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THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE NORTHWEST COAST FUR TRADE

by

(Loraine Littlefield, B.A.

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of
Graduate Studies in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

Department of Sociology and Anthropology
Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario
February 21, 1987

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Abstract

This thesis examines the historical adaptation of Northwest coast women's role in the distribution of trade goods during the fur trade. While enforced by the concepts of ownership that gave women access to property, this role was primarily an extension of her traditional role in the management and rationing of household resources. The fur trade, due to its trade relations that retained the traditional economy and the gender related roles intrinsic to it, maintained and continued women's role in trade. Furthermore, the increased demand upon household resources and the priority of maximizing exchanges increased the opportunities for women's participation in trade transactions during this historical period.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines the role of Northwest coast women in the distribution of trade goods during the historical period of the fur trade. Specifically, it examines the degree and nature of women's participation in fur trade transactions, and tests the hypothesis that their role in trade transactions was not a new behaviour arising out of the fur trade but a continuation of their traditional role as active participants in the exchange of trade goods. Furthermore this thesis proposes that women's role in trade was continued during this historical period due to the specific trade relations of the fur trade that maintained the traditional gender related roles and ownership of production within the Northwest coast economy.

While there exists a wealth of ethnographic and historical material on the native peoples of the Northwest coast, little attention has been paid to the role of women in the fur trade. While recent research (Brown, 1980; Van Kirk, 1980) into the fur trade has revealed the important social and economic roles of Indian women in terms of trading and marriage alliances, and their productive role as a labour force facilitating fur trade operations it only

portrays women in the fur trade as supporting men's roles and neglects the active role of women in the distribution of trade goods. This neglect is surprising in light of the many historical accounts throughout the fur trade that document the presence of native Northwest Coast women at the time of trade transactions, their shrewdness and skill in bargaining, and their role as chief negotiators.

This neglect of women's active participation in the economy has been attributed to several factors. Many (Linton, 1971; Murphy & Murphy, 1974; Reiter, 1975; Rohrlich-Leavitt, Sykes & Weatherford, 1975; Slocum, 1975) have argued that such omissions in the literature are a case of a male bias that either devalues women's activities or neglects them entirely. This male bias, they argue, has produced an asymmetrical picture of sex roles in traditional societies and places women in a subordinate role in economic activities. Supporting this criticism are the classical ethnographies of Malinowski (1961), and Hart & Pilling (1960) which portray women as wholly devoted to domestic concerns while recent restudies of these same societies (Weiner, 1978; Goodale, 1971) has demonstrated the active role of women in trade and other economic activities.

However, not all scholars attribute the neglect of women's economic roles in these ethnographies to a male bias in anthropology. Some authors (Sacks, 1976; Leacock, 1975)

have suggested that the neglect stems from ethnographers and historians inability to divorce themselves from culture-bound concepts of sex roles. These concepts which are a product of western capitalist ideology assumes the presence of sexual asymmetry in all societies. While these concepts are applicable for the analysis of sex roles in capitalist societies where such sexual asymmetry does exist, they are not adequate to represent societies where social relations are more egalitarian (ie., among hunter gatherer and incipiently stratified societies). They believe that to adequately portray the true nature of sex roles anthropologists need to devise new concepts that do not have this cultural bias of sexual hierarchy.

As well as these criticism of male and cultural bias many scholars (Aaby, 1977; Rohrlich-Leavitt, Sykes & Weatherford, 1975) have also argued that the interaction with western economy and ideology has greatly altered and devalued women's traditional roles in many egalitarian societies. For example, Leacock (1978, 1981) argues that the form of male dominance found in contemporary Naskapi-Montagnais band organization is a product of historical interaction with missionaries, traders, and government officials, and not representative of traditional sex roles found in the pre-contact band structure. She argues that western emissaries appointed male chiefs and male commercial

middlemen to facilitate their own interests and in so doing emphasized the importance of men's roles and their decision making powers outside of the band. This consequently devalued women's roles in economic and political activities.

The presence of women traders on the Northwest coast throughout the fur trade reveals that the process of acculturation that exempted women from such economic roles as trade in other parts of North America did not occur in this region. Women's presence in trade transactions during the fur trade indicates that Northwest coast women enjoyed a high degree of economic power in spite of the introduction of western economy and ideology. This participation of women in trade transactions raises the question of whether this was a new role arising from the fur trade or a traditional role maintained and perpetuated during the contact period. The answer to this question not only offers insights into the adaptation of women's economic roles to the fur trade, but contributes to a wider understanding of the effects of the fur trade upon Northwest coast societies.

Women, Trade, and Capitalism

The role of women in the appropriation and distribution of trade goods has been well noted in many historical (Silverblatt, 1976; Adams, 1966) as well as contemporary (Mintz, 1971; Bohannah & Dalton, 1962; Afonja,

1981; Etienne, 1977; Ifeka-Moller, 1975; Ogbu, 1978) societies. This active participation in an economic role that in many societies excludes women has encouraged many scholars to assess what underlining social factors are necessary to give women access to trade goods. Many (Draper, 1975; Leacock, 1978) have attributed the most determinant factor to the level of women's participation in the production of goods that were used as trade goods. For example Draper(1975) noted that among the !Kung, women had full rights to distribute goods that did not need assistance from men in any stage of their production. However, other studies (Friedl, 1975; Sanday, 1973,1974) have noted that while women's participation in production was important and increased the chances for women to be assigned control of distribution of those goods it did not automatically give women those rights. They note that there are many societies where men appropriated part or all the products of women's labour and women held no rights at all to distribution of their own production.

This indeterminate link to the role of production has led other authors to examine the specific relations of production within a society that gives women rather than men ownership and rights to distribute goods. In societies where individual production is intricately linked with kinship relations women's rights to property and trade goods is

determined by their position within the kinship system. In assessing the structural consequences of the different types of kinship systems many studies (Leavitt, 1971; Gough, 1971; Martin & Voorhies, 1975) have revealed that women tend to be in a better position to exercise power over trade goods where matrilineal kin ties are emphasized. This position is further strengthened by an uxori-local residence pattern that allows women to live with or near their relatives. However, while research has revealed that the structure of matrilineal kinship systems does increase women's access to property and trade goods it does not guarantee it. Although property was inherited through the female line in many societies, rights to distribution were often bestowed upon the male members of the lineage (Friedl 1975). It was brothers and uncles and not women who controlled the wealth of the lineage and rights to distribute trade goods.

Goody (1976) who has analyzed how property is specifically transferred to women in societies whose major structuring is based upon descent systems has identified three broad categories; societies with no rules of transmission, horizontal inheritance where females inherit from females, and vertical inheritance of non-sex linked property where females inherit as well as men. Goody has also correlated these three inheritance categories with increasing degrees of stratification. Societies with no

rules of transmission and no individual property rights are found in hunting and gathering societies or societies with egalitarian social relations. Horizontal inheritance is found in societies with hoe cultivation and some forms of stratification. While inheritance of non-sex linked property (Ortner 1976) is most often associated with highly stratified systems where individuals of rank and class maintain control of the social wealth by transmitting it from one generation to another. It is most often given to women in the form of dowry.

While it would seem that highly stratified systems would give women the best access to trade goods cross-cultural studies (Rapp, 1977; Rohrlich, 1980) have confirmed a relative loss of economic autonomy for women with the increase of stratification and the formation of class societies. These studies have verified the historical materialists' theories that with the historical rise of stratification and the growth of private property there is universal subordination of women. Engels in The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State argues that private property imposed the need to transmit wealth through children. This emphasis upon private property and inherited wealth increasingly separated the family from the clan and transformed women's socially necessary labour into one of private service. Thus women became increasingly dependent

upon men and an instrument for the production of children and service to the family unit. With the development of private property and class societies women had no economic ties to a communal group as a whole, only ties to an individual male and his household.

Engels argument of the historical significance of private property has led some scholars (Rosaldo, 1974; Sacks, 1974; Sanday, 1973) to point to the link between women's economic role and the ownership of social production. These scholars argue that within class and state structured societies there is a sharp distinction between domestic and public spheres whereby women are universally associated with the domestic sphere and its production and men with the public sphere and social production. Due to this dichotomy of production some authors maintain that women's rights to distribute trade goods stem from her role in the management and control of the domestic sphere. If there is surplus in this sphere women are able to make decisions concerning its allocation for distribution outside of the household. In some societies this control of domestic production is informal while in others there is a formal dichotomy of gender ownership and women are restricted to trading their own gender related goods.

Other scholars (Ogbu, 1978; Robertson, 1976; Sudarkasa, 1976; Hammond & Jablow, 1976) have suggested that

the determinant factor in many societies for women's role in trade is linked to the introduction of capitalism and western market exchanges. In particular these scholars have pointed to the formation of petty commodity production which occurs in areas on the periphery of the capitalist economic system and is the form of production most compatible with women's domestic labour. For example, Ifeka-Moller(1975), argues that only after the transformation of the Igbo subsistence economy to petty commodity production did Igbo women become active traders. Similarly, Ottenberg(1959) noted that the introduction of cassava cultivation produced a major source of economic change for Afikpo women and encouraged their active role in trade.

However, others (Boserup, 1970; Van Allen, 1972; Bossen, 1975) who have studied the changes in women's economic roles with the introduction of capitalism have disagreed and argued that petty commodity production and other capitalist market interactions have overall decreased women's economic roles in such economic activities as trade. Mintz(1971) argues that petty commodity production initially increased women's activity in trade but with the on going integration into the wider economic systems it was the men who gained increasing economic control and surpassed women, even in the control of what were formerly women's resources. For example, Mintz noted that while Haitian women were

active in the market place Haitian men became more and more involved in the import-export trade and economically restricted women to retail trade only.

These arguments concerning the role of petty commodity production and capitalism has revealed the need to explain why in some societies this production allowed women access to trade goods while in others it did not.

Afonja(1981) and Etienne(1977) in their studies of the historical changes of men's and women's roles in Yoruba and Baule society have linked the role of women in trade to the structural consequences of women's relations of production within the traditional economy. For example, in tracing the history and continuity of the role of trade for Yoruba women Afonja(1981) notes that within the traditional economy women produced and owned items of subsistence (food, clothing, pots, etc.) while men owned prestigious items (slaves, and ceremonial gear). This gender related ownership of goods produced a trade structure with clear divisions by sex. However, women's role in the distribution of subsistence goods was an extension of their productive role in the traditional Yoruba economy. Despite the introduction of capitalism and cash crop production women's traditional subsistence production remained important to the economy. The retention of their gender related roles enabled women to continue their role in trade.

Etienne(1977) in her study of women traders in Baule society traces the historical demise of this role when the traditional dependency upon women's labour and goods was no longer necessary to Baule economy. She documents that in historic times the gender related production and ownership of cloth created a dependency between men and women, and gave women an active role in its trade. With the introduction of capitalism, factory made cloth was introduced along with large scale cotton production. Men gained control of all aspects of this production and in doing so freed themselves from the structural dependency of women's production. Women's production of cloth became negligible to the Baule economy and their alienation from cotton production led to their discontinuing role in trade.

Afonja and Etienne's research reveals that the historical adaptations of women's role in trade differs depending upon the specific articulation of capitalism and its effects upon the gender related production within the traditional economy. If capitalism introduces goods that change the structural dependency between men and women's production women's economic roles are greatly effected. Furthermore their studies note that women's role in the distribution of trade goods was an integral part of the women's productive role within the traditional economy. With the introduction of capitalism this role was either

continued or discontinued depending upon whether women's productive roles remained intact and important to the economy.

In applying Afonja and Etienne's research to the Northwest coast it can be argued that the introduction of the fur trade either continued or discontinued women's role in trade. If women's role in trade was a continuation of their traditional role then the gender related roles and ownership of trade goods within the traditional Northwest coast economy remained intact during the fur trade. However, if this was a new role produced by the fur trade then not only had gender related roles been effected but the new relations of production now allowed women ownership to trade goods that traditionally were not available to them. If this latter case is correct, then women's role in trade on the Northwest coast was directly linked to the introduction of the fur trade.

Effects of the Fur Trade

To date there is no consensus among historians and anthropologists of the effects of the fur trade upon Northwest coast societies. Some scholars argue that the fur trade was easily incorporated into the existing traditional economic structures of the Northwest coast. They maintain that the acquisition of new trade goods and wealth items

were not disruptive but simply effected minimal changes in a direction already established. For example, Fisher(1977:47) maintains that the fur trade produced a state of "mutually beneficial economic symbiosis" because it required the accommodation of traditional economy to hunt fur bearing animals. He believes that the fur traders made no attempt to undermine Indian values or change their means of livelihood for it was against their own best interests to do so. Fisher concludes that it was not until the last few decades of the 19th Century with the beginning of large scale White settlement that major social changes occurred.

Wike(1957:91) in her analysis of the maritime trade period agrees and maintains that the European fur traders had no interest in proselytizing the Indians who were allowed to continue in their traditional ways. In her thesis she concludes that the effects of the fur trade led to an intensification and expansion of the prevailing Northwest coast cultural structures.

In disagreement with these views are a number of scholars that support the negative impact hypothesis. Jenness(1932) points to the increase in monumental carvings and the use of trade blankets in potlatches as signs of serious cultural decline. Howay(1925) believes that the incidents of interracial conflict are evidence of the detrimental and predatory nature of the fur trade. While

Duff(1964) points to the large scale depopulation brought on by European diseases and weapons as symptoms of negative cultural disruption. Codere(1969) maintains that such negative effects occurred gradually and were not fully apparent until the systematic exploitation of the land fur trade. While Duff believes that these effects were apparent at the onset of the trade.

Other scholars (Vayda, 1961; Piddock, 1965; Suttles, 1968; Weinberg, 1978) agree with Duff and maintain that the fur trade had detrimental effects from the start. These scholars, endorsing a cultural ecological approach, believe that the introduction of new material wealth and goods unbalanced the delicate relationship between the environment and Northwest coast social structures and produced from the beginning a decline in the elaborate social systems. These authors have primarily drawn their conclusions from their interpretations of the potlatch exchanges. They propose that the potlatch was a highly adapted mechanism of exchange to control the movements and counter movements of food in order to minimize the adverse effects of local and unpredictable food supply. This mechanism of self regulation was disrupted by the introduction of the fur trade and the unlimited supply of goods from outside the system. Evidence of this disruption, they believe, is evident in the growing practice of

destroying goods in an attempt to reduce the inequalities in distribution among the different communities.

In contrast to the cultural ecological school other scholars propose that the Northwest coast experienced a cultural fluorescence during the fur trade. They argue that the fur trade brought new technological improvements as well as an expansion of the native economic systems. In regards to technological improvements Barbeau(1929) believes that the carving of totem poles and other rich representational art forms did not occur with such intensity until the introduction of metal tools. Garfield(1951), however, attributes this fluorescence to the benefits of monopolistic trade and the increase in returns to the native economy. She notes that increased accumulation in exchange value increased the number of potlatches, secret societies, and hereditary power demonstrations, which in turn intensified the demand for ritual paraphernalia. Drucker(1965) also endorses a fluorescence but qualifies this by adding that it did not occur until the presence of the land fur trade. By this time, he notes, Indians were well supplied with tools and unlimited access to wealth goods.

Within these interpretations some authors have tried to assess the impact of the fur trade upon the traditional social relations. Drucker(1939,1965) for example, believes that the fur trade created more equal access to social

status. Collins(1950) disagrees and in her study of the Skagit of Puget Sound, maintains that the presence of wealthy chiefs during the fur trade indicates that rights to ownership and distribution remained unchanged. Wike(1951) in her thesis on the maritime fur trade, also suggests that an initial inequality to access of trade goods intensified incipient class differences in the traditional society. These conclusions have also been further endorsed by Ostenstad(1976) in his thesis on the Tlingit. He concludes that the fur trade changed the Tlingit from a ranked society to one with attributes of a stratified society by stressing wealth over age, sex and personality.

These two positions have respectively differed concerning the nature of traditional social relations before the introduction of the fur trade. This disagreement centers upon whether the societies of the northwest coast had, apart from slaves, a distinct class of nobles and commoners, or merely a single class of freemen with only ranked individuals. Drucker(1939, 1955) and others (Codere, 1957; Lowie, 1978) maintain that Northwest coast societies consisted of a complete series of relatively graded statuses. This ensured that no two individuals were precisely equal in rank and no specific point separates the nobles from the commoners. Drucker(1955) argues that with the introduction of the fur trade the new wealth as well as

the decline in population left social gaps between nouveau riche and commoners which falsely accentuated out of proportion the graded system.

However, more recent commentators (Adams, 1973; Donald, 1982; Rousseau, 1979; Ruyle, 1973) argue that chiefs, commoners and slaves constituted three distinct classes before the introduction of the fur trade. These authors take as evidence the fact that nearly every ethnographer of this cultural region has recorded a named class of commoners and provided the names in phonetic transcription. Suttles (1966) believes that the basis of this disagreement, rank versus class, lies in the definition of class and the presence of variation in Northwest coast societies. He points out as an example the historical evidence that the Kwakiutl had a highly developed system of ranking while the Coast Salish had a poorly developed one.

The Thesis

While the above theories have generated considerable debate among the respected scholars, very few (Klein 1980, Blackman 1982) have assessed the impact of the fur trade upon the traditional gender related roles. These roles were intricately linked to the traditional Northwest coast fishing economy and are well documented in the fur trade journals. It is proposed in this thesis that the fur trade,

while introducing new material wealth goods, had minimal effects upon the Northwest coast economy and its gender related roles. Thus the presence of women traders during the fur trade was not a new role arising out of this historical period but a continuation of their traditional role in the exchange of trade goods.

The following chapter summarizes the historical developments of the fur trade on the Northwest coast. This summary examines the fur trade in terms of two distinct periods, the maritime trade based upon the sea otter herds, and land fur trade based upon land furs such as beaver, marten, muskrat, and lynx. The concluding section reveals the biases and limitations of the historical material for examining women's participation in the fur trade. The third chapter documents the historical records of women's role in trade during the two distinct periods of the fur trade. Chapter four examines the traditional fishing economy, the gender related roles intrinsic to it, and women's role in the production of trade goods. Chapter five, examines women's ownership of property and trade goods, their role in traditional trade, and finally the historical adaptation of this role during the fur trade. The concluding chapter six, offers some conclusions and proposes further research necessary to understand the role of women in trade.

CHAPTER TWO

THE NORTHWEST COAST FUR TRADE

Maritime Fur Trade, 1785-1825

The maritime fur trade began with the exploratory voyages of the major European nations who were seeking more direct routes to the Orient in hopes of expanding their export markets. The first to enter this trade were the Russian promyshlenniky after the discoveries of Bering and Chirikov in 1741. By the time the Spanish made exploratory visits north of their California colony beginning in 1774, the Russians were well established in the Aleutians from which they made frequent forays to the mainland for furs. However, it was not until a decade later, with the official publication of Cook's third expedition to the Pacific Ocean in 1784, that the lucrative market potential of sea otter furs was announced to the world and the maritime fur trade began in earnest.

British merchants dominated the trade in the first few years. Once weakened by the Napoleonic wars however, this monopoly was decisively broken and the Americans played a leading role until the close of the maritime trade period. The Russians, while well positioned in the north to take advantage of the maritime trade, were handicapped by a lack

of finances and manpower. As well a treaty with China restricted them to one point of entry for their furs, Kiakta, on the Mongolian border. It was not until 1794 with the formation of the Russian American Company that Russia was able to reestablish her rights to trade with China and fully participate in the fur trade.

The trading strategies of the British and American merchants followed a consistent pattern. Vessels rounded Cape Horn in the winter months, sailed up to the Northwest coast trading for furs in the spring and summer months, and then sailed on to China to trade the accumulated furs for nankeen, silks, teas, and chinaware. Once all furs were traded, the vessels made their way back to home port. In the beginning of the maritime trade, ships would cruise up the coastline visiting harbours that had proved profitable the year before. Later as furs became scarce it became more efficient to remain at one village until the supply of furs was exhausted in that area. This pattern of trading continued until 1806, when due to the lack of available furs, ships were forced to winter on the coast and trade the following season to achieve their quota.

During the maritime trade period it is estimated that over 450 vessels visited the Northwest coast with the peak years falling between 1792 and 1812 (Howay, 1930). The first trading vessel dispatched solely for the purpose of

the fur trade was the British "Sea Otter" commanded by Captain James Hanna in 1785. In his brief visit he obtained 560 sea otter pelts which fetched \$20,600 on the Chinese market (Beresford, 1789:315). While not all traders realized such profits, many vessels were able to acquire a great numbers of pelts, often in a very short time. For example, Captain Dixon in 1787, acquired 300 pelts in less than half an hour, while his stay of a month produced a total of 1,821 (Beresford, 1789:201,228). One source (Rickard, 1947:27) has estimated that a total of 25,000 pelts were collected by British, American, and Russian traders in the year 1802 alone. With such heavy pressure on the sea otter herds, it is not surprising that they were drastically reduced and close to extinction by 1825.

While these enormous numbers of pelts collected are indicative of the intensity of the maritime trade, they also demonstrate the desirability and eagerness to trade on the part of the native population. The earliest accounts of exploration (Crespi, 1927:329; Mourelle, 1781:503; Beaglehole, 1967,III:296) noted this eagerness from the start. While maritime traders were pleased with this response they were at times astonished at native shrewdness and mercenary aptitude for trade (Meares, 1967:141; LaPerouse, 1798,II:369). This trading ability is most notably measured by the increased price of sea otter pelts

as the maritime trade progressed. The English Captain Meares (Meares, 1967:140), in 1786 at Nootka Sound, traded one piece of copper for ten sea otter pelts, yet six years later a Spanish trader (Espinoza, 1930:90) discovered that the price had increased so that one piece of copper could only buy one pelt.

While the prices and profits varied between different coastal locations throughout this period, the high demand for European trade goods remained consistent. Initially, natives demanded only metals such as iron and copper. In response to these demands, some early trade vessels stripped themselves clean of all metal on board (Beaglehole, 1967, III:302). Sometimes if a vessel lacked sufficient metals to trade, the natives would refuse to trade altogether and patiently wait for the next ship to appear. However, this demand for metals did not last for within a decade the coast was saturated with metals. One enterprising American, finding no market for his cargo of metal bars, took advantage of native tastes in personal adornment and fashioned iron collars in an effort to cut his losses (Ingraham 1971). These collars became very popular with one Northwest group, the Haida, but their demand waned after a few years.

Another trade good to suffer a similar fate was the Californian dentalium shell. This shell had been held in

high esteem and had been an important trade item in traditional trade. Once this demand was discovered by maritime traders, dentalium shell was imported in such large quantities that the market declined within a few short years. Ermine pelts were another important traditional trade good that lost their value once they glutted the market.

By the turn of the nineteenth century, muskets had become a popular trade item. While not all traders agreed that it was safe to trade this item, the increasing demand coupled with stiffening competition for furs amongst the maritime traders themselves ensured a lively trade. A not unforeseen incentive was the demand the musket would ensure for future trade in powder and shot. Blankets and cloth also became important trade items and within a decade after they were introduced they became a major staple and standard commodity. Finally during the later years of this period, more exotic tastes in trade goods created a demand for tobacco, molasses, biscuits and rum.

As the maritime trade period progressed, some chiefs played more dominant roles than others in the trade. Whether reinforced by trading vessels revisiting the same villages or the European traders' preference for dealing with selected leaders, middlemen developed in the form of wealthy chiefs who controlled and exploited the trade. Cook (Beaglehole, 1967, III:299) in his visit to Nootka Sound

noted that trade was controlled by a few selected chiefs and that this trading behaviour did not seem new to the natives. A few years later Meares(1967:141) witnessed a contract between three lineage heads at Clayoquot Sound. Two chiefs agreed to sell all their furs to one chief, Wickinish, who then sold them to the English captain. The presence of middlemen from the onset of the trade seems to indicate that chiefly control over trade transactions was an extension of their traditional role. Frequently mentioned in the trade journals for their great wealth and prestige are the chiefs Cunneah, Cumshewa, Macquinna, Wickinish, and Tatoosh.

The interest in the trade by both European and native traders was not however to guarantee freedom from interracial violence. The maritime trade had throughout its history incidents of hostility and violence. Northwest coast natives were perceived by many European traders as warlike and often unpredictable. Many incidents were provoked by the native's habits of pilfering. While some accounts seem to imply that these acts were done in good humour on the part of the natives, it was not always perceived so by the Europeans who viewed such acts as warranting punishment. Another factor contributing to further friction was the trade of inferior goods by both sides. One French trader (Roquefeuil, 1823:97) recounts how one native attempted to pass off a land otter pelt for a sea otter pelt, while the

loss of the ship "Boston" and the majority of her crew was blamed (Jewitt, 1967) on the defective workmanship of a musket traded by the ship's captain to chief Macquinna.

As well many Europeans in their eagerness to acquire as many pelts as possible had limited patience to understand or appreciate the different values placed on trade. For example they had limited patience for the rituals and haggling which accompanied all trade transactions. The violation of social customs as well as incidents of hostage taking and other acts of force to acquire furs no doubt produced feelings of resentment on the natives' part.

The maritime fur trade ceased to exist as a separate entity by 1825. The sea otter herds had been so decimated by this time that the trade had dwindled to a trickle and by the mid 1820's if a vessel obtained 300 skins it was considered a good return. Due to this reduction sea otter pelts had ceased to be the only fur sought and the fur trade expanded to include other fur bearing animals. Later, sandalwood trade became an adjunct to the fur trade as traders increased the diversity of their trading operations in order to make a paying voyage. Very few vessels by 1825 were trading exclusively for sea otter furs.

Land Fur Trade, 1825-1860

The land fur trade on the Northwest coast was a

continuation and expansion of the land fur trade that had been developed earlier in the interior of North America. This trade differed considerably from the maritime trade not only in its exploitation of a different fur resource base but in its trading methods and practices. The maritime trade had been speculative and transitory in nature as individual merchants and captains arrived on the coast, traded for furs and in many cases never returned. These brief encounters left little opportunity, or inclination, on the part of these men to understand the Indians or to regulate the harvesting of furs. However, the land fur traders spent years not only living with the Indians but studying their behaviour. Their concern for the trade incorporated planning and policies that often took decades to implement.

The land fur trade was organized and monopolized to an extent unknown in the maritime fur trade. On the Northwest coast the bulk of the trade was controlled by three large companies, the Russian American Company in the area north of Sitka, the Hudson's Bay company from Sitka to the Columbia River, and the American Astorians to the south of the Columbia River. Supported by their respective governments, the preoccupation of these three companies was to increase their own monopolies. To do so the main strategy was to set up permanent fur trading posts in those areas that held the most promise for larger fur trade returns. The

Russians were the first to establish posts at Sitka(1799) and Yukatat(1804) followed by the Americans at Ft.

- Astoria(1812) on the Columbia river. The Russian American Company however, was restricted in operations to the area north of $54^{\circ}40'$ for fishing and trading, while the Astorians lost their foot hold on the Columbia river with the beginning of the War of 1812. This left the Hudson's Bay Company full reign to systematically exploit the rich fur resources of the Northwest coast.

Under the leadership of Governor Simpson, the Hudson's Bay Company set up a chain of land posts that could be easily serviced by a small fleet of ships. The first post established was Fort Vancouver in 1824 on the Columbia River. This post was ideally situated to service the interior networks of the Columbia District. The success of this post encouraged the establishment of Ft. Langley in 1827 on the Frazer River in order to tap the interior networks of this river and the region of Puget Sound and Georgia Strait. In 1831, Ft. Simpson was established on the Nass River principally to halt the Russian exploitation of this northern region. This post was later moved to the Tsimshian peninsula to become the company's most important and successful post. Four other posts were also founded. Ft. McLoughlin on Millbank Sound in 1833, Ft. Durham at Taku in 1840, Ft. Victoria on the southern tip of Vancouver Island in

1843, and finally Ft. Rupert on the northeastern part of Vancouver Island in 1849.

With the establishment of these posts the Hudson's Bay Company hoped to control the trade in furs in the surrounding areas and ensure profits by standardizing prices. However the Hudson's Bay Company was continually exasperated by the presence of the Russians in the north and the frequent forays by American vessels along the coastline. This competition gave the natives an advantage to exact the highest price possible. John McLoughlin, the chief factor of the New Caledonia District, in his report to the Governor (Galbraith, 1957:138) explained that there were three prices in his territory, one in the interior, the second on the coast, and the third when competition was in the area.

This competition and subsequent disparities in prices were enough at times to encourage the natives to redirect the furs to those posts that were paying the highest prices. For example, the Kwakiutl on occasion would view it more advantageous to redirect furs from the Musqueam and Ft. Langley to the more northern post at Ft. Simpson. A Hudson's Bay trader, John Work, noted in his journal in 1835 that because the presence of American traders coincided with his own arrival at Newwitty, prices peaked so that one beaver skin was traded for one blanket, five gallons of rum and ten heads of tobacco (Work, 1844). Given such prices it is not

surprising that the Hudson's Bay Company was determined to eliminate the competition in their territory. They did not succeed, however, until 1840 when they managed to secure the Russian supply routes and deprive the American traders of a much needed revenue to augment their fur trading costs.

The middlemen element that had been present in the maritime fur trade persisted during the time of the land fur trade but the emphasis now shifted from control of certain harbours to the control of trade around the trading posts themselves. The 'Home Guard' as they were called acted as agents and dealers to other natives who came to trade at the posts. These middlemen often realized handsome profits that increased their power and control over all trade relations with these posts. To protect this control some bands moved their villages to locations next to the posts. For example, the Songhees moved from Cadboro Bay to Ft. Victoria, and the Nishga moved to a location adjacent to Ft. Simpson. When it was decided to move Ft. Simpson from the Nass River to the Tsimshian Peninsula, the Nishga were extremely annoyed to lose this profitable control.

Another aspect of the middleman element during the land fur trade was the control of trade routes and networks into the interior. This control became increasingly important since the majority of land furs necessary for the trade came from the interior regions. The Nishga, for

instance, controlled the important trade networks on the Skeena River. They particularly controlled the movement of the Gitskan of the upper Skeena and prevented them from trading directly with the post. Similarly, the Tlingit Stikine monopolized trade on the Stikine River, the Millbank Sound Indians on the Fraser River, and the Chinook and Clatsop on the Columbia River. The important middlemen during the maritime fur trade were now jeopardized if a post or access to interior routes were not traditionally available. Nootka Sound, once the center of maritime trade, lost this status to the Columbia river with the establishment of Ft. Vancouver. Likewise, the Nass and Skeena rivers preempted the Queen Charlotte Islands for the important northern trade. The Haida, however, were far more enterprising than the Nootka and sought trade alternatives such as argillite carvings and potato cultivation to ensure their participation in the land fur trade.

The trade items demanded during the land fur trade were the same as those demanded during the maritime fur trade period. Blankets and cloth remained the staple goods with the Hudson's Bay Company blanket commanding the best return. Muskets too remained a popular item and were now owned by all classes and not the sole property of chiefs. Liquor gained increasing importance as well, but the Hudson's Bay Company attempted to restrict, and if possible

prohibit, the sale of this item. This was not always possible, however, if competition was in the area. Other items that became popular were rice, molasses, wheat flour, tea, and clothing.

Interracial conflict between native and European traders did not completely desist during the land fur trade. However, it was kept to a minimum for it was to the benefit of both sides not to allow conflict to disrupt the trade. When it did occur it was due to provocations of two kinds, the encroachment on native trading monopolies, or personality conflicts. It was not the policy of the Hudson's Bay Company to avenge wrongs by indiscriminate killing as had been the practice in the maritime trade period. Instead attempts were now made to discover and punish only the guilty party. The Hudson's Bay Company advocated moderate punishments knowing full well that retaliation by the natives could produce devastating results to their posts and men. There were, however, some isolated cases of indiscriminate retaliation by both sides during this time.

A further factor encouraging economic ties and dispelling conflict was the permanent liaisons established between European traders and Indian women. These liaisons were known as 'marriage a la facon du pays,' (after the custom of the country), and had become the norm within fur trade society. While these marriages were originally

discouraged by the Company, it was well appreciated that these women contributed greatly to the comfort and solace of the fur traders, as well as cementing economic ties for trade. The importance of these liaisons is best attested by the frequency of their occurrence and the status of the women involved. For example, Alexander McKenzie, a well known Hudson's Bay Company trader, married the favorite daughter of Concomly, a powerful Chinook chief. Similarly, John Kennedy, another Hudson's Bay trader, married the daughter of an important Tsimshian chief, Legaic, who had considerable control of the trade around Ft. Simpson. The children from these marriages later married other fur traders.

The incentive for the land fur trade had been the demand for beaver pelts created by trends in European fashion. These demands began to decline in the 1830's and beaver became less and less the staple fur as other furs, such as marten, muskrat, and lynx gained importance in the trade. The fur trade, whether due to over-exploitation or the beginning of colonization in the southern regions, ceased to be important south of 60 degrees latitude by the mid 19th Century. A major blow to the industry came with the Oregon treaty of 1846 that restricted the fur trade to the area north of the forty ninth parallel. This treaty gave license for settlers to pour into this region and the fur

trading posts began to take on an increasingly new role in accommodating these new immigrants. An event that officially marked the end of the fur trading era occurred when the Hudson's Bay Company gave up its exclusive license to trade in 1859.

Historical Material

The material documenting the maritime and land fur trade of the Northwest coast is in the form of logs and journals written by explorers and traders to the region. This rich material documents the social dynamics of the fur trade by including data pertaining to the personal life of fur traders and their individual interactions and relationships with the natives. The use of such historical material has long been recognized by anthropologists (Forbes, 1968; Fenton, 1952) for its important contributions in reconstructing past societies as well as documenting social change with the introduction of western economy. However, it is also recognized that this type of material often lacks the scientific rigor, credibility, and reliability necessary for anthropological research. Before examining this material to document the historical evidence of women's active participation in the appropriation and distribution of trade goods during the fur trade this issue must be addressed and the limitations of the material

acknowledged.

One of the principle concerns of reliability in reconstructing women's roles in the fur trade is the presence of cultural and sexual biases that are inherent in the methods of participant observation. In reporting the behaviour of indigenous people, the fur traders were subject to the biases of their time and culture. On the one hand, some journals are coloured by the Rousseauian tendency to rediscover the ideal 'golden age' of the primitives, while others characterize the native culture in a negative and unfavourable light. Such biases have inevitably produced a number of contradictions which are particularly evident in the reports concerning the roles and statuses of women in native culture. For example, some journals (Bishop, 1967:126; Blanchet, 1956:188; LaPerouse, 1798, II:134), record that women in this region were treated no better than slaves, while others (Fleurie, 1801:242; Vancouver, 1798, II:409; Cox, 1957:266; Green, 1915:44; Lewis & Clark, 1905, III:330) pointed to their humane treatment and the respect they commanded. These contradictions either illustrate the cultural biases of the traders themselves in terms of expected sex roles of women in society, or as later noted may have been a product of their ignorance of class differentiation, an important factor determining the role and status of women on the Northwest coast.

Aside from this problem of cultural and sexual biases, inconsistencies exist in the records due to the lack of opportunity or interest by some traders' to observe and record native behaviour. Fur traders did not go to the Northwest coast to specifically document facets of native social and economic life. During the early maritime period their intent was to trade and acquire as many furs in the shortest time possible before their provisions and good weather ran out. This allowed fur traders only brief contact with native people as they traded along the coastline. Later, when vessels remained more than one season on the coast, they had more opportunity to interact and record native behaviour, however, due to the secrecy and competitiveness of the trade, many were forbidden to keep or publish journals of their trading experiences.

The land fur traders, who for many years lived at different locations on the coast had far more opportunity to observe native culture, yet their journals are at times less informative than their maritime counterparts. Many dutifully wrote journals for their respective companies to record the daily economic and social affairs of the posts. However, while reporting the Indian visits and the number of furs traded, they often did not differentiate between gender. At times it is only through other references (e.g., prostitution or quarrels) that one is aware that women were present

during these trading visits. Other visitors (Douglass, 1904; Green, 1915; Parker, 1967) during this period, were often more sensitive to discriminate sex than the fur traders.

While the problems of bias and inconsistencies found in the documentary sources preclude any attempts to achieve the anthropological ideal of ethnographic participant observation, the quantity and multiple references made by many witnesses concerning women's participation in trade transactions allows some generalizations of women's roles in this historic period. Additionally, due to the time span of the fur trade, this material provides an opportunity to examine and speculate about changes in women's participation in trade throughout the fur trading periods.

Before examining the historical data for evidence of women's role in trade, it is first important to specify the temporal and spatial confines of the research, and to operationalize what constitutes an active participation in the appropriation and distribution of trade goods. It is proposed that to substantiate the participation of women in the fur trade it is necessary to begin examination of the historical material at the onset of contact. According to the more notable historians of this region (Bancroft, 1890; Howay, 1932) the fur trade did not start in this region until the publishing of Cook's third expedition to the Pacific in 1784 and the subsequent arrival of the 'Sea

Otter" in 1785. However, while it is acknowledged that the 'Sea Otter' was the first vessel outfitted for the sole purpose of the fur trade, other vessels had visited this region prior to this date. Bering and Chirikov, on a Russian expedition in 1741, were the first Europeans to land on the mainland of the Northwest coast. Unfortunately, the Russians had no direct contact, and it was not until the Spanish exploration in 1774 that the first description of the native people and their trading behaviour is provided. These Spanish accounts give the first opportunity to examine women's participation in trade at the onset of the fur trade.

Since our research is concerned with the fur trade period exclusively, examination of historical material will not include those written after 1860. Some historians (Howay, 1932) maintain that this fur trade period ended a decade earlier with the signing of the Oregon Treaty of 1846 and the establishment of Victoria in 1849. However, while acknowledging that the southern regions of the coast experienced diverse economic activities not related to the fur trade before 1850, the northern regions of British Columbia were still solely involved in the fur trade. Fisher (1977) believes that it wasn't until 1858 that a definite shift occurred in the northern region with a clear indicator produced by the termination of an exclusive right

to trade by the Hudson's Bay Company in 1859. As it is important to adequately cover the extent of the fur trade throughout the entire Northwest Coast region, this thesis includes historical data up to 1860.

The Northwest coast cultural region is defined as that area geographically bound by Yukatat Bay, Alaska in the north, and Cape Medicino, California in the south. To date the literature (Grumet 1979) recognizes two other definitions that are geographically restrictive: one has been termed the 'classic' area and includes only southeastern Alaska and northern British Columbia, and the second includes the area from southeastern Alaska to the southern end of Puget Sound. For the purpose of this thesis it is considered appropriate to use the broadest definition due to its correspondence to the geographical area where the fur trade was most significant. Also many anthropologists (Drucker, 1965; Allen, 1977; Woodcock, 1977; Robinson, 1978) agree that while there is great cultural variation within this area, there exists enough similarity in behaviours and institutions to designate it as a cultural region.

Finally active participation in trade by women is operationalized to include gift giving, bartering, and the consent to finalize trade transactions. While the presence of women at the times of trade transactions is not necessarily deemed as constituting active participation

their presence is noted.

CHAPTER THREE

WOMEN TRADERS

Maritime Fur Traders

From the Spanish exploratory visit of the Santiago made in 1774, survives the first accounts to describe women traders on the Northwest coast. These accounts written by the captain, Juan Josef Perez, and two chaplains, Juan Crespi and Thomas de la Pena Savaria, record the first known contact with the Haida Indians off the coast of the Queen Charlotte Islands and the Alaskan Panhandle, and the Nootka Indians off the west coast of Vancouver Island. As the Spanish vessels anchored near these locations, they were greeted and surrounded by a flotilla of canoes that contained men, women and children. Crespi (1927:329) and Pena(1891:122) noted that these Indians were not shy or afraid of their visitors and both men and women were eager to trade such items as mats, fish, furs, hats, capes, and feathers in exchange for European clothing, knives, and beads.

This eagerness to trade indicated to the Spanish that they were perhaps not the first to visit this area for the Haida and Nootka seemed prepared and accustomed to trading in this manner. Crespi(1927:329) and Pena(1891:122)

commented to their astonishment that both men and women wore iron and copper bracelets and speculated that the source of these items may have derived from the Russians to the north or indirectly through intertribal trade. Later explorers and fur traders were to confirm that the Indians did in fact travel great distances to trade, as well as participate in intertribal networks.

A Spanish expedition a year later, 1775, substantiated the eagerness to trade by both men and women at more southerly locations of the coast. The Spanish diaries of Francisco Mourelle (1781) and Fray Benito de la Sierra (1930), reported that while they anchored off the coast of northern California and Washington, native men, women, and children paddled out in large canoes to trade sea otter skins, fish, and whale meat in exchange for knives and trinkets. As in the previous expedition, these authors left detailed descriptions of the native appearances and their welcoming rituals. These rituals which took the form of dancing and singing, puzzled the Spanish but later European traders were to recognize this behaviour as a traditional welcoming ceremony that prefaced all trade on the Northwest coast.

While these early Spanish explorers recorded the presence and participation of many women during the welcome rituals and trade transactions, the next visitors to Nootka

Sound gave mixed account of women's participation. Like the Spanish, the English journals from Cook's expedition in 1778, noted that the natives were unafraid and eager to trade. They described the trading tactics, tribal factionalism, and the role of chiefs in trade transactions. However, unlike the Spanish, some of Cook's crew commented on the absence of women during their stay at Nootka Sound. The crew, who had spent some time in the South Pacific Islands were accustomed to fraternizing with the native women and expected to do so at Nootka Sound. In this expectation the crew made their desires known to the Nootka Indians. Samwell (Beaglehole, 1967, III:1095) and Ellis (1782:203,216) noted that only after repeated demands were they eventually accommodated with Nootka women. This absence was not apparent less than a decade later, when fur traders visiting this harbour documented not only the presence of women but their active role in trade.

The first trader to specifically identify women's active participation in trade was an English trader who recorded his visit and trading experience at Nootka Sound in 1786. James Strange, a senior merchant for the East Indian Company, recorded that in many of his trade transactions with the Nootka Indians, women were not only present but were principally in control of the trade. In his journal, Strange (1928:25) noted that when present, women traders

would increase the price of furs up to three times the price he could have acquired for them when dealing with the men.

Trading by Nootka women was confirmed two years later by Captain John Meares, who visited another Nootka community to the south of Nootka Sound at Clayoquot Sound. Meares (1967:141) also noted the presence of women during trade transactions, and remarked on their ability to increase prices. Like Strange, he complained that the women would consistently interfere in his trade transactions and retard the sale until they had procured an additional gift from the transaction. Other traders (Quimper, 1933:84; Boit, 1941:382,389; Roquefeuil, 1823:32) who visited the Nootka later in the maritime period also noted and commented on the active role of Nootka women in trade transactions.

While these accounts confirm the participation of Nootka women in trade throughout the maritime trade period, other journals recorded that the women on the northern coast of this region were equally shrewd and active in trade with the fur traders. Captain George Dixon and Nathaniel Portlock were the first to discover the rich fur resources of the Queen Charlotte Islands in 1786. They (Beresford, 1789) acknowledged that in their trade with the Haida all the transactions had to be endorsed by the Haida women. Other fur traders recorded a similar participation in their visits to this area. Robert Haswell (1941:96), a crew member on the

first voyage of the Columbia, noted that in his trade at Cuneah's harbour at the tip of the islands, the trade was controlled by Cuneah's wife. Later in the second voyage of the Columbia, many of the crew members (Haswell, 1941:325; Hoskins, 1941:208; Boit, 1941:372) confirmed that this behaviour was the norm for this area. Later, other traders also acknowledged that the Haida women were shrewd traders and had principal control of the trade. Supporting comments by the American trader, Joseph Ingraham and the Spanish trader, Jacinto Caamano, noted that men did not dare trade without the concurrence of their wives (Ingraham, 1971:132), and that in trade transactions women were better than men at bargaining (Caamano, 1938:205).

Still other traders recorded that such an active role in trade was also present among the Tlingit and Tshimshian women. Captain Douglas (Meares, 1967:323) accompanying Meares in the Iphigenia, commented that women with large lip plugs (labrets) commanded the canoes and trade alongside his vessel when sailing between the Queen Charlotte Islands and Cook Inlet. Later Etienne Marchand (Fleurie, 1801:242) recorded that Tlingit women at Sitka Sound and Yukatat Bay were consistently present and the men seldom concluded a deal without consulting them. When George Vancouver (1798, II:409) surveyed this northern coastline in 1792 he noted that women took the principal part in all the

commercial transactions. By the turn of the century this participation was still evident. William Sturgis(1978:34), an experienced trader on the Northwest coast, noted that in this northern region women had more of a say than men in the sale of their furs. He also noted that women, if they chose, could sell all a man's stock whether he liked it or not.

South of Nootka Sound, the participation and control of trade transactions by women was equally noted. Quimper (1933:123) during his exploration of the Strait of Juan de Fuca, noted that at Cape Flattery and Waddah island, women were present and equally participated in the trade of goods. Bishop(1967:125), a few years later, recorded that women eagerly traded goods while they anchored at the mouth of the Columbia river. When Sturgis(1978)arrived at the same location in 1804, he observed that in all his trade transactions he dealt solely with women.

Many of the trade goods brought by the maritime fur traders were specifically trade goods for women. One of the first examples in the maritime trade was the manufacture of collars out of iron. Ingraham(1971), an enterprising American trader, noting the pattern of a necklace worn by a Haida woman made collars of iron wire twisted together the size of a man's finger. These collars were so popular that three sea otter skins were traded in order to acquire one necklace. Like other trade goods, however, once the coast

was saturated with them their demand waned. Later other traders catered to women's demands and stocked thimbles, jewelry, household utensils such as pots and pans, cutlery, and dishes.

While these fur trade accounts document the active participation of women in trade throughout the length of the coast, the fur traders differed in their opinions concerning the nature of this participation. For example Meares's statement that women interfered or retarded a sale indicated that men initiated the negotiations and that women were only peripheral participants. However this statement may stem from the fur traders' bias in recording women's roles in trade, rather than reveal any sexual variation in roles throughout the coast. For example, the inclusion of men in the bargaining process may have been purely a male bias on the part of the European fur traders who were accustomed to directing their trade transactions to men. Later fur trade accounts do substantiate this bias as they do not use the terms 'retard' or 'interfere' in sales when discussing women's participation in trade transactions.

Other fur trade accounts noted that trade transactions needed the approval or concurrence of women in order to succeed. To account for this behaviour many traders felt that women's participation stemmed from a man's respect for her decision making and not from any other form of

formal rights in trade transactions. For example, Alexander Walker(1786) accompanying Strange at Nootka Sound, recorded that the Chief Maquinna was principally directed by his wife Hestoquotto. In Walker's estimation this control stemmed from her husband's desire to please her and not to any form of political authority. Marchand(Meurie, 1801:242) formed a similar opinion in his observation of women's control over trade among the Tlingit. He felt that women's opinion was sought by the men before concluding a bargain out of polite respect.

This view that women's participation in trade was only a product of men's respect for women's decision making does not explain those cases where men were actually abused for not complying with the wishes of women in trade transactions. Douglas(Meares, 1967:324) recounts a fairly vivid account of a Tlingit woman at Cross Sound, who, when interrupted in her trade transactions began to strike a man upon his head violently with a paddle for close to half an hour, and then to end the abuse by slashing his thigh with a knife. Douglas noted that during this violent exchange no one interfered as this seemed to be the right of this woman. Such acts of violence and abuse during trade transactions were also witnessed by other traders(Vancouver, 1798,II:342; Beresford, 1789:290; Roquefeuil, 1823:104; Ingraham, 1971:132).

Such observations of women's controlling and principal role in trade transactions led some traders to conclude that in many locations of the coast women were the superior sex. For example, Haswell(1941:325) refers to the Haida wife of Cunneah as the "superior officer" and the "chief." Vancouver (1798,II:409) formed a similar opinion of the Tlingit women. However, there are also observations in the northern and the southern regions of women in inferior roles. For example, LaPerouse(1798,II:134) visited a Tlingit village and reported that men acted like tyrants over their women and mistreated them consistently. Similarly, John Boit(1941:370) noted that women stood in great fear of their men.

— Such contradictions may stem from differences in class and status rather than any variation in sex role expectations throughout the region. While recent ethnologists have documented the presence of class and status as an integral feature of Northwest coast societies, not many traders were originally perceptive to the existence of class. For example, Vancouver (1798,II:253) and Malaspina (1934:16) both believed that Northwest coast societies were fairly egalitarian and that the concepts of property and class had not yet arisen. This lack of awareness of class may have misled some traders when observing women's behaviour in trade for women of high class would have had a

superior status over many of the men in their tribe. One exception is found in the journal of W. Ellis, the assistant surgeon to Cook in 1778, before the maritime fur trade began. Ellis (1782, I:216) noted the difference in temperament that class produced among women at Nootka Sound. On one hand some were mute and totally under the command of those who brought them out to the ship, while others were full of conversation and under no one's control.

However, while there were many accounts describing trade transactions with chief's wives or women of great authority, there are many more accounts that record the active role of women in trade that do not have such power. While class may have influenced the type of goods women traded it does not seem to have restricted a woman's ability (with the exclusion of slaves) to trade. One account in the historical material that acknowledges that women of all classes traded can be found in the account written by Ingraham (1971:101) after arriving at Cloak Bay, off the tip of Queen Charlotte Islands. He was disappointed to find that this particular village had traded all its fur to previous maritime traders. The canoes that came alongside his vessel, he complained, contained women of the lowest class for they had only fish and not furs to sell.

During the maritime fur trade, women played such an active role in trade that some traders took their absence as

an indication the visiting natives either had nothing to trade (Menzies, 1923:26) or their intentions were not peaceful (Bishop, 1967:63; Cleveland, 1842:77). As earlier noted, the maritime fur trade had many incidents of conflict throughout its history. According to many maritime fur traders, the natives on the Northwest coast were unpredictable and warlike. When traders saw the presence of women in the visiting canoes, they were assured of the intentions to trade and peaceful relations. These accounts offer the possibility that the maritime fur traders may have reinforced the participation of women in trade in order to allay their own suspicions and fears. The Indians, on their part, could have perceived that trade relations were always more amiable when their women were present.

Land Fur Traders

While the land fur trade on the Northwest coast did not commence in earnest until the amalgamation of the Northwest Company and the Hudson's Bay Company in 1821, there had been exploration and an established land post on the Columbia River for more than a decade. The Lewis and Clark expedition, financed by the American Congress primarily to protect American interests on the Northwest coast, arrived in 1805 and established Ft. Clatsop at the mouth of the Columbia River. Lewis and Clark remained here

during the winter months and recorded the habits and behaviours of the native people that lived in the region. In their daily entries they made repeated note of the active role of women in trade on the Columbia river. They described (1905, III:293, 289, IV:96) incidents where women either arrived at the post individually or accompanied by their male relatives in order to trade a variety of items.

Lewis and Clark after travelling the width of the continent, was amazed at the equality and independence of these women in comparison to what he had witnessed in the interior. To account for such high status they speculated (1905, III:331) that this equality stemmed from the usefulness of women's labour in subsistence production. In the interior of the continent, among the Sioux, Assiniboine, and others on the Missouri where women's status was lower, he noted that hunting the main subsistence activity excluded women, while on the Columbia River the Chinook and Clatsop women played an active role in drying fish and gathering the wappitoo root, berries, and shell fish. This production made a major contribution to the traditional economy and he believed, gave women a voice in their distribution.

Later, fur traders to this region, agreed with Lewis's conclusions. After residing at Ft. George (1811), and then establishing and commanding Ft. Okanagan (1815), a Northwest Company trader, Ross Cox (1957:226) noted that

women at the mouth of the river had an air of liberty and independence quite unknown among the interior natives. He attributed this independence to women's role in collecting the wappitoo root. This independence in all matters of importance, including trade, was further confirmed by Alexander Henry, another Northwest Company trader who resided at Ft. George in 1814. He (Coues, 1965:783,854,859,881,906) makes repeated reference to the importance of certain women in decision making and their frequent visits to the fort to trade a variety of items.

Governor George Simpson, a director for the Hudson's Bay Company, who visited the Columbia and New Caledonia districts in 1825, confirmed that women's active role in trade was well established and accepted on the Columbia River. Simpson (Merk, 1968:102) was quite astonished at the difference the fur trade meant to these Indians in comparison to those he had known in the interior. He commented that overall these people were a nation of traders and not hunters since the principal occupation of the men was to go about the neighbouring tribes for the purpose of trade. He noted (Merk, 1968:98) at this time that it was a common practice of the chiefs of the Columbia River to take on extra wives for the prime purpose of accommodating the trade networks. These wives, chosen from the better known families of the neighbouring tribes, were then organized and

outfitted to head trading expeditions to their home territories on a frequent basis.

Such trading expeditions headed by women were not only witnessed at Ft. George and in the Columbia River region for two other journals reported organized outfits headed by women in the surrounding regions of Puget Sound and the Fraser River. John McMillian (PAC,HBC,B120a), the chief trader at Ft. Langley, noted that the wife of a Cowichan chief was outfitted several times during the year 1828 to trade goods with the tribes on the upper Fraser River and the Kwakiutl villages. William Fraser Tolmie, a young physician engaged by the Hudson's Bay Company, also verified that such an organized outfit visited Ft. Nisqually, in 1833. Towards the end of the fur trade these entourages were still common in this region. Alexander Ross(1849:92) noted that it was common to see women arrive at the posts with a train of slaves in order to trade and barter.

Due to the depletion of the sea otter herds and the lack of access to the interior land fur harvest, Nootka Sound and other harbours on the western side of Vancouver Island lost their roles as important trade centers. Consequently, there exists little documentation on the Nootka women's role in trade during this period. Traders now plied the inside passage via Georgia, Johnston, and Queen

Charlotte Straits, to new centers of importance such as Newwitty on the southern tip of Vancouver Island and Ft. McLoughlin at Milbanke Sound. The Kwakiutl, who had chiefly been ignored during the maritime trade period, now were principal traders during the time of the land fur trade. That the Kwakiutl women were active in trade is confirmed by Tolmie(1963:301) in his visit to Ft. McLoughlin in 1834. He noted that women from Milbanke Sound regularly visited the post to trade a variety of items.

The Haida, situated on the Queen Charlotte Islands, found themselves in a similar situation to the Nootka. However, as the sea otter herds decreased, the Haida women began to cultivate potatoes and the men to carve argillite pipes and ornaments in an attempt to augment their trading income. Their success in diversifying their economy encouraged other tribal groups to do likewise.

Besides noting this new role in trade, many journals substantiate the continuation of these northern women's active participation in trade. At the beginning of the land fur trade, Jonathan Green, a missionary who in 1829 visited the Haida of the Queen Charlotte Islands and parts of southeastern Alaska, noted that the Haida women still retained their authority and active role in trade. He further noted that women still physically abused their husbands if they were not satisfied with their conduct in

trade. Edward Belcher(1970:95), captain of a British warship authorized to survey the coastline in 1833, visited the Russian settlement of Ft. Sitka and reported that the Tlingit women of the area did the majority of the trading for the post. Belcher was surprised at such active participation of women and complained of the lack of foresight on the part of his superiors to stock him with trade goods that would appeal to women. This lack of foresight he felt greatly hampered his diplomatic mission.

James Douglas, an experienced trader on the Northwest coast was also fully aware of Tlingit women's role and influence in the fur trade. In establishing Ft. Taku on the Taku River the Hudson's Bay Company hoped to intervene in the flow of furs to the Russian post, Ft. Sitka. For the Company to be successful, Douglas knew he would have to persuade the Tlingit that it was more advantageous for them to trade at Ft. Taku rather than Ft. Sitka. With this object in mind he visited the Indians at Cross Sound. He was pleased to find that during his visit most of the men were out procuring furs. Acknowledging that the authority and control of the trade was invested in "a portly dame" he proceeded to cajole and bribe her. From Douglas's remarks (PABC, Aug 15, 1840) he seemed fairly confident that the bribery of this woman was sufficient to guarantee the redirection of all the Cross Sound furs to Ft. Taku.

The active role of the Tsimshian, Tlingit, and Haida women in trade during the land fur trade period is confirmed by the many references in the journals kept by the traders at Ft. Simpson. One Tshimsian woman who was frequently noted for her active participation in trade was Neshaki, the daughter of the powerful Nishga chief, Legaic. She became a fur trader of some note and had such a flourishing business that her Nass residence became known as a branch post of Ft. Simpson. Another trader frequently reported was a Haida woman, Howan, who visited the post seasonally to trade furs for the Kygarnie (PAC, HBC, B-201, July 28, 1837).

With such control and interest in the trade, it is not surprising to discover that during the land fur trade many women placed their loyalty on the maintenance of good trade relations rather than support interracial and intertribal disputes. Many sources record that women often warned the fur traders of impending ambushes and intrigues upon the forts and individual traders. Belcher (1970:950) noted that the Russians, who had experienced frequent attacks on Ft. Sitka, used Tlingit women as spies to warn them of impending plots. The Russian fur traders felt quite confident that these women would remain loyal to their cause because of their shared interests in trade.

Some women became more known than others for their alliances with the fur traders. Reverend Samuel

Parker(1967:245), a Presbyterian minister, who visited the Northwest coast in 1835, wrote glowingly of one of Concomly's daughters for her loyalty to the traders and other travellers. Alexander Henry (Coues, 1965:809) reports that such loyalty to the fur traders was evident from the start of the land fur trade. He noted that women were the ones to successfully retrieve the trade goods stolen in an ambush of his men at Dalles Rapids thus averting further armed conflict. The importance of women's role in this incident cannot be underestimated for the outcome was to determine the policy and success of good trade relations at the onset of the land fur trade in the Columbia River region.

This alliance between the fur traders and native women was further enhanced with the increasing inter-marriage between them. The temporary liaisons of the maritime fur trade now became more permanent relationships during the land fur trade period. While originally these liaisons were frowned upon by the fur trading companies, it soon became apparent that some unions were beneficial to the trade. Governor Simpson recognized that the marriages (a la facon du pays) between his men and native women of important trading tribes helped to enhance trade relations when first setting up posts in an area. Aware of this fact Governor Simpson commented favourably on Alexander McKenzie's

marriage to one of Concomly's daughters, the 'Princess of Wales' (Merk, 1968:86,104). Another such alliance that pleased him for cementing the trading relationships in the north was the marriage between the chief trader, John Kennedy, at Ft. Simpson, and the daughter of the Tsimshian chief, Legaic.

Such liaisons with the fur traders not only benefited both the women's kin and the company traders, but placed the women involved in an important mediating role in trade negotiations. Simpson (Merk, 1968:99) called these women "petticoat politicians" and while acknowledging that they were assets to the company also complained that their participation was often a nuisance due to their power to undermine the Company's control. However, by the end of the land fur trade period such complaints no longer were voiced as these women worked hand in hand with the company traders. Some women due to their positions became quite rich. One journal account (PAC:BC,B201, Nov 27,1841; Nov 29,1841) noted that this wealth was often translated into rivalries between them.

Summary

While there were some geographical and temporal variations, the above historical material reveals that women were active participants in the distribution of trade goods

throughout both periods of the fur trade and the Northwest coast region. During the maritime trade, fur traders were often surprised by the level of women's participation in determining prices and finalizing trade transactions. To account for such behaviour many attributed this role to women's superior status in the society, or their productive role in the traditional economy. During the land fur trade this role continued and traders at this time had accepted the presence and role of women as negotiators in trade transactions. Evidence of women's loyalty to the trade and their marriage alliances to traders at the trading posts reflects women's vested interest in this role during this period.

It is the object of this thesis to show that this economic role was not a new role for women produced by the fur trade but a traditional role that had been present prior to contact. The role of women in the distribution of trade goods was continued during the fur trade because of the maintenance of the traditional gender relations of production. The following chapter reconstructs the impact of the fur trade upon the traditional fishing economy and examines the gender related production integral to this economy.

CHAPTER FOUR

WOMEN'S ECONOMIC ROLE

Northwest Coast Economy

According to archaeological studies (Fladmark, 1975; Borden, 1975; Matson, 1975; Chisholm, Niblack & Schwartz, 1983) a fishing economy had persisted with little variation on the Northwest coast for approximately 5,000 years. This fishing economy, while exploiting a variety of marine resources, was most dependent upon the anadromous fish, salmon, which spawned in great numbers annually in every river and stream along the coast. These fish, which varied in size from five to twenty-five pounds, have a characteristic homing instinct to return to the same rivers from which they hatched. This characteristic, coupled with the quantity of these runs and the efficient techniques to catch and store fish produced an available and rich food resource to support a number of large sedentary communities the length of the coast.

As well as salmon, other fish that were important in the economy but not as abundant were cod and halibut. These fish which were fairly large in size congregated in large fish banks off the coast. Smaller fish such as herring, smelt, and oulichon spawned annually in some of the

northern rivers. Fresh fish such as cutthroat trout, suckers, and squaw fish were caught in the rivers while large sturgeon were caught by those tribal groups that had access to fresh water lakes. Another important marine resource were the numerous edible shell fish such as clams, mussels, shrimp, sea urchins, crabs, and oysters which were gathered along the beaches. Sea mammals such as sea otters, seals, and porpoises were hunted with harpoons and bows and arrows not only for food but also for their furs. The Nootka and a few groups occupying the west coast of the Olympic Peninsula, were noted for their whale hunting and used special harpoons for that purpose. All other coastal groups took advantage of whales washed up on the beach or stranded in shallow tidal lagoons.

The seasonal runs of salmon and other fish created periods of intensive fishing activities at different times of the year. Archaeological research (Hester & Nelson, 1978; Dewhirst, 1978) has revealed that a variety of techniques were used to catch these fish, but the most productive were the traps and wiers placed near the mouths of rivers or in areas where fish were known to congregate. Other fishing gear used by all coastal groups were dip nets, harpoons, gaff hooks, and herring rakes. In open water, fish were caught by trolling with hooks or using gill nets. Many fur traders (Beresford, 1789:391), while not particularly

impressed with native fishing gear, did acknowledge that the natives were very skilled and productive in fishing.

The hunting of land mammals was of limited importance in the economy and varied with the availability and the tribal group. For example, the Chilcat Tlingit hunted caribou in the interior, the Salish and Nootka hunted deer, while the Chinook hunted antelope on the plains adjacent to the Columbia River. Most of these animals were hunted with bows and arrows or driven into large nets. Traps were used for deer and bear as well as smaller animals such as mink, marten, otter, and raccoon. Ducks, geese, swans, and a variety of other waterfowl were caught with small throwing nets or long nets stretched across the water. Finally but not least plant foods such as sea grass, berries and a variety of roots were also gathered.

While food resources were abundant their seasonal nature made it imperative to preserve and store food to ensure supply all year round. Depending upon the species of fish, the season, and the local tradition, fish was either dried in the sun, over open fires, or in smoke houses built of cedar planks. Shell fish such as clams were steamed and then placed in pits lined with wood. Berries and sea grass were dried and compressed into dry cakes. Despite what seemed to be an overall abundance of food resources, many of these resources were seasonal and partly unpredictable

(Suttles, 1968). There were times of the year in the early spring when food was scarce. Some villages were more frequently faced with shortages than others for salmon did not necessarily appear on time or arrive in some streams on an annual basis.

During the fur trade period, many historical accounts noted the continuation of this traditional economy in spite of the native participation in the fur trade and the introduction of trade goods. One account that substantiates this claim during the maritime period was written by John Jewitt, a captive at Nootka Sound for twenty eight months. The Nootka, at the beginning of the nineteenth Century had experienced several decades of intensive contact with maritime fur traders yet in spite of the introduction of iron and muskets they remained wholly dependent upon their traditional subsistence resources and methods. For example, Jewitt(1967:68,69,87,103) observed the use of the traditional fishing gear such as pots, wiers, and rakes to catch great quantities of fish in the local rivers and streams. Also he noted the use of bows and arrows, as well as harpoons and spears, to hunt land and sea mammals.

Besides witnessing the continued use of their traditional technology, Jewitt(1967:84,100,104,133,135) also observed the Nootka's seasonal movements to various fishing locations and their annual food production cycle. He noted

that in the fall the Nootka moved to various fishing camps to fish for salmon. At these camps he witnessed great quantities of fish being caught and dried for the winter months. Throughout the summer and fall he noted the gathering of shoots and berries which were also dried and stored. In the winter the Nootka retired to a larger and more permanent village which was situated inland away from the inclement coastal weather. It was at this time that they trapped and hunted for land animals such as deer, and bear. In the spring, they returned to the coast and Nootka Sound for whale hunting and the gathering of shell fish.

Many other fur traders noted the continuation of the traditional subsistence activities in other areas of the coast during this time. While many did not have the opportunity to observe the annual cycle in food production due to the nature of their maritime visits, they do record the sightings of fishing parties, the gathering of berries and roots, and other traditional subsistence activities. Vancouver(1798,II:253) who surveyed the coastline in 1792, witnessed such continual movement of people in their subsistence pursuits that he assumed the people in this region were wanderers. Dixon(Beresford, 1789:173) was one of the few early maritime visitors to guess correctly that the temporary construction of huts indicated they would be taken down and moved to another location once resources grew

scarce in one area. It was not until the land fur trade that Europeans became fully aware of the seasonal nature of the Indian villages and their subsistence practices.

While the fur traders record the continuation of the traditional fishing economy the fur trade did alter the seasonal dispersion of some tribal groups to their local food resources. During the maritime period some tribal groups remained at their coastal villages all year round in order to remain accessible to the maritime traders. For example, the Haida remained at those villages where maritime traders would visit (Robinson, 1978). During the land fur trade, the establishment of permanent posts encouraged some tribal groups in the vicinity to situate themselves close to the posts to control the incoming furs. For example, four different Kwakiutl tribes descended upon Ft. Rupert and never completely left their village site for fear of losing their middleman role to the interior and other coastal groups (Codere, 1969).

As well as these changes in the seasonal movement of some populations the fur trade also increased the importance of hunting fur bearing animals. Hunting which had been of minor importance in the traditional economy now was pursued with keen interest by all tribal groups throughout the Northwest coast. Sea otters which had been hunted for food and furs before the fur trade were now hunted in greater

numbers and small fur bearing land animals such as beaver, martin, and mink were avidly trapped and snared. However, while fur returns were substantial for both the maritime and land fur trade periods some fur traders complained that it was difficult to get the natives to hunt for furs. For example early in the maritime trade, Colnett and Duncan in 1786, were unable to persuade the Haida to hunt for more sea otters once each had acquired a long knife and iron spear point. A few years later Marchand(Fleurie, 1801:279) and Ingraham(1971:101) discovered that the Haida at Cloak Bay would only hunt sea otters while they remained moored in their bay. During the land trade Simpson(Merk, 1968:98) when surveying the Columbia region believed that the Chinook were lazy and that the quotas of furs in this region could be greatly increased. Similarly, Douglas(Rich, 1941:216) complained of the fur returns on the Fraser river and blamed it on the laziness of the Ft. Langley Indians.

These complaints are surprising in light of the keen interest by the Indians of this region to exploit the fur trade. Simpson and Douglas, who knew the potential fur returns for their region may not have realized the limits the traditional fishing economy set upon time for hunting. While the fur traders were anxious to acquire more furs, it was not within their means to change the traditional subsistence activities and create a dependence upon them for

food. The foods that they did introduce such as biscuits, rice, molasses, and tea, were popular trade items but viewed only as luxury foods and not foods to replace traditional ones.

The frequent attempts by European fur traders to teach gardening among the natives was not a desire to change native economy as an attempt to ensure fresh produce for themselves. For while the natives did not become dependent upon the fur traders for their subsistence, the fur traders in many respects were dependent upon them. Trading vessels after reaching the coast were in desperate need to replenish their stores of fresh water, meat, and vegetables before sailing on. The maritime trader, in most cases, found the natives quite accommodating and there are many accounts that record trade transactions for food. During the land fur trade, some post journals noted that food was more highly desired than furs. For example, James Douglas(PABC:35), at Ft. Taku complained in his journal that the Indians were bringing only furs and not provisions to the post which were much more needed at the time. Finlayson(Rich, 1941) also noted that without the food that the Ft. Langley Indians brought to them, their residence on the Fraser River would have been extremely difficult.

Also fur trade accounts seem to indicate that while there was an increase in the amount of furs harvested, the

methods and techniques of hunting changed very little from the traditional ways. For example during the maritime period sea otters were still hunted with bows and arrows (Von Langsdorff, 1968:131). While larger and more efficient groups were organized to hunt sea otters muskets were not suitable for the noise had a tendency to scatter the herds and there was no means of retrieving a wounded animal. Muskets were used during the land fur trade period but traditional hunting techniques such as traps, snares, individual stalking and group drives were still important for hunting land game. Muskets during the fur trade seem to have had more of an impact upon warfare than hunting (Duff, 1964:59).

Gender Related Production

The household was the fundamental social and economic unit of Northwest coast society. Many sources (Beaglehole, 1967, III:317; Jewitt, 1967; Lewis & Clark, 1905, III:356) noted that numbering from a dozen to fifty people, members of a household comprised of a chief or elder, his related family and slaves. Each household was autonomous even if several belonged to the same lineage or were originally split off from each other. A village was made up of a collection of households and could include from a few to fifty units. In some cases households within a

village were ranked with the political authority of the village determined by the largest and most powerful (Codere, 1950). The chief of the village was usually the chief of the highest ranked household.

While some tasks were reserved for specialists (i.e. canoe and wood carving) the division of labour within the household was determined by sex with the chief supervising men's work and their senior wives supervising the women and their slaves. Men were the fishermen and hunters and in groups, or individually, they furnished the majority of food. Men were also skilled in woodworking and made a variety of items such as dishes, bowls, spoons, boxes, and other small items. As well as wood, they carved bone and shell to make arrowheads, fishing hooks, and awls. Amongst men there was some specialization in production and either through skill or heredity some individuals carved poles, and manufactured large canoes and ritual masks.

Women's role in the traditional economy is confirmed in many fur trade accounts. The first recording of women's role's can be found in the journals written by Cook and his crew during their stay at Nootka Sound in 1778. While their short visit of a month restricted them from observing many of the Nootka subsistence practices, they did have an opportunity to visit the Nootka village in Friendly Cove and observe some of the traditional activities of women. While

it was April and the Nootka fishing season had not fully begun. Cook (Beaglehole, 1967, III:303) observed that many of the women were busy cleaning the days catch and placing them on racks close to the fire. As they dried the women moved them closer and closer to the roof and before storing them in wooden boxes and baskets. Rickman (1967:245) a crew member noted that as well as drying fish women took care of the children and assisted in curing and preparing the skins.

Jewitt (1967:61, 74, 87, 94) several decades later confirmed these early observations of women's roles in Nootka society. He noted that during the fishing season Nootka men were the fishermen, while women were primarily responsible for the drying and curing of the fish they caught. At other times of the year he noted women dug clams, gathered mussels, sea urchins, and other edible shell fish. Also according to the season women picked berries and shoots. Jewitt (1967:55) also observed women's industry in making aprons, capes, and hats out of cedar bark that had been soaked and pounded before being woven.

Apart from the active subsistence practices of drying fish, and other foods, Nootka women were also responsible for the management and rationing of food that was stored in boxes or bundles suspended from the ceiling. While this food was communally shared by the household, individual women were responsible for checking that these

foods were kept dry and free from insects and mold. The care taken by them in monitoring and rationing this food was crucial for during the later winter months when food supplies were scarce the survival of the household depended upon it.

This division of labour found within Nootka society was also found with little variation among other Northwest coast groups during the maritime fur trade. Marchand(Fleurie, 1801:242), visiting Norfolk Sound in 1797 noted that the Tlingit men hunted, fished, and cut wood for fuel and cooking. Women, he observed, were busy cleaning the skins and sewing them into robes. Later at Cloak Bay, he(Fleurie, 1801:279) observed more of a variety of activities and noted that Haida women not only prepared and sewed furs into robes, but also dried and smoked fish, made mats and baskets, and cared for the children.

South of Nootka on the Columbia River, Clark and Lewis(1905,III:350) witnessed the same division of labour among the Chinook and Clatsop tribes. The men fished, hunted, and collected fuel for the fires while the women, dried and smoked the fish, gathered roots and berries, and manufactured mats, baskets, and clothing. Clark and Lewis, (1905,IV:187) however, like many other visitors to the Columbia River region noted that the women spent a great deal of their time collecting great quantities of wappitoo

roots which only grew in the marshy areas of the river. These roots which were as large as a European white potato, were gathered by wading and treading on the plants until they came floating up. They were either eaten immediately or stored for several months. On one occasion they reported seeing more than a hundred women engaged in such activity in one day.

Due to the variety of vegetation and fauna on the Northwest coast the gathering activities of women varied with their location. However generally the search and gathering of plant foods began in the early spring and continued until the late fall and many fur traders were to witness women busy in this activity. Vancouver(1798) while surveying Puget Sound noted women gathering camas, a bulbous root similar to an onion. This root grew fairly extensively in many parts of the coast and a number of traders(Douglass, 1904:244; Scouler, 1905:174) commented on the camas cakes that women made by first pulverizing the root, shaping into cakes, and then drying in the sun. Cakes were also made out of berries, sea weed, and herring roe by the same method. These cakes were later dissolved in water and eaten mixed with fish oil. As well as these roots, a variety of shoots, ferns, and berries were also gathered.

As well as noting some regional variations in plant foods, many fur traders also noted variations in women's

craft production. Visitors (Von Langsdorff, 1798:132; Malaspina, 1791:288) to the north noted that the Tlingit and Tsimshian women wove elaborate and stylized blankets out of mountain goats wool and yellow cedar bark. These blankets were woven without a loom and resembled an apron with long fringes. Their designs, while individual, were all strikingly similar. Further south, the fur traders (Vancouver, 1798, I:279; Menzies, 1793:58; Espinoza, 1793:107) noted that the Salish women were just as proficient and wove blankets out of a combination of mountain goats wool and the hair of a domestic dog which was sheared like a sheep. They combined these wools with a variety of other materials such as fireweed, cotton, and down from geese and ducks. These blankets, however, were stylistically different in pattern and colours to those woven in the northern regions.

As well as blankets, other traders noted women's regional production of woven baskets out of various weaving materials. These baskets were made out of plant materials that were dried, pounded, and then coiled or twined. Many of them were decorated in traditional stylized patterns produced by local vegetable dyes. LaPerouse (1798, I:407) wrote that he had not seen such skillfully made baskets in the world as those found among the Tlingit. Similarly, Lewis and Clark (1805, III:355) believed that the baskets made by

the coastal women were far superior to the ones that they had seen made among the interior tribes. Besides being useful for carrying and storing foods, Vancouver(1798,I:347) noted that the baskets were woven so closely that they could hold water and thought that the women were not only industrious but also ingenious. Many traders were later to note that these baskets as well as holding water were used for cooking by throwing hot stones into them.

During the land fur trade period, many fur traders noted a continuation of this sexual division of labour. Scouler 1905:19), who visited the Klallam in 1825 noted that women and children collected berries and roots, while their men fished. Tolmie(1963:186,189) noted that women still made the dried camass cakes as well as wove baskets in the Puget Sound Region. Similarly in the northern region many Hudson Bay post journals record the continuation of women drying fish, collecting shellfish and berries, and weaving baskets and blankets.

Evidence that the traditional roles were kept intact throughout the fur trade are also evident in the ethnographic accounts written at the close of the fur trade period. Gibbs (1877:209) who was sent out in 1856 to study the tribes of Western Washington and Northwestern Oregon noted that it was the man's business to hunt, catch fish, and make the canoes, while the women gathered roots and

shell fish, cured fish, and loaded and assisted in paddling the canoes. Similarly, Swan(1869:11) who lived several years with the Makah at Cape Flattery, collaborated Gibbs observations in 1864. Krause(1956:109) who visited the Tlingit in 1878 noted the same role and commented that the women were seldom idle for once activities such as drying fish, gathering berries, and shell fish were complete women were constantly engaged in making baskets, blankets, moccasins and other pieces of clothing.

While production of goods were gender related historical accounts during the fur trade also note that there was some margin of flexibility that allowed women to hunt and fish, and men to assist in gathering shell fish and plant foods. This flexibility was noted by Von Langsdorff (1968:132) at Sitka Sound when he observed that Tlingit women were quite accustomed to firearms and were included in the many hunting expeditions. Also, Vancouver (1798,II:262), while surveying the Strait of Juan de Fuca, noted the participation of both men and women in the gathering of camas and other root plants. Later ethnographies (Niblack,1890:253; Murdock, 1934:221,225; Oberg,1973:85,105) have confirmed that the only restriction for women in men's tasks occurred when they were pregnant or menstruating.

However unlike the flexibility in subsistence activity, there are no historical accounts that document

such gender flexibility in the production of crafts. Traditionally women did not carve wood, bone or shell, and men did not weave baskets or blankets. Collins(1974) maintains that among the present day Salish a man was labeled a transvestite if he attempted any women's crafts. She noted the only times there occurred cross sexual division of labour was in the making of twine and the preparation of reef nets.

Production of Trade Goods

While fur trade journals confirm the continuation of women's traditional roles in subsistence activities during the fur trade, they also reveal the contribution of women's labour to the production of trade goods. Many fur traders were to note that many of the traditional goods produced by women were important items for trade. Lewis and Clark (1905, III:343; IV:7), for example, noted that the Chiqook and Clatsop traded great quantities of dried fish and wappitoo roots to neighbouring tribes of the interior regions. Jewitt(1967:78) in his journal itemizes many Nootka trade goods produced by women. For example, foods such as dried fish, herring or salmon spawn, clams, mussels, salal berry cakes, and camass roots were traded between the Yuquot and their neighbouring tribes. Foods produced by women was also an important trade item during the fur trade. As noted

earlier European fur traders were reliant upon native foods for their provisions and record instances of Indians rowing out to the boats or visiting the posts to trade a variety of food items such as fresh and dried fish, ducks, shell fish, berries and shoots.

Many of the traditional crafts produced by women were also trade goods. The baskets, mats, and blankets women wove were important trade goods in traditional trade with certain regions of the coast known for particular crafts. Among the European fur traders the interest in these goods was only one of curiosity than marketability. While on some voyages there was a conscientious effort to collect material culture for ethnographical research the majority of these trade goods were acquired by individual crew members who were interested in them for their own personal use. During the maritime period the demand for women's crafts was not high and on one voyage one trader (Beresford, 1789:294) forbid his crew to buy women's crafts all together as he was afraid that it would spoil his trade for furs. Nevertheless, during the land fur trade there was an increase in the demand for such trade goods as traders at the posts had many uses for women's baskets, mats, hats, and blankets. Later ethnographers confirm that by the end of the fur trade women's crafts were quite marketable and generated substantial trade returns for some industrious women.

As well as the continued production of traditional foods and crafts for trade during the fur trade women also contributed to the important preparation of furs for trade. Pelts had to be carefully stretched over a frame and all the flesh scraped off. This was often a time consuming task yet the care taken in preparing a pelt added to the value of the pelt in trade. The increase in the demand for pelts during the spring and summer when maritime traders arrived on the coast was an additional burden for women who were active in their traditional subsistence activities at this time. During the early maritime period sea otter pelts were traded in such quantity that women did not have time to prepare them properly. This is revealed by some early maritime fur traders (Strange 1928:21) who complained about the lack of preparation of some of the pelts they received.

However during the land fur trade it is difficult to determine if the preparation of pelts for the fur trade interfered or added greatly to women's traditional labour. Land fur bearing animals were hunted and trapped in the winter and early spring when their coats were at their fullest. This was not a time of intensive traditional subsistence activities for women. Also, during the land fur trade many furs were traded from the interior and were fully or partially prepared before they arrived on the coast. These furs may not have demanded too much attention by the

coastal women before they were traded to the posts.

However, another trade good that did add substantially to women's labour during the fur trade was the cultivation of potatoes. The potato because of its short growing season, and easy maintenance was one of the few European foods that could be easily grown in this region. It was also well adapted to the traditional fishing economy because like traditional foods it could be stored for several months if kept cool and dry. Many early ethnographers (Krause, 1956:109; Chittenden, 1884:22) noted that the planting and harvesting of potatoes was primarily the task of women and an extension of her digging and gathering of traditional plant foods. On the northern coast all the tribal groups actively grew potatoes for trade but according to accounts in the Ft. Simpson journals (Nov 6, 1834) it was only the Tsimshian in their middlemen role, who traded them directly to the post. When Simpson (1847, 1:232) visited the area he noted that it had become an annual occurrence for the Queen Charlotte Islands Haida to arrive on the Tsimshian coast to market their potatoes.

The Ft. Simpson journal also reveals that the quantities of potatoes traded were quite substantial. In one account (May 1, 1835) the post bought 67 bushels of potatoes, and on another occasion (Oct. 3, 1835) 136 bushels from one

party of Tsimshian and 306 bushels from another. In one season Dunn(1844:294) records that Ft. Simpson bought five to eight hundred bushels of potatoes. By the 1840's the Tlingit Indians traded to the Russian posts a startling fifty-six tons of potatoes a year(Gibson 1978:54). The cultivation and trade of potatoes was also fairly extensive in the southern regions. In the Puget Sound region and in other regions of Washington, not only the fur trading posts but also the added demand from the early settlers encouraged a profitable market in potatoes for the Salish and other southern tribes (Gibbs, 1877:429,432; Wilkes, 1845:481; Swan, 1868:2; 1857:259).

Many authors have argued (McLeod, 1925,1928; Garfield, 1951; Suttles, 1968; Niebor, 1971; Donald; 1983) that this demand to produce trade goods for the fur trade increased the importance of slaves in the economy. They argue that the primary tasks of slaves was to help in the female related labour production. This labour, they believe, was highly valued in Northwest coast society because it was women who produced the majority of trade goods. However, while many journals do document that slaves were assigned to women(Ross, 1956:92) and did female related tasks there are also accounts that reveal slaves participating in male occupations as well.

Slaves were present among all groups on the

Northwest coast and were either taken in warfare from neighbouring groups or acquired through trade. Many fur trade accounts (Sturgis, 1978:60; Dunn, 1844:274) noted the activity of this trade and that the primary motives for warfare was the acquisition of slaves. Fur traders disliked the traffic in slaves, not on moral grounds, but because it often meant lost revenue in furs. In the maritime period, some traders (Scouler, 1905:205) tried to offset this loss by transporting and trading slaves themselves. In the land fur trade, it was against the Hudson Bay policy to deal with slaves and factors (Douglas, PABC:33, July 14, 1840) from the different posts lamented when they saw furs traded directly for a commodity that they did not have.

However, while fur trade accounts document the increase in slaves during this period, it is difficult to measure if this activity increased during the fur trade for there is no means of judging what proportion of the population were slaves before the introduction of the fur trade (Averkieva, 1971:331). Other authors (Drucker, 1939, 1955; Service, 1963; Rohner & Rohner, 1970; Mitchell, 1984) too, believe that slaves were not important in Northwest coast societies for their labour but for the prestige they brought to their owners.

While the argument of slaves for labour versus prestige may not be resolved here, one aspect of slave

labour that increased during the fur trade was the use of slaves in prostitution. From the onset of the fur trade the journals record the growing involvement of slaves for this purpose. In the beginning of the maritime period, many journals noted the restriction of women from fraternizing with crew members. However within a few short years many traders (Hoskins, 1941:200; Walker, 1982; Bishop, 1967:83; Beresford, 1789:225; Reynold, 1938:59; Vancouver, 1798, I:399; Puget, 1939:77) were to record the presence of women on board their ships in all regions of the coast. This commerce quickly adapted to the more permanent land posts. Many fur traders (Lewis & Clark, 1905, III:241; Coues, 1965:859; Cox, 1957:166) were to record incidents where slaves were brought to the posts for this purpose. Simpson (Merk, 1968:101) confirmed that prostitution had become an important source of revenue for the trade and an accepted way of life at the posts.

Summary

As the fur trade accounts have revealed the fur trade did not alter the traditional economy on the Northwest coast. Despite the introduction of new trade goods and technology, the fishing economy relied upon the traditional technology and techniques that had been developed over the last 5,000 years. The historical material also reveals that

the organization of production and the gender related roles that had been integral to the traditional economy continued during this period. The household remained the economic unit and all individuals participated in subsistence activities. Men were the fishermen and hunters, while women dried and preserved fish, gathered shell fish, edible roots, and other plant foods. This division of labour produced a strong structural dependency between men and women within the household unit.

Many traders (Lewis and Clark 1905; Cox, 1957:226) speculated that women's active role in subsistence production was the source of their economic power in the distribution of trade goods. Evidence that women substantially contributed to the production of trade goods has been well established in the fur trade records. However, cross-cultural studies (Sanday, 1973; Friedl, 1975) have revealed that women's participation in the production of trade goods in a society does not necessarily ensure women's rights to distribute them. To understand women's rights to distribute trade goods during the fur trade one must first examine the property relations that enmeshed all Northwest coast resources and trade goods, women's role in traditional trade, and the historical adaptation of this role during the fur trade.

Chapter Five

WOMEN'S ROLE IN TRADE

Ownership of Property and Trade Goods

The concept of ownership was well developed among the people on the Northwest coast as many fur traders were to discover. Cook (Beaglehole, 1967, III:306, 1407) and his crew, who had a great deal of experience with other indigenous groups in the Pacific, were surprised to find that ownership of property on the Northwest coast extended over a multitude of resources. At Nootka Sound they were asked payment for fresh water, driftwood, and even the grass that they used for fodder. This strong sense of ownership was to remain throughout the fur trade (Belcher, 1970:84; Ross, 1966:88; Espinoza, 1930:17) and was still evident after the fur trade (Krause, 1956:169; Niblack, 1890:298; Swanton, 1905:71; Boas, 1921:1345).

Later ethnographies have revealed that there were two recognizable types of property, communal and private. Communal property included all food producing areas such as fishing streams and banks, hunting territories, berry grounds, fishing equipment such as wiers and traps, all buildings to include smoke houses, food boxes, important weapons, and ceremonial gear. It also included intangible

property such as names, songs, dances, rituals, medicines, family crests, and supernatural powers. Communal property was owned and used by all members of a household group, however, it was supervised and administered by the chief or elder. This chief was designated the custody of this property based on his hereditary rights that placed him as the highest ranking member within the household. These hereditary rights either followed matrilineal, bilateral, or patrilineal descent. Other members of a chief's household while they did not have rights to distribute communal property did have user rights based on their hereditary affiliations.

This distinction of a chief's role to manage rather than own was not always clear to many of the early fur traders. Many fur traders (McKenzie, 1971:375; LaPerouse, 1798, I:375) felt that a chief had exclusive rights to all the resources and had unlimited power over his people. However, others (Lewis & Clark, 1905, III:359) reported that the power of the chief was much more limited and that a chief only had authority through his own personal characteristics and ability. Jewitt's (1967:138) journal confirms that the Nootka chief, Macquinna, had no power over the property of his subjects, nor could he require them to contribute to his wants, being no more privileged than any other person. Later ethnographers (Drucker, 1965)

maintain that in the south there was a greater emphasis upon individuality, while in the north a chief's power derived principally from his hereditary links.

While communal property was collectively owned and used by the household group private property was owned and used by individuals. This property included items such as clothing, tools, ornaments, and other personal effects. Individual men owned their fishing gear and woodworking tools, while women owned household utensils such as knives, baskets, mats, and bowls. The majority of these items were produced by their owners, however, there was a complementary exchange within the household group, whereby men carved bowls and other wooden utensils for women to use, and women made nets, clothing, and mats for their men to use. It is within private property that one sees a gender property connection that was intimately associated with the labour process itself for each individual owned and had rights to distribute the goods of their own production.

Many fur trade accounts record the trade of goods that are recognizable women's private property. They note the active participation of women trading baskets, hats, and their other gender related crafts. The demand for such trade goods ensured women's participation in trade transactions, but during the maritime trade the interest in these goods was often more one of curiosity than one of marketability.

While on some voyages, there was a conscious effort to collect material culture for anthropological and ethnographical research the majority of these trade goods were acquired by individual crew members who were interested in them for their own personal use. During the land fur trade the posts had far more uses for women's crafts such as baskets and mats and because of their perishable nature ensured a steady demand as trade goods.

However, there are also many reports in the fur trade literature that document women trading sea otter furs, fish, berries, potatoes, and other trade goods that were collectively produced by both men and women and were designated as communal property. Nevertheless, there are some contradictory statements in the literature concerning the ability of women to own and distribute this property. Some Northwest coast ethnographers maintain that communal property was not owned or distributed by women but was legitimately owned and distributed by men. Some of these contradictions may stem from tribal variations in descent systems. For example in the north, where matrilineal descent groups were predominant, women were the highest members of their lineage. However, there are many fur trade accounts that record the participation of women trading communal property in the more southern regions where bilateral or patrilineal descent systems were present.

Nevertheless variations in women's access to property may also be attributed to rank. Within Northwest coast societies every individual had his or her place within a system of ranked nobles, commoners, and slaves. This position was governed by an individual's place in the line of descent from a common ancestor. The eldest son of a line of eldest sons (or a line of eldest daughters) commanded the highest rank, that of a chief. Other individuals of the noble rank had rights to inherit this position depending upon the order of their birth. A woman's rank was initially determined by her parents and in order to maintain her rank a woman needed to marry someone of equal rank or higher.

Fur traders, with few exceptions, noted the differences in women's rank. For example, Jewitt(1967:56,57) noted that among the Nootka the women of noble birth wore furs, and ornate hats and jewelry. These women were attended by slaves and were free to come and go as they pleased. Ellis(1782,I:216) commented upon the difference in temperament that rank produced among women at Nootka Sound. He noted that some women were subservient while other were quite outspoken and under no one's control. Lewis and Clark(1905,III:241) noted that among the Chinook women those who did not wear strands of beads around their ankles and tattoos on their arms and legs were considered the lower class. In the north many traders noted that a woman's rank

was indicated by the size of the labret worn in her lower lip. The large and more ornate labrets were worn by the highest ranking women. These ornaments were of great interest to the European traders and many (Vancouver 1798, II:280; Beresford, 1789:208) attempted to trade for them.

More importantly rank determined the type of property owned by an individual. Ranked individuals owned slaves, coppers, ermine, and dentalium shells. While these items were considered wealth goods throughout the cultural region there was some tribal variation. For example, among the Nootka sea otter furs were only owned and worn by the highest ranked nobles while among the northern groups sea otter furs were worn by nobles and commoners alike. However, while fur traders recognized the rank of certain women and the restriction of some wealth goods by ranked individuals, there is only one reference that acknowledges rank as a determinant of the type of goods women traded. Ingraham(1971:101) in his visit to the Haida at Cloak Bay stated that only women of high rank traded furs.

In attempting to determine the role of rank and the type of goods women traded it becomes clear in reading the ethnographies of the region that rank did not automatically restrict individuals from wealth goods.. Averkieva(1966) noted that such property could be owned by

anyone who had the skill to acquire or trade for them. For example, while the sea otter hunts took the cooperation of many men, the owner of the pelt was not determined by the highest ranked individual but by the hunter who first wounded the animal. Thus an experienced hunter who had success in the sea otter hunts was able to accumulate wealth goods. Similarly, individual women, highly skilled in weaving, basketry, and other crafts, regardless of rank, had the ability to own wealth goods.

However an individual's ability to own wealth goods may reflect changes in property relations produced by the fur trade. Many authors have disagreed concerning the effects of the fur trade upon ownership of property. Drucker(1939,1955), for example, theorizes that the fur trade encouraged the breakdown of communal relations and fostered private ownership of resources. Such a breakdown of communal relations may explain the reports by ethnographers of women's ability to inherit property from her husband. For example Drucker(1951) noted that amongst the Nootka a husband at marriage transferred everything he owned to his wife with the understanding that all would be eventually inherited by his children. Similarly Oberg(1973:352) records that property could be inherited by a deceased Tlingit man's wife and she was able to manage it as she found fit. If she remarried she took it with her.

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However other ethnographies have also noted that women could inherit from women. Elmendorff(1974:363) reports that among the Salish lineage property such as clam beds, berry and potato patches was often the sole possession of women and inherited from mother to daughter. Similarly Olsen(1936:115) found that the Quinault placed some of women's property at the grave but the remainder were inherited by the daughter or other female kin. Other ethnographers(Gibbs, 1877:187; Haeberlin & Gunther, 1930:52) confirm that this gender related ownership and inheritance of property was well entrenched by the end of the fur trade.

While these later ethnographies may reflect changes in property ownership from traditional times, they do reveal that women were able to own property either through private gender related ownership or access through their structural position vis a vis the kinship and ranking system. The transformation of communal to private and gender related ownership would have assured women's active participation in trade transactions. However, as the following section will reveal the role of women in the appropriation and distribution of trade goods, stemmed from the division of labour in the traditional fishing economy that placed women in an important economic role during trade transactions. To understand this role we must examine women's role in traditional trade and the historical adaptation of this role

during the fur trade.

Traditional Trade

Trade, was an integral part of the structure of Northwest coast economies long before the introduction of the fur trade. Evidence of this trade is well documented in the archaeological records for a number of sites along the length of the Northwest coast (Dewhirst, 1980; McDonald, 1973). From this record it is discerned that trading networks often extended hundreds of miles and linked not only the coastal groups with each other but also to groups of the interior and plateau regions.

The existence of traditional trade was evident to the earliest visitors before the introduction of the fur trade. The Spanish explorers (Crespi, 1927; Mourelle, 1781) were surprised to see the presence of European trade goods among the natives who visited their vessels. The Spanish, who were sure by their welcome that they were the first Europeans to deal directly with them, assumed that the natives acquired these goods from the Russians to the north not directly but through intertribal trade. When Cook (Beaglehole, 1967, III:302,321,332) arrived at Nootka Sound he too noted the abundant presence of iron and copper and speculated that they acquired it by trafficking with each other. During the fur trade these intertribal trading

networks continued and this was fairly evident to many of the fur traders (Bell, 1915:631; Beresford, 1789:116,225; LaPerouse, 1798:122; Meares, 1967:155; Fleurie, 1801:194; Menzies, 1923:42) who found that many of their own trade wares preceded them.

Later fur trade journals and ethnographic sources reveal that traditional trade occurred in the spring before intensive subsistence activities began and it was primarily an outcome of regional availability of natural resources and craft specialization. For example, the most productive oulachan streams were restricted to the northern regions on the Nass and Skeena rivers. The oil(grease) produced from these fish was held in high esteem by the surrounding coastal groups who assembled annually to the Tsimshian fishing camps to trade. In return the Tsimshian received well crafted canoes, dried halibut, and seaweed from the Haida; Chilcat blankets, finely woven baskets and copper from the Tlingit; and slaves and dentalium shells from the Kwakiutl. The Tsimshian also traded oil up the Skeena to the Gitskan villages who in turn supplied them with cinnabar, obsidian blades, and elk hides.

While trade was intertribal the trade relations were between self-sufficient and autonomous households. Each household established its own trading partnerships with other households in neighbouring villages. These trading

partnerships were maintained by marriage and kin affiliations or by trading monopolies of specific resources. This social and political aspect of trading partnerships was expressed in rituals, feasting, and gift-giving that preceded all trade transactions. Gift-giving was an integral part of traditional trade and while all members of the household were present during trade transactions, the principle participants were the elders or chiefs of the households. The gifts that they exchanged were viewed as gifts to confirm and maintain the social and political alliances between the two households. These gifts however, were not gifts in the true sense of the word for they carried the obligation of an eventual and equal return. They included not only tangible property such as furs and other prestige items, but also intangible property such as rights to rituals, songs, and medicines.

Jewitt(1967:80) was one of the few fur traders to actually witness and record the customs of traditional intertribal trade. He observed that first the traders stopped a few miles away and dressed themselves in a ceremonial manner. An ambassador representing the visiting chief would then make a speech standing up in the canoe off shore. After stating what goods he desired he would then hold up the goods they had brought to trade. Once all the goods had been traded they would depart; however for some

visitors there was an extended invitation to come ashore and feast with Macquinna before beginning their trade transactions.

Jewitt's (1967:80) journal confirms that after Macquinna had finished trading completely with the visitors other individuals of his village were then allowed to trade. Many fur traders noted that this was often the custom during the maritime period. Trade transactions (Espinoza, 1930:17; Meares, 1967:204; Beaglehole, 1967, III:307) began by gift-giving exchanges between the chief and the captain of the vessel. These gift-giving exchanges were exclusive to the chiefs. Once these exchanges were complete other individuals were allowed to trade their goods. At this time all individuals (with the exception of slaves) had an opportunity to participate in trade.

Nevertheless, trading partnerships were not always amicable or trading exchanges based upon balanced reciprocity. There were at times a great deal of mutual antagonism between the two groups. On these occasions, after the formal exchanges had been made one group attempted to fare better at trade than the other which in some cases led to trickery and stealing. For example, Jewitt (1967:80) noted that after one trading party had been feasted they remained with their boats in order to prevent their hosts from stealing back their acquired trade goods. In another account

Jewitt(1967:40) noted that Macquinna ordered his visitors to retire for the evening on their boats for fear they might try to steal his own newly acquired trade goods. This aspect of trade was to continue during the fur trade. Many traders(Beaglehole, 1967,III:302; Vancouver, 1798,III:239; Reynolds, 1938:59; Beresford, 1789:225) report incidents of deceit and thievery during their trade transactions and in some cases only allowed the chief or principle traders on board.

This antagonism and competition among the different tribal groups was noted by some early maritime traders. They were told stories about the hostile nature of their neighbouring tribes to dissuade them from trading with them. Some traders noted this competition among the different households in trade transactions. For example, Dixon(Beresford, 1789:204) observed in his trade with the Haida that the furs in each canoe were distinct household property and the trade returns kept secret from each other. Among more distant groups there were no social and political obligations and the predominant exchange relationship seems to have been barter where each group tried to maximize their own trade returns. However, barter still took the form of offers and counter offers. Lewis and Clark (1905,III:312) noted that among the Chinook barter did not always ensure the maximum returns for it was their custom that the first

offer was never taken even if later the goods were exchanged for less.

There are many accounts in the early journals that confirms women's participation in traditional trade. One such example is their active role in trade rituals that preceded all trade transactions. The Spanish visitors Crespi(1927:329) and Pená(1891:122) observed that when a flotilla of Haida canoes came out to greet them many women were present and participated in the chanting and singing alongside their vessel. These women had their faces painted red with ochre and wore long cloaks of sea otter furs. Similarly when Cook(Beaglehole, III:298) sailed into Nootka Sound he too was greeted by both men and women in their canoes. Cook's clerk, Samwell(Beaglehole, 1967, III:1090) was to notice a particular woman in one canoe who consistently made a 'bawling noise' that he personally did not find appealing.

Besides their involvement in the welcoming rituals and preparation of food for feasting, women also participated in the traditional gift-giving exchanges. The senior women of the household gave furs and other prestige items to the visiting traders. Many of these women were related to their visitors through kinship or marriage and consequently these exchanges further enforced the trading alliances between the two household groups. However, again

these gifts were expected to be reciprocated with gifts of equal value. Von Langsdorff (1968:135) a Russian visitor to the Tlingit, witnessed such behaviour for after a chief's wife had given him a gift of a sea otter tail she immediately begged another from him. After this formal aspect of gift-giving, individual women traded or exchanged gifts among themselves. Some of these women formed specific trading partnerships that endured over several generations. Such partnerships were present after the fur trade and noted by later ethnographers (Garfield, 1939:199; DeLaguna, 1972:355).

Gift-giving however, was not the only role women played in traditional trade for it was the responsibility of senior women of the household to keep check of the goods to be traded and the prices and quality of each item traded in return. Sometimes the price was set by custom, however, other times women could through their own shrewdness and experience manipulate the prices to ensure a better trade exchange. Such a role for women was an extension of their role in the management and rationing of household resources. Women were responsible not only for the scarcity in food stores but for any surplus that might have been available for trade outside of the household. While men contributed the majority of subsistence resources, it was the preservation of fish and the management of stored food that

ensured the survival of the household group. Due to the importance of this economic role senior women of each household were able to command control over these resources in trade transactions. A woman's ability to increase the trade returns not only benefited the household group but added to her own prestige and economic power. That women were adept at maximizing trade returns is substantiated by the early fur trade journals.

Historical Adaptation to the Fur Trade

Women's role in trade as an extension of her role in managing and rationing household resources was assured with the introduction of the fur trade. While the main motives of the fur traders was to acquire furs, another trade item important to them was food. There are many accounts in the fur trade journals that reveal the dependence of the fur traders upon native foods. In this regard the Indians of the Northwest coast were quite accommodating and accounts record many instances of women rowing out to the boats or visiting the posts to trade a variety of items such as fresh and dried fish, ducks, shell fish, berries, and shoots. During the summer when food was in abundance and food gathering activities were at their peak such trading activity would have had no or little consequence upon household stores. However, in the winter months the added demand of food

provisions could have jeopardized the winter stores of the household group. The increased demand upon household stores enforced women's economic power in managing and rationing this food for trade. This assured women's traditional role in trade transactions during this historical period.

However, as well as maintaining women's role in trade the fur trade due to the nature of its trade relations offered increasing opportunities for women to raise the level of their participation. The fur trade differed in many respects from traditional trade in that it did not have the same social and political ramifications as inter-tribal trade. In fact, many traders (LaPerouse, 1798:1:370; Jewitt, 1975:69; Beresford, 1789:187) were quite aggravated by the time consuming welcoming rituals and feasting that first accompanied trade. Their prime concern was to acquire furs as quickly as possible and move on. While many maritime traders (Hoskins, 1941:265; Ingraham, 1971:126) were forced into gift-giving exchanges they recorded their dislike for such practices and declined as much as possible. Such dislike was further increased when many maritime fur traders discovered that gift-giving exchanges actually increased the price of trade goods. Later in the land fur trade trading rituals were abbreviated and gift-giving exchanges between the fur traders were kept to a minimum.

As barter rather than gift-giving took priority in

trade relations the individual with the most skill to maximize exchanges commanded the role as chief negotiator., Early maritime fur traders (Beresford, 1789:227) noted that while a chief may trade for his whole tribe, if the price he attained failed to satisfy the group then each separate family claimed rights to dispose of their own trade goods. A women's role as a trader was assured if she could secure a better bargain for her group. That women had this ability at the beginning of the fur trade is well noted in the journals.

