Elk

4Antelope

another mile, when they came in view of a large group of horsemen advancing abreast and in perfect order.

We were ordered to stop, without dismounting; the several squads keeping their respective places, singing, shaking their rattles, and, at intervals, shouting. The Schians and Sioux—for the camp was composed of both of these nations, and a few Buffalo Indians—having advanced within about 50 paces of us, made a general halt, facing us; they were about 100 men. The neighing, snorting, and prancing of such a large company of strange horses, meeting each other suddenly and being restrained by their riders, had really a very spectacular effect.

We had not remained many minutes in this manner, when suddenly the first great war chief of the Schians, who was posted in their center, mounted on a handsome black stallion, gave him the reins, and at full speed rode directly up to the flag, the staff of which he folded in his arms; then he embraced the war chief who held it, next Le Borgne's brother, and then Two Crows. This ceremony being performed on horseback, with the greatest dispatch and dexterity imaginable, he passed on to the main body, selecting particular persons, whom he embraced very cordially; finally he came to us and gave us a hearty handshake, but did not take any of us in his arms .... As soon as this great man had performed the ceremony of embracing the flag, his whole party came on full speed amongst us; at the same moment orders were given for us to proceed, and every one of them selected one of our party, whom he adopted as his comrade, which is done by riding up and embracing him. The ground over which we moved being rough and covered with loose, round stones, and all these ceremonies and manoeuvres being performed on horseback at a gallop, it was surprising no accident happened. They each in turn shook up very warmly by the hand, saying something we did not comprehend, but supposed it was a welcome. The bustle and noise of so many horses galloping and prancing through the ranks,

\footnote{Arapaho}
while the war chiefs of all parties, now being intermixed, passed from right to left at full speed, each making his own arrangements in his own language, had quite a martial appearance. 1

When they came at last in sight of the camp, the expedition was ordered to halt line, while the Cheyenne and Sioux departed at full tilt for the camp-ground. The Hidatsa stopped only briefly, singing and shouting, then filed off to the camp in small groups.

On our arrival the principal men among the Schians were busy riding around at full speed, both within and without the camp, haranguing with great vehemence, ordering the people to receive their friends well, take them into their tents, give them plenty to eat, secure their property from theft, exchange their own commodities upon equal terms, and cheat or wrong nobody. By this time our main body had entered the camp and were formed in the center; the young men, as usual, singing, whilst the old men and war chiefs continually galloped around haranguing their own people to deal fairly with the rest, and be guilty of no foolish pranks, but make a firm and lasting peace with a people whom they should now consider their best friends. This formal business continued for some time, until all the women had been invited into different tents; then the men ceased haranguing and singing, dismounted, and sent their horses to feed and rest—which many of the greatly needed after the violent exercise they had taken since morning. 2

Henry counted one hundred twenty leather tipis, all "white as linen, " 3 in the camp, pitched with great

2Ibid., p. 380
3Many of the Plains Indians rubbed a white clay on their leather tents, clothes, and robes which served to keep these articles from stiffening when being dried out after a rain (Coues, Henry-Thompson I, P. 395.)
regularity in a double-row circle in the form of a horse­
shoe that opened toward the north. This left a large
space in the center of the circle unoccupied. The
spaces between in each row were occupied by racks for
drying meat, and these were heavily loaded, as the
Cheyenne had killed some two hundred buffalo a day or
two before. Beside each of the big tipis was a small
tent about half the size consisting of cut-down remnants
of old tipi-skins. These small tents, which Henry called
"kitchens," were used by the women for preparing the
cooking meat, dressing hides and the like.¹

Henry noticed that the Hidatsa, Cheyenne, Mandan,
and Sioux employed sign talk rather than interpreters in
communicating with each other:

I saw Le Borgne hold a conference with
some of the Schians for more than an hour,
during which not a word was spoken by either
party, and all appeared to comprehend perfectly
well every question and answer."²

That evening all seemed peaceful, and nothing but
singing was heard through the camp. The young men moved
sociable about on horseback. The Hidatsa, and mandan
squaws, however, devoted themselves solely to trade:

The women were . . . . busy exchanging their
corn for leather, robes, smocks, and dried
provisions, as if at a country fair. Each one
was anxious to dispose of her property to
advantage, and to this end carried a load from
tent to tent. But the numerous women of our

²Tbid., p. 383.
party had overstocked the market, and many were obliged to keep half what they had brought, for want of buyers.¹

Then, about sunset, a great commotion arose. Cheyenne, Hidatsa, and Mandan men grabbed up their weapons, mounted, and rushed off to a point of the outskirts of camp. Le Borgne, the head chief of the Hidatsa, seized his battle-axe and joined them. The cause of the uproar was the unexpected arrival of twelve Assiniboin, a tribe on friendly terms with the Mandan and Hidatsa, but sworn enemies of the Cheyenne. Consequently, the latter were determined to kill them, and the former to protect them. The Assiniboin had learned at the villages that the Hidatsa-Mandan expedition greatly outnumbered the Cheyenne camp, so dared to make an appearance.²

The Cheyenne offered five horses to Le Borgne if the Hidatsa would stand back while they dealt with the newcomers, but he as quickly turned the animals over to the Assiniboin. He then conducted them under a strong guard to his tipi.

The Schians appeared enraged, and their chiefs made continual rounds on horseback, haranguing in the own language, whilst the principal men of our party did the same.³ The uproar did not cease until dark . . . .³

Actually, for the Hidatsa the situation went much

²Ibid., pp. 385-386.
³Ibid., p. 386.
deeper than a mere matter of friendship. The Assiniboine had been trading with them since 1738, the time of Verendrye's visit, and probably earlier, and were one of the chief sources by which the village tribes received guns and other articles of British and French manufacture. To abandon the Assiniboine party to the Cheyenne would be to jeopardize the Hidatsa supply lines for European goods. Consequently, they apparently felt that they had no choice but to protect their visitors and take a chance that the Cheyenne would not let the matter interfere with the projected peace-match and trade.¹

The camp passed an uneasy night. Le Borgne had forbidden any of the expedition to depart, though many of the women feared to remain. The next morning Henry made a tour of the grounds. The Cheyenne families that had hospitably entertained them the day before were now morose and obviously hostile. Nevertheless the Hidatsa were determined to go through with the treaty and the trade.

At eight o'clock the preparations commenced for Le Borgne to adopt a son among Schians... The affair went on very slowly, and it was not without many speeches, smoking-matches, and persuasive arguments, that the medicine-tent was prepared. The Schians appeared very backward, indeed, and at first would neither bring tents enough to form the circle, not lend a hand to erect them, while our party appeared very anxious

¹Jablo, Cheyenne, pp. 40, 49.
to forward the business. After many obstacles had been surmounted the circle was formed with six leather tents, opening the N. At nine o'clock the ceremony began by three of Le Borgne's principal mishinaways, or secretaries, taking their seats in the center of the tent which faced the open space. One of them, Two Crows, with great ceremony and many grimaces, untied the pipe-stem, adjusted the feathers, hairs, etc., and displayed it on a fathom of red strouts, whilst the other two secretaries were busy singing, one beating a drum, and the other keeping time with a rattle made of cabbrie hoofs. The stem being thus displayed, old General Choke-cherry, who was sure to make himself busy upon every occasion, posted himself in front of the hut and uttered a long oration, inviting everybody to the ceremony. Many of our party accordingly took their seats on each side of the stem, but not a Schian or Sioux came near us.\(^1\)

More singing followed, after which the aides rose and danced to the accompaniment of frum and rattle toward the tent of the Cheyenne that Le Borgne was to adopt. One of aides carried the calumet, while another supported a buffalo bull's head on his back. Such bull heads figured prominently in the sacred ceremonies of the Mandan and Hidatsa. Dancing before the intended son, the aides offered him the calumet and rattle. He sullenly refused to take these, but finally did so after a long conversation with some other Cheyennes. Wrote Henry:

Le Borgne, who sat in the tent during all this part of the ceremony, wrapped up in an American flag, said not a work but cast many a sardonic grin at his adopted son.\(^2\)

\(^1\)Coues, Henry-Thompson, Vol. I, pp. 388-398
\(^2\)Ibid., p. 389.
The proceedings ended with Le Borgne draping the flag around the Cheyenne and presenting him with three horses. Then, with the assistance of another Hidatsa chief, he lifted the adopted son by the arms and followed by the aides and music conveyed him to the medicine tent, where the trade was to begin.

On their arrival the adopted son was placed in the center, opposite the fathom of red strouds, holding the stem in his right hand; Le Borgne was seated on his right hand, and Chirf of the Wolves on his left; near them were the three secretaries, who continued to sing and shake the rattle; the bull's head was placed opposite the cloth and son. The Big Bellies brought in some ammunition, and laid it upon the strouds; the son was directed to lay the stem over these articles, which he did accordingly, our old general was again posted opposite the entrance of the shelter, where he was fully employed in his usual vocation of haranguing, inviting everyone to bring something to put under the stem. But all his eloquence was in vain; not a Schian came forward until some of their old men had gone the rounds making long speeches, when a few of the Schians appeared with some garnished robes and dressed leather, which were spread on the ground near the bull's head, which was then laid upon the heap. The Big Bellies next brought two guns, which they placed under the stem. The Schians put another robe or two under the bull's head. Our party were each time more ready to come forward with their property than the others were with theirs. The latter next brought some old, scabby, sore-backed horses for the bull's head. This compliment was returned by our party with corn, beans, ammunition, and a gun. General Chokecherry grew impatient, and reproached the Schians in a very severe and harsh manner for their mean and avaricious manner of dealing, in bringing forward their trash and rotten horses, saying that the Big Bellies were ready to give good guns and ammunition, but expected to receive good horses in return. In answer to this they were given to understand by the Schians that they must first put all their guns and ammunition under
the stem, immediately after which the Schians, in their turn, would bring in good horses. As it was never customary in an affair of this kind for either party to particularize the articles to be brought to the stem or bull's head, but for everyone to contribute what he pleased of the best he had, this proposal induced our party to suspect the Schians had planned to get our firearms and ammunition into their own possession, that they might be a match for us, and commence hostilities. To prevent this, no more guns or ammunition were brought forward, and the Schians were told they must first produce some of their best horses; but to this they would not listen. After a few more trifles had been given in on both sides, the business came to a stand-still on the part of the Schians, who retired to their tents.

It was about 3 p.m. when affairs thus assumed a gloomy aspect; harangues were made through the camp by both parties, evidently not of a very amiable nature; frequent menaces were made by our party, and the other as often retorted. The ceremony was totally neglected and everybody left the spot. The adopted son went sullenly to his own tent; horses were collected on both sides; everyone was surly and gloomy; silence reigned throughout the camp, only broken by the neighing of horses and some few orations; . . . .

And so the attempted peace-making and trading came to a close. Le Borgne ordered the expedition to saddle and load, and before long, in company with their troublesome friends the Assiniboins, the Hidatsa and Mandan were on their way. The Cheyenne followed for some distance, fiercely disputing, not in the least awed by the superior numbers of the village tribes. But at last they dropped back, and Le Borgne explained to Henry and McKenzie that he had suffered their arrogance to pass be-

cause of the women and children with the party, who would certainly have been killed if a battle had started. He declared, however, that he would be revenged upon the Cheyenne for the way in which they had slighted his calumet.¹

If the trade with the Cheyenne had gone as planned, in all probability it would have followed the same pattern that Mackenzie noted the year before in a ceremonial exchange between the Crow and the Hidatsa. Three hundred tents of the Crow Indians, who at one time formed a single tribe with the Hidatsa, arrived at the main Hidatsa village with many horses and other commodities to trade. The first day they put on an exhibition of horsemanship by charging wildly through the village. The following day the Hidatsa decked themselves out and gave a return exhibition. The "trading on the pipe" took place the third day:

Les Gros Ventres made the (Crow) . . . . smoke the pipe of friendship, and, at the same time, laid before them a present consisting of two hundred guns, with one hundred rounds of ammunition for each, a hundred bushels of Indian corn, a certain quantity of mercantile articles, such as kettles, axes, clothes, etc. The (Crow) in return brought two hundred and fifty horses, large parcels of (buffalo) robes, leather leggings, shirts, etc, etc. This exchange of trading civilities took place dancing; when the dancing was over, the presents were distributed among the individuals in proportion to the value of the articles respectively furnished; this dance therefore is a rule of traffic. The

Mandane villages exchanged similar civilities with the same tribe.\(^1\)

This pattern, with minor variations, was the usual one for group trade in the Northern Plains.

Henry's account is instructive in many particulars. It does not, however, bring out the limitations on the role of the chiefs in Plains ceremonial exchange. The chief was a dominant figure in the actual transactions, but this position was arrived at by extremely democratic means. Prior to engaging in any trade on a tribal level, councils were called and the consent of the people was required. This was obtained through the majority consent of the principal men and camp soldiers who constituted the council, and who through their extended family relationships could speak for practically every individual in the band or village or tribe. Once the council agreed on a given matter, all members of the community were bound to conform, and the chief accordingly acted for the group.\(^2\)

Inter-village trade rivalry is evident in Henry's description of the excursion to the Cheyenne, where in the Mandans attempted to strike off from the expedition in

\(^1\)Mackenzie, Mississouri, p. 346.
order to reach the trading grounds before the Hidatas. Henry had undergone a previous experience in this connection on his first visit to one of the Mandan villages. When he wished to cross the Missouri to a village on the opposite side, he found it necessary to send one of his men to the latter place to obtain assistance in transporting his party across.

It would have been in vain for us to attempt to prevail upon anyone in this village to ferry us over; for, as long as a stranger has any property, they wish him to trade all he brings to the first village he enters. . . . 1

The ceremonial approach parade that formalized the initial meeting of the main groups of Cheyenne and Hidatsa, and which provided the opportunity for rival displays of costume and martial demeanour, was so integral a part of the trade pattern of the Plains Indians that they continued to employ the form for many years in their tribal dealings with the fur companies. When in 1832 the factor at Port McKenzie on the Marias River attempted to dispense with these time-consuming preliminaries, the Blackfoot "immediately took offence and were even going to part without transacting any business; . . . .2

The selection and embracing of individuals of the opposite trade group by the Cheyenne men in the course

of the initial greetings may have implied the establishment of a temporary "trade Friend" relationship in private exchanges during the gathering.

Two types of exchange patterns are evident in the Hidatsa-Cheyenne trade: ceremonial group exchange, and individual barter. The former was engaged in by the men, was accompanied by the rituals of the calumet and the dance, and dealt in such war-important commodities as horses and guns. Women dominated in the latter type, unceremoniously hawking and exchanging foodstuffs, leather, robes, and artifacts of women's dress. A sexual division of trade is manifest here.

The village tribes obviously had large surpluses of vegetable produce and the Mandan and Hidatsa women speedily began to dispose of these the moment the big Cheyenne camp was reached. The competition among themselves must have been intense, for before nightfall they had "overstocked the market." And this before the treatmaking had even been attempted.

Elsewhere Henry made further observations on the persistence of Mandan women in matters of trade:

We purchased sweet corn, beans, meal, and various other trifles, for which we paid in ammunition, beads, and tobacco. Having bought all we required, which was three horse-loads, we were plagued by the women and girls, who continued to bring bags and dishes full of different kinds of produce, and insisted upon trading. It was some time before we could persuade them that we
had already purchased more than we had horses to carry. They then offered to sell us some common pack-horses, and also buffalo robes in great numbers; but our trifling equipments would not admit of such purchases. 

If the Mandan women could barter "Common pack-horses" as well as leather and food, then comparatively speaking they had a wide latitude in the field of trade.

Plaine hospitality patterns in connection with trade are to be seen in the fact that the Hidatsa expedition took no tiplis along, relying instead upon being the lodge guests of the Cheyenne. Since the latter had initiated the peace-making and trading overtures, they were logically the host tribe, even though the permanent villages of the former were near at hand.

It is of interest to note the manner in which the village visitors were lodged. The Hidatsa men remained on horseback in formation in the center of the encampment "until all the women had joined the wives. Probably also, with such a quantity of fresh buffalo meat in camp, the Hidatsa and the Mandan would have been lavishly feasted by their hosts during the night if the Assiniboine ruckus had not occurred, for feasting was an important element in Plains hospitality.

The vehement harangues by the principal men of both groups, urging their respective people not to

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cheat steal, makes clear that whites were not the only ones on whom the Indian exercised these talents.

It will have been noted that Henry's account makes no mention of the Cheyenne actually smoking the Hidatsa calumet. The "adopted son" received it, but apparently did nothing further than to lay it on the strouds when the trading began. Normally, as was seen in the instance of the Crow-Hidatsa trade, both sides would have smoked the sacred pipe. The fact that the Cheyenne made no move to do so was obviously indicative of their resolve not to go through with the projected compact.

When the Cheyenne began to enumerate the articles that must be brought to the pipe before they would engage in any horse trade with the Hidatsa, they broke with custom and transferred the transactions from the plane of ceremonial exchange to that of outright bargaining. Henry's statement that the accepted system was "for everyone to contribute what he pleased of the best he had" ties in with McKenzie's observation on the Crow-Hidatsa exchange, that "when the dancing was over, the presents were distributed among the individuals in proportion to the value of the articles respectively furnished." This, however, in no way invalidates the exchange standards that Le Borgne referred to when he commented that according to their manner of trade the Hidatsa expected so
many guns.

The day after Henry returned to the Mandan village from the abortive Hidatsa-Cheyenne meeting he witnessed a trade between the Hidatsa and thirty Crow Indians, who had just arrived with their families at the Hidatsa villages with horses, skins, furs, and slaves to barter for guns and ammunition, tobacco, and the like. Although the Crow were close kinsmen to the Hidatsa, having once been a part of this sedentary tribe, the latter were anything but equitable in conducting the transactions:

It was disgusting to see how those impious vagabonds, the Big Bellies, keep those poor inoffensive Crows in subjection, making their own price for horses and everything else; nor will they allow a stranger to give the Crows the real value of their commodities; the price once fixed by those scoundrels, they permit no one to give more. By this means they generally get whatever is brought into their villages, and then sell out to strangers for double what it cost them. Today we were continually watched and attended by Rattlesnake, who frequently threatened that, if we purchased a horse from the Crows for more than the Big Bellies offered, he would take it from us and keep it himself. The Crows had a handsome slave girl, about 12 years of age, who was offered to us for a gun, 100 balls, and powder enough to fire them; but those rascally Big Bellies would not allow us to purchase her, saying they wanted her for themselves.¹

Truces between hostile Plains tribes for the purpose of trade were occasionally regularized to the point where they occurred periodically and without

negotiation, the times and the circumstances being tacitly understood on both sides. This system obviously facilitated exchange. Matthews described one such arrangement, in existence in early times between the Sioux and the Mandan*Hidatsa, who were mortal enemies the remainder of the year:

When the Dokotas saw a certain flower (Liatris punctata blooming on the prairie, they knew the corn was ripe, and went to the villages of the farming Indians to trade. From the time they came in sight of the village to time they disappeared, there was a truce. When they had passed beyond the bluffs, they might steal an unguarded pony or lift a scalp, and were in turn liable to be attacked.¹

Henry's accounts of individual transactions with the Missouri tribes are reminiscent of Lewis and Clark's experiences along the Columbia River:

All the tribes I say on the Missourie have a mean, dirty custom, but more particularly the Big Bellies. When you wish to purchase a horse, or, indeed, any trifle, they very often instantly accept the price offered, and go away apparently pleased with the bargain. But they soon come back, refund the price, and without ceremony take back what they have just sold. Should you offer to increase the price, they may accept it, but you may rest assured it will not be long before they bring back your property and ask for theirs in return. It is of no use to augment the price, as in the end they will insist on taking back their own property, being at the same time very particular not to embezzle the least article of yours. The best way is to take back your own property upon the first offer, and without murmuring . . . . This fickle manner of dealing is common even among themselves,

¹Matthews, Hidatsa, p. 27.
and provided every article of the price is punctually returned, the buyer cannot object to return to the other his property, even should the bargain have been closed for several days.\footnote{Coues, Henry-Thompson, pp. 354-355.}

This method of rescinding a bargain and its associated property concept were in common practice, then, from the Columbian coast to the Northern Plains.
CHAPTER IV
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

It is clear that an extensive trade, involving a great quantity and variety of commodities, was carried on by the native populations of the Columbia Valley, the Plateau, and the Northern Plains in late prehistoric and early historic times. Although this trade had been stimulated by the introduction of articles of white manufacture from British Canada, the Spanish Southwest, and trading vessels off the Northwest Coast, it was still based in large part on exchanges of native products at the opening of the nineteenth century, and there is no doubt that it was almost as extensive before the arrival of European commodities. Prior to the introduction of the horse in the region in the 1730's, Northern Plains trade must have been comparatively small-scale. The situation was different in the Columbia Basin, however, where a well-developed system of waterways afforded an easy means of transportation. The traffic in that area must have been considerable in ancient times.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century two great aboriginal market centers were functioning in the Northwest, one at the Dalles of the Columbia which serviced the coast and the western Plateau, and one at villages on the Missouri River, which supplied the tribes.
of the Northern Plains. Such native articles passed by barter from the coast and the Dal-
distance of more than a thousand miles to the
the Missouri, the principal carriers being the Nez Pe-.
and the Crow. Likewise European goods, consisting mainly
of beads and iron from ships along the Northwest Coast and
guns and ammunition from British Canada, moved inland from
the Missouri villages and those at the Dalles. Transportation
of goods was effected by canoe on the Lower Columbia and by
horse in the Plateau and the Northern Plains. The trunk
trade route between west and east followed the Columbia
River and the Lolo and Yellowstone trails. A number of
passes provided a means of surmounting the barrier of the
Rockies.

Both of these markets were centers of production
as well as of distribution. The Mandan and Hidatsa on
the Missouri raised large surpluses of corn, beans,
squash, and pumpkins for trade, while the Dalles Indians
produced quantities of pounded fish for the same purpose.
Cultural factors gave each of these centers a monopoly
on its product.

Regional and tribal specialization in trade
commodities based on localization of resources, on
tradition, and on skill was everywhere evident, but
particularly so in the Columbia Basin and along the coast.
Dentalium shells, eulachon oil, pounded salmon, and
wappato roots were among the many localized products of the latter area. Horn bows, camas roots, beargrass, wild hemp, and the skins of mountain animals were furnished by the Plateau. The Plains tribes variously specialized in the production of buffalo meat and robes, elaborate costumes, and cultivated vegetable foods. Obviously such specialization greatly stimulated aboriginal trade.

Trade was carried on not only to meet subsistence requirements but for social, military, prestige, and religious reasons as well. The need to dispose of surpluses of pounded salmon and corn was a major factor in the respective marketing activities of the Dalles Indians and the Missouri village tribes.

Middlemen on a village and tribal level operated in all of the areas under discussion, but none of these performed the role to the exclusion of production. The Missouri village people were middlemen for European and nomadic Plains commodities, but they also produced large quantities of vegetables. The Crow were middlemen for the horse herders of the Plateau and the Basin, but they also manufactured the finest of buffalo robes. The Dalles Indians were middlemen for ocean and Plateau products and for European goods, but they also prepared pounded fish. The Lower Chinook were middlemen for dentalium and whale oil, but they also produced shellfish, baskets, and eulachon oil.
The greatest incidence of middlemen occurred in the heavily-populated, multilanguage Northwest coast area, where short trading journeys by water were the rule. As an example, dentalium shells produced by the Nootka on Vancouver Island passed successively through the Makah, the coastal Chinook, the Skilloot, and the Wishram merely in reaching the Columbia Basin peoples east of the Dalles. During disputes between villages, from two to five additional tribes performed the middleman role for the passage of the same goods. Articles moving south from the Columbia along the coast to California involved many more tribes.

Monopolistic practices were common in both the Columbia Basin and the Northern Plains. The monopolies of the Dalles and Missouri villages with respect to pounded salmon and cultivated vegetables have already been cited. The Lower Chinook monopolized the southward and eastward distribution of dentalium shells from their source at Vancouver Island, and the fact that the largest and hence most valuable shells did not reach the tribes south of Chinook territory indicates that they reserved the best of this shell money and token wealth for themselves, artificially controlling the supply with respect to the Northern California tribes. Apparently they even disseminated a mythical account of the origin of dentalia to protect their interests in the sources of the shell. That monopoly techniques were not foreign to them is further
illustrated by the middleman monopoly that Concomly, chief of the Chinook proper at the mouth of the Columbia, established over the trade in European goods from Astoria for many years, denying by threat of force to all other villages and tribes, including those of other Lower Chinook, direct access to these valuables. Instead, he traded them on at his own terms and a brisk profit to his village.

The Dalles Indians, by virtue of their dominating position at a major break in Columbia River transportation, prevented direct intercourse between the Lower Columbia and Plateau tribes, and thus reserved for themselves the profitable exchange of commodities between these two areas.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the Missouri village people were monopolizing the distribution of European articles to the interior Plains nomads, being enabled to do this in part by the cooperation of the European traders, who preferred at this stage in fur trade development to deal with the villages rather than with the roving tribes, and in part through the attitude of the other Plains tribes, who mistrusted the whites and preferred to receive European goods from other Indians. The Sioux provide another example of monopoly in this area, by their action in throwing a cordon about the Arikara villages and denying other tribes access to them. In this manner also they prevented the Arikara from themselves hunting buffalo, and forced them to trade all of
their surplus agricultural produce to the Sioux in return for buffalo products secured by the latter.

Production techniques were well developed. In response to the heavy demands of other tribes for dentalia shells for use as money and as wealth tokens the Nootka had devised one of the most complicated contraptions of native North America for the mass deep-water recovery of these shells. The distribution of this localized article of trade in quantity from the mouth of the Columbia to Northern California and east far into the Great Plains indicates that hundreds of thousands of the shells must have been procured from Vancouver in the course of time.

The technique employed by the Dalles Indians in manufacturing pounded salmon preserved the fish in edible condition for several years, and the baskets in which the product was "packaged" for barter made it readily transportable. The evidence presented in this paper is that something in the neighborhood of one million pounds of salmon were annually prepared for barter by the natives in the vicinity of the Dalles.

In the aggregate the nomadic Northern Plains tribes annually produced thousands of surplus buffalo hides and thousands of tons of buffalo meat, but through lack of techniques and incentive, much of this was never marketed. The village tribes were so successful as horticulturists that their main problem was to dispose of
Mechanisms for the continued circulation of goods between groups during hostilities were employed in all areas. On the Lower Columbia and along the coast, where great numbers of villages insured that a tribe would almost always have friendly relations somewhere, additional middlemen were interposed between disputing tribes to maintain the traffic. On the Northern Plains, however, where warfare was a constant factor and the populations widely scattered, temporary truces appear to have been the usual form. Warfare among the Plateau peoples was relatively infrequent. In their trade relations with hostile Plains groups they employed the truce technique. In trade with the Dalles it is probable that they called in friendly middlemen in the event of difficulties.

Both the Northwest Coast and the Northern Plains peoples employed warfare as a means of supplementing commodities received in trade. The former raided primarily for slaves, and the latter for horses.

An interesting sidelight on distribution is the evidence presented in this paper that Monterey shells from California reached the Plateau and the Northern Plains via the Shoshoni, who obtained them in the course of long trading journeys from the Snake River country to Oregon and California. Apparently they received these both from the Klamath Indians and from Spanish traders.
Presumably also the Klamath and Modoc, in their slave-trading trips to the Dalles via the valley of the Deschutes River, brought Monterey shells to that market for barter, just as they returned to southern Oregon with dentalium shells. Spanish trading vessels along the Northwest Coast were a third source for the Monterey product, and undoubtedly numbers of these passed up the Columbia for inland distribution.

The Chinook jargon was the medium for intertribal communication of the Lower Columbia and the coast. Interpreters were employed at the Dalles in dealing with tribes that did not speak the jargon and whose languages were not familiar to the market operators. An early sign language was in use by the tribes of the Columbia Basin. Communication there was relatively easy anyway because of the large language blocks and the frequency of inter-marriage. By 1800 the sign language had been modified by the influence of Plains sign talk, which was universal in the latter area.

The Chinook and neighboring groups on the Lower Columbia and the coast were the only tribes in the areas under discussion that systematically employed shell money in their economy. The fathom-long strings of dentalia shells were carefully graded and rated and the worth of all other commodities could be measured against these. The tribes of all of the areas, however, had standard
equivalents for estimating rates of exchange, and these also may be classified as money. Basic units of value in the exchange of the Plateau were horses and deerskins, and those of the Northern Plains included horses, buffalo robes, skin corn measures, and stone mortar measures. This acceptance of established values made gift exchange economically feasible, and eliminated the necessity of bargaining in many of the group transactions.

The above indices were well stabilized, but certain other values fluctuated considerably under varying conditions of supply and demand. An example of this is to be seen in the instance of blue and white European trade beads which for a period of several years following their introduction on the Northwest Coast served as the principal circulating medium among the Lower Columbia and coastal tribes. Concurrently, dentalium was retired as the standard exchange equivalent. It was still regarded as money, but it was not in use as such. The coastal extent of the bead money fad is unknown. Inland, however, it apparently extended as far as the Dalles. Geographical usage of the beads, therefore, coincided with the previous geographical usage of dentalia. However, between 1806 and 1811 traders visiting the coast must have brought in such quantities of blue and white beads in response to demand that their value as a money token was destroyed, and the natives revived the traditional tusk-shell as the accepted
The concept of credit does not seem to have been operative in intertribal trade in these areas. Even the commercial-minded Dalles Indians did not extend credit to friends lacking trade goods, giving them instead the opportunity to fish for themselves at the family stations.

Payment for services rendered is seen in the trading expeditions of the Okanagan to the Plains, wherein "poor" men with nothing to trade were taken along to tend the horses, and were reimbursed in food and leather clothing. And the imposition of ceiling prices on the commodities of another group in order to turn a better profit in subsequent exchanges was evident in the Hidatsa-Crow transaction witnessed by Alexander Henry.

Esthetic and prestige elements were of outstanding importance in the value systems of the Northwest Indians. Though often deficient, even by their own standards, in food, clothing, and equipment, their choice of commodities frequently rested on such articles as beads, dentalia, abalone shells and the like, rather than on objects of intrinsic utility. As an example, in the value system of the Northern Plains tribes the tail of an eagle was worth a horse, despite the fact that horses were still in short supply and in great demand among many of the tribes during the period concerned. Generally speaking, the natives resisted changes in established values.
Three standard patterns of exchange existed in the Northwest; ceremonial gift exchange between groups; gift exchange between individuals; and individual barter.

Ceremonial gift exchange reached its peak of development in the war-conscious Northern Plains, where the variety of commodities was relatively small and accepted standards of value existed for most of the articles exchanged. Here the exchange pattern involved emissaries: highly formalized approach parades centering on rival displays of military power and wealth and skill; oratory, dancing during exchanges, and the smoking of the calumet.

The buffalo-hunting tribes of the Plateau, such as the Flathead, Nez Perce, and Pend d'Oreille, employed the same pattern. However, the remainder of the Plateau tribes, located on and adjacent to the Columbian plains, engaged in a much less formalized type of exchange. Groups representing numbers of different tribes assembled periodically to stage trade fairs or festivals. These were in the nature of sociable gatherings, where gift exchange and bargaining were equally featured, and where horse-racing, dancing, gambling, and various other diversions were involved. These seem to have possessed less of the competitive element than comparable Plains activities. Here also smoking appears to have been indulged in as a pastime rather than as an important ceremonial preceding group trade and significant of peaceful intentions, as
it was on the Plains.

The sociable pattern evident here is consonant with the general absence of war between tribes within the region, and with the presence of numerous, closely-related kin groups.

Little or no trade ceremony is discernible at the Dalles. The pipe complex was absent, and transactions were constantly being carried on with groups and individuals from many different tribes. Furthermore, the Dalles Indians dealt with a great variety of commodities and because of their monopoly on the up-river traffic of such sought-after articles as European trade beads, iron, copper, sea-shells, and the like, they were in a position to extract the ultimate in value from the inlanders that flocked to their market-place. Consequently, individual haggling was the rule, and ceremonial gift exchange between groups must have been engaged in only under such exceptional circumstances as the meeting between the Wishram and the Bannock before described.

Ceremonial exchange between the canoe tribes of the coast took place, but again because of the multiplicity of contacts between different villages and the fact that most of the trade was carried on by small detachments of individuals, ceremonialism was absent in the majority of trade situations. The calumet was unknown.

The practice of individual gift exchange was
universal in the Northwest. Factors of etiquette and prestige were particularly operative on the Northern Plains and the adjacent rim of the Plateau.

In conclusion, it is evident that in late prehistoric and early historic times the patterns of trade among the aboriginal populations of the Lower Columbia, the Plateau, and the Northern Plains were basically similar but differed considerably in degree.

Chiefs everywhere but at the Dalles played a leading role in intertribal trade; there they appeared to have little authority in such matters. Nowhere, however, could the chief act for the tribe without the consent of his people as expressed in council.

Women were most prominent in intertribal transactions among the coastal Chinook, and least so at the Dalles. On the coast they seem to have had a voice in the exchange of all types of commodities, while on the Plateau and the Northern Plains their transactions were restricted primarily to foodstuffs. At the Dalles, though, the men traded in food.

The institution of trade friends was present in some degree in all of the areas under discussion, but reached its greatest development among the tribes of the Plateau.
The ceremonial pipe complex was an integral part of the intertribal trading patterns of the Northern Plains and among the buffalo-hunting Plateau tribes. Farther west, however, along the Middle and Lower Columbia, this complex was absent, and even smoking as a pastime was a relatively recent development, introduced from the south and east.

Of the areas considered, only the Lower Columbia showed evidence of the potlatch complex, and there it existed only superficially.

Finally, the practice of bargaining was as universal among the natives of the Northwest as was gift exchange. It was usually restricted to individual transactions, however, whereas the latter was appropriate in both individual and group situations.

Perhaps the most striking aspects brought out by the present study are the extensiveness of intertribal trading activities in the Northwest during the period concerned and the connections these provided for the diffusion of traits and values between the Columbia River and the Great Plains.
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