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THOMPSON INDIAN PAINTED CLOTHING:

An Analysis of Clothing and Art
as Visual Communication

by

Leslie Heyman Tepper

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

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The undersigned recommend to the Faculty
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Clothing and Art as Visual Communication

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ABSTRACT

For the Thompson Indians of British Columbia, an Interior Salish people, painted clothing was a means of visual communication. It expressed the individual's status within the community by giving indications of his or her wealth, social and ritual position. Painted clothing also expressed group affiliation including that of gender identification. Cosmological beliefs were restated on painted clothing through the use of single symbolic images and in the creation of complex compositions showing physical and symbolic order. This research is based on the material culture collected by J.A. Teit between 1883 and 1920 which is now housed at the National Museum of Man, the British Columbia Provincial Museum and the Field Museum, Chicago.

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Chapter 1:

Introduction

In the material, design and embellishment of their traditional clothing, the Thompson, an Interior Salish people of British Columbia, incorporated signs and symbols which conveyed information from the designer and the wearer to the viewer. This is a study of Thompson painted clothing as a means of visual communication. It shows how meaning was encoded in clothing and how painted images reinforced and extended the visual message.

The artifacts which form the basis of this study are drawn from material culture collections created by one man, James Teit, between the years 1883 and 1920. No analysis has been published of these artifacts since the general description of dress in Teit's 1900 ethnography. Indeed comparative research on the art or clothing of the Plateau area in general is sparse. However using the ethnographic information provided by Teit and the more recent field work by Laforet, (see Laforet a-d) this corpus of Thompson material culture can be understood in terms of its cultural context. Such analysis shows how painted clothing was used to make personal statements, to express affiliation with groups within the population and to communicate Thompson cosmological beliefs.

Clothing as Communication

Clothing can be viewed as a communication system which conveys information about the wearer. A person's sex, age, economic position or life style can be shown through the use of certain articles of clothing and by the cut, style and quality of the material of such items. Political attitudes can be shown by uniforms, buttons or ornamentation as in the case of the brown shirts of Nazi Germany or campaign buttons and hats at election times. Religious and ritual standing is often conveyed by a complex code of dress and adornment as, for example, the plain garb of the Amish, the robes of Christian priests and nuns or the robes and hairstyles of Buddhist monks, Hari Krishna devotees or Hasidic Jews.

Clothing functions in society in two ways. Sometimes it is used to make a statement for a community. Expected clothing patterns are established and enforced by social censure for deviation. Such agreement concerning bodily adornment according to Roach and Eichler (1979:18) strengthens "community consciousness and a common course of action that holds people together in a closely knit group". Clothing also functions to make personal statements. Here dress acts to define the 'social self' of an individual and identifies or distinguishes him or her from the surrounding community (Holman 1980:14).

Clothing as a communicative instrument can affect the behavior pattern of both the wearer and of the audience who perceives the message. Statements through clothing

of social or ritual status create certain expectations of associated behaviour by the wearer. Audiences may react with respect, avoidance, deference or other behaviours according to the message they perceive (McNaughton 1982; Bourgeois 1982; Maurer 1979). Sometimes clothing can affect the wearer's physical behaviour pattern as well and thus project a message to the audience. A Japanese woman's tightly bound kimono limits her ability to move, walk or sit; while the man's kimono is more loosely tied and may have trousers or pleated skirts to permit freedom of movement. Keali-inohomoku suggests (1979) that these patterns create or permit body movement which project cultural messages.

Art as Communication

It is something of a truism that art is a form of non-verbal communication between the artist and the viewer.¹ This communication occurs through the use of images which act as signs and symbols. Visual signs are images which have a fixed and conventional connotation (Leach 1981:13). Symbols, in contrast, contain a wider and more complex field of reference including emotional as well as intellectual connotations. As Firth notes:

The essence of symbolism lies in the recognition of one thing as standing for (re-presenting) another, the relation between them normally being that of concrete to abstract, particular to general. The relation is such that the symbol by itself appears capable of generating and receiving effects otherwise reserved for the object to which it refers - and such effects are often of high emotional charge (1973:15-16)

1. Some questions can be raised about modern art and its ability to communicate in this respect.. See Alland 1977:91.

The identification of an image drawn on Thompson clothing as either a sign or symbol is difficult as analysis is based on records of the traditional culture and not on observed action in a cultural context. Therefore a design is termed as symbol when it appears as 'multivalent' or 'multivocal'; that is when it has a large number of related meanings (Turner 1975:155). Thus in Thompson imagery a cross is used for the morning star which also symbolizes the dawn, birth and beginnings.