Another factor that contributed to an increase in women's participation was the cultural role definition that excluded some men from situations of maximizing behaviour. In traditional trade chiefs participated only in gift-giving exchanges which was part of their important need to publicly demonstrate generosity. With the introduction of the fur trade and trade transactions where the predominant exchange relationship was barter, such public displays of generosity were not appropriate and avoided by European traders. Thus the rank of chieftainship had a cultural role definition that excluded some men from barter during trade transactions. However while these factors only excluded certain men, to understand why women gained increasing participation in trade transactions we must examine the link between trade, wealth and rank.

While each household was economically self-sufficient trade was an important means of acquiring wealth. Wealth as well as heredity determined rank. The Northwest coast was unique from other societies in that the accumulation of wealth did not in itself produce rank but its distribution in an exchange system called the potlatch. The potlatch took on several variations among the different tribal groups but essentially it was a social congregation of kin and affines to witness formal announcements and public validations of rank. While a chief's rank automatically held certain titles and prerogatives of his lineage he had to maintain the prestige of his rank and lineage by displaying and distributing his wealth. During these occasions other individuals belonging to the same lineage substantiated their rights to titles and prerogatives by the distribution of wealth that reflected the prestige of their rank.

While competition had always been a factor in traditional trade, the fur trade, due to the nature of its interaction and introduction of new trade goods, brought new disparities of wealth between tribal groups. In a society where wealth was linked to rank, the infusion of new wealth produced intensive competition between them. An indication of this competition can be seen in the dramatic increases in potlatch ceremonies given to confirm and validate rank

during the fur trade. Drucker(1965:199) points out that by the 1850's the Tshimshiam who traditionally only potlatched on a chief's death, now participated in many specialized and competitive potlatches almost nightly. Similarly, Codere(1950) in her analysis of the historical changes of the potlatch for the southern Kwakiutl agrees that their frequency increased during the fur trade. She particularly noted that this increase occurred during the land fur trade and the resettlement of many tribes near the Hudson's Bay Company Ft. Rupert. The increase in potlatches during the fur trade also occurred among tribes that had traditionally not given them. Olsen(1967:124) noted that among the Quinault Indians potlatches which were not originally given started about 1800 and were very popular.

Wike(1958) in her analysis of the fur trade maintains that the potlatches encouraged a preference for trade goods that could be counted and compared. This emphasis upon quantity was also aided by new trade goods which were not only less perishable than traditional goods but not as labour intensive to produce. For example several blankets could be acquired for the labour of one sea otter pelt. In traditional times it would have taken a woman weeks or months to weave one blanket.

This increasing emphasis upon quantity and competition produced an increasing need for individual

households and tribal groups to accumulate and redistribute wealth. The ability of women to barter and increase the price of trade returns was encouraged and viewed as an additional asset by individuals and household groups who needed to maintain their rank. As traders, women were not only able to actively participate in the accumulation of wealth but their role in maximizing trade returns became increasingly important to the economy. The more skill a women displayed in trade transactions the more prestige and rank she obtained for her household.

Another means of acquiring wealth goods was warfare.

While warfare and feuding had been well established traditional behaviour for acquiring wealth goods and property, the introduction of the fur trade and the increased competition escalated this activity. During the fur trade the principle article desired was slaves, and traders (Merk, 1968:101; Douglas, 1840:33) noted that slaves rather than any other item produced the greatest riches. Raids were generally from the north and often involved great distances. Traditionally warfare occurred in the summer when the weather was more conducive for travelling. At this time villages were dispersed to their fishing camps and war parties found small fishing groups more highly vulnerable to attack. During the maritime trade the summer was a time when the vessels visited the coast and there are some accounts by

fur traders(Sturgis, 1978:38) that indicate women were trading due to the absence of their men. With the increase of warfare such an absence of men at times of trading transactions would have increased women's participation.

While barter and the presence of warfare increased women's participation in trade transactions, another important factor was women's increased production of trade goods. In high demand during the fur trade were prepared furs, baskets, blankets, mats and food. While men hunted for furs other goods they produced such as fishing gear, memorial crests, masks, poles and other ceremonial gear did not become important trade goods until much later in the 19th Century. It was not until that time that ethnological purchases by museums and private collectors encompassed all facets of Northwest coast material culture. The presence of a property connection that was gender related and the lack of gender flexibility in the production of some of the trade goods, ensured that only women could produce and distribute them. As the demand for these goods accelerated women's participation in trade transactions also increased.

Finally, the fur traders themselves encouraged the presence of women in trade transactions. As noted earlier, the fur trade had many incidents of hostility and conflict. When traders saw the presence of women in the visiting trading parties they were assured of the honourable

intentions to trade. Secondly European traders were quite eager for the company of women and if they were not present asked for them. Such circumstances reinforced the participation of women in trade for the Indians could have perceived that trade relations were always more amiable when their women were present.

Summary

It has been established by examining the concepts of ownership on the Northwest coast that women did have rights to own and distribute trade goods. Women owned private property either through gender related ownership connected to the production process itself, or communal property via their structural position within the kinship system. However, it is proposed that women's role in trade stemmed from her traditional role in the management and rationing of household resources. The historical adaptation of this role during the fur trade was an extension of this role produced by the increased demand upon household resources. The fur trade due to the introduction of new wealth goods also escalated women's participation in trade transactions due to the increased desire to accumulate wealth, a cultural role definition that excluded chiefs from maximizing behaviour, and the encouraged presence by the European traders themselves.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

Historical records reveal that throughout the fur trade many Northwest coast women exhibited great skill in bargaining and often took the principle role during trade transactions. The object of this thesis has been to examine this role and to specifically show that this was not a new role arising from the fur trade but a traditional economic role that was maintained and continued during this period. Furthermore, this thesis proposed that the trade relations of the fur trade maintained the traditional gender related rôles and ownership of property which in turn increased women's participation in trade transactions.

To date many anthropologists and historians have not agreed concerning the effects of the fur trade upon the traditional Northwest coast economy. However, in examining the history of the fur trade it was noted that one of the interesting features of this period was the intensity of trade interactions from the start. Within a few short years a large number of furs were obtained and exchanged for an equally large number of trade goods. The early fur traders were often surprised by the eagerness of these Indians to participate in the trade. Nevertheless, they were equally

dismayed to discover that the Indians were shrewd and skillful in trade transactions for not only were prices quickly inflated but they were very selective in taking trade goods.

Yet, fur trade accounts also documented that despite the introduction of trade goods and new technology there was a continuation of the traditional subsistence activities throughout the fur trade. They witnessed the seasonal movements of different tribal groups to their various fishing locations and their annual food production cycle. Nevertheless fur traders did note that the fur trade altered the seasonal dispersion of some tribal groups. During the maritime trade some remained at their coastal villages in order to remain accessible to the maritime traders while during the land fur trade, the establishment of permanent posts encouraged others in the vicinity to situate themselves closest to the posts to control the incoming furs. As well the demand for furs also increased the emphasis upon hunting which traditionally had not been an important subsistence activity. Sea otters which had been hunted for furs before the fur trade were now hunted in greater numbers and small fur bearing land animals such as beaver, martin, and mink were avidly trapped and snared.

In spite of such accommodation to the fur trade many fur traders complained that the Indians were lazy and not as

avid in hunting for furs as they would have liked. Such complaints by the fur traders has been interpreted in this thesis to indicate that there was a limit to the Indian's participation in the fur trade due to its interference in traditional subsistence practices. While the fur trade offered wealth goods it could not and did not offer alternatives to the subsistence economy. On the contrary, the presence of the fur traders further taxed the native economy because of their demand for food supplies. The fur trade, due to the nature of its interaction, maintained the traditional economy and its subsistence practices.

Fur trade journals also recorded that the traditional organization of production remained intact. The household, comprised of a chief, his related family and slaves, remained the fundamental economic and social unit. Within it men fished and hunted, while women preserved fish, gathered shell fish, roots, and other plant foods. Fur traders also documented that women were highly active in the production of trade goods. They prepared the pelts, wove baskets and blankets, as well as preserved fish and gathered roots for trade. Many fur traders (Lewis and Clark, 1905; Cox, 1957) assumed that this role in the production of trade goods gave women economic power to distribute them. However as cross-cultural studies have revealed, such active participation in the production of trade goods was not a

guarantee that women were assured rights to distribution. There are many cases where women were highly active in production of trade goods but it was the men who owned and distributed them.

In examining ownership of property on the Northwest coast it was revealed that such concepts were well entrenched and all encompassing at the onset of the fur trade. There were two recognizable types of property, communal and private. Communal property included all food producing areas and was managed by the chief, while private property included all personal effects and was produced and owned by the individual. Such concepts of ownership gave women rights to distribute goods that were their own private property and fur trade accounts substantiate that women were active in trading these trade goods. However, besides their own private goods women were also active in trade in property such as furs, fish, and potatoes that were considered communal property belonging to the household group.

Such an active role in the distribution of communal property raises the question of how women acquired rights to distribute this property. Many authors (Leavitt, 1971; Gough, 1971; Martin & Voorhies, 1975) have stressed the importance of kinship relations and the structural consequences of specific kinship systems for women's access to this

property. However, according to ethnographic data there were three distinct types of kinship systems in this cultural region which had mutually exclusive geographical distribution, matrilineal groups in the north, bilateral in the central area, and patrilineal in the south. Matrilineal kinship systems have been viewed as more favourable for women to exercise control over trade goods and among the northern tribal groups women were highly visible as traders. Nevertheless, women in the central and southern regions were just as active in trade and fur traders record the active participation of Nootka and Chinook women in negotiating and exchanging trade goods.

While a specific kinship system does not seem to have influenced women's access to trade goods, it was noted that kinship on the Northwest coast did determine a woman's rank and thus her access to wealth goods. Fur trade accounts revealed that women of high rank were active participants in trade transactions. Women of high rank were seen to command and control many trade transactions. In some cases the fur traders noted incidents where such women actually abused men if they traded without their consent. This led many fur traders to conclude that women were the superior sex in this cultural region. Later ethnographies have disclaimed these views and shown that it was men who became chiefs and had political power in the society. Thus women's superior role

may have only existed in trade transactions.

However rank in itself did not assure women's participation in trade as in many societies women of high rank are prohibited from such economic activities. It has been proposed in this thesis that women's rights to distribute trade goods while enforced by a woman's rank and ownership of private property stemmed from a women's role in the management and control of household resources. This role in the traditional economy placed women in an important economic position that gave her access to trade goods. While the Northwest coast had abundant food resources there was great diversity and seasonal availability throughout the region and there are many historical accounts that reveal seasonal shortages of food. It was the preservation of fish and the management of stored food that was essential for a household's survival. Women's control over household resources placed them in a powerful decision-making role in determining what surplus could be used as trade goods.

In examining the historical adaptation of women's role in trade it was noted that while trade was intertribal trade relations were between self-sufficient and autonomous households. Women, as members of their respective households, were active participants in the welcoming rituals preceding trade transactions and in the gift-giving exchanges. They were also in charge of checking the goods to

be traded and the prices and quality of each item in return. Such a role for women was part of their role in the management and rationing of household resources. The shrewdness and care in assuring good trade returns not only benefited the household group but added to a women's economic power within her household.

With the introduction of the fur trade and the additional demand upon these resources women's economic power in managing and rationing this food for trade transactions increased. During the summer when food was in abundance and food gathering activities were at their peak such trading activity had no or little consequence upon household stores. However, in the winter the demand of food provisions had the potential to jeopardize the winter stores of the household group. This increasing demand upon household stores maintained and continued women's active participation in trade transactions.

This thesis also identified that the fur trade while maintaining and continuing women's role in trade also created increased opportunities for women to participate in trade transactions. The introduction of new wealth goods escalated competition and rivalry between the autonomous households. Barter and maximizing exchanges took priority in trade relations. Women's role and their ability to increase trade returns was encouraged and viewed as an additional

asset by individuals and household groups in their quest for wealth. Many fur trade accounts documented that many Northwest coast women had a superior skill over men for increasing trade returns from the onset of the fur trade. The inflationary prices frequently noted by the fur traders confirms that women were highly successful in maintaining good trade returns for themselves and their households. Other factors that were identified for increasing women's participation in trade transactions included a cultural role definition that excluded chiefs, the absence of men due to warfare, and the encouraged presence of women by the European traders themselves.

The historical adaptation of women's role in trade on the Northwest coast raises questions concerning possible changes in the gender relations of production. For example, while such control over household resources was traditionally informal, with the increased demand upon household resources for trade transactions is it possible that there developed a formal dichotomy of private gender ownership? While it has been argued (Rosaldo, 1974; Sacks, 1974; Sanday, 1974) that women's economic role and participation in distribution of social production decreased with the formation of private property, there are many cross-cultural instances where private property in the form of gender-related property gave women an increasing role in

trade. For example, Afonja(1981) in tracing the role of women in trade, noted that within the Yoruba subsistence economy there was a private but gender-related ownership of property that encompassed all property relation. This gender- related ownership of property allowed women rights to trade goods. There is some evidence in the later ethnographies (Gibbs, 1877:187; Haeberlin & Gunther, 1930:52) which indicate that this gender- related ownership of property was well entrenched between a woman and her husband at the end of the fur trade. As well many ethnographers have reported that women inherited property from women. However, such evidence does not reveal if gender- related ownership increased during this period from that in traditional times and further research is needed to determine if such changes occurred.

Other questions raised concern whether women's increased ability to accumulate wealth intensified the incipient class differences between women? Fur traders report many incidence where ranked women who visited their vessels and posts domineered women slaves. Slaves were an expensive commodity during the fur trade and women's ability to accumulate wealth through trade transactions would have enabled women to buy and own more slaves. Whether this did in fact occur and women's retinue of slaves increased during this period might be revealed in the fur trade records.

Another important question is did women's ability to accumulate wealth effect their role in the redistribution of wealth in the potlatch? While the accumulation of wealth was important in Northwest coast societies it was its redistribution in the potlatches that produced prestige and enhanced rank. Traditionally potlatches were given by chiefs and women generally were excluded or restricted in their role in the redistribution of wealth. However, if women in their own rights were able to accumulate great wealth their increased contributions might have changed their participation in the potlatches. Fur traders accounts of rivalry potlatches between women may be an indication of gender-related changes in this redistribution exchange. To date there has been little material written concerning women's contribution and role in potlatches. Further research in the historical material may reveal whether women gained increasing political power in potlatches during this period.

Finally, future studies should be directed to the issue of whether male or cultural biases have overlooked other important economic or political roles of Northwest coast women. The wealth of historical material generated by the fur trade offers a rich source of data which may offer further insights into the adaptation of women's roles during this period. Such studies will contribute to a wider

understanding of the effects of the fur trade upon Northwest coast societies.

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