Art as a communication system is especially important in what Anderson (1979) terms 'primitive' societies. He offers three reasons why art is particularly suited to performing this function. First art in these societies tends to be representational and acts as a recording of information and of history. Secondly, art is typically "public" in nature providing a medium for communication between large numbers of people over time and distance. Finally art is an excellent means of communication because it can invoke emotional response which reinforces the intended message.

Recent work on art in non-industrial societies has shown that art can communicate cultural information. Blundell's study (1982) of Australian cave art demonstrates how art encodes the cultural model about the nature of the cosmos, e.g. in the case of North-West Australia, a model of changelessness and unbroken continuity from the first acts of creation to the present day. The art and associated acts of renewal through new paint and rituals binds the present generation to the preceding ones and preserves the existing

world order for future generations. Art is an effective means of communicating this cultural model because the information encoded in the symbols "allows the message to be sent at several levels of meanings in a broad, flexible and intentionally ~~ambiguous~~ way" (Blundell 1982:18). The art thus provides cultural continuity from one generation to the next, can be re-interpreted according to an individual's needs and can acquire new symbolic meaning over time.

Art and clothing are thus powerful communicative forces in a society. Through symbols and signs they encode cultural information and create and direct social action.

Thompson Painted Clothing as Communication

The Thompson Indians were a loosely structured, seasonally migratory society, where social prestige and power were gained by personal achievement with the aid of supernatural guardian spirits. It was necessary for members of the community to make known their own sexual, social and ritual status and to know that of others. This was accomplished in part by visual information presented on clothing. The individual usually painted his own clothes.² Men and boys, for example, told of their vision quest experiences or dreams by painting scenes of them on articles of clothing. Sometimes it was a record of their encounter with a supernatural being who promised them success or power;

2. Only one artifact, a pubescent girl's dress (II-C-587) notes that it was painted by her father with images from his dreams or guardian spirit.

other times it was an image their guardian spirit told them to paint and which would bring them success. These drawings were public, non-verbal statements of a private but socially significant act and helped to identify the person's social status.

The importance of clothing as communication is found in other pieces of evidence aside from Teit's ethnography (1900). Clothing as it was used to identify the 'social self' is seen in the following description of a drawing of a warrior painted on a man's shirt:

The warrior wears a feather headdress and holds a tomahawk and a spear. Attached to these are tufts of feathers or human hair. He wears armlets with pendants, feathers, or tufts of hair and embroidered belt with fringe of hair or feathers attached to the side. He wears a painted shirt or an armoured vest painted with his manitou of two ravens. The dots below represent missiles such as stones, bullets etc. The shoulders of the shirt or vest are ornamented with pendants of hair or feathers. This figure is a good sample of a warrior in costume as drawn by an Indian. (Teit catalogue notes)

Photographs provide another visual resource which demonstrates the image a 'well-dressed' Thompson person may have presented to his audience. The following photographs (plates 1 to 12) were taken early in this century by a professional photographer under Teit's supervision. The clothing is from Teit's personal collection and certain items appear frequently in different combinations of costume on different people. Nevertheless, the pictures (though lacking the associated face or body paint, tattoos and elaborate hairstyles) provide visual evidence of the complexity of the image presented by clothing and of the effort invested in dressing.

Plate 1 Men in Costume (BCPM pn 14828)

Plate 2 Man in Costume (BCPM pn 14842)

(BCPM pn 14834)

Five Men in Costume

Plate 3

Plate 4

Three Men in Costume

(BCPM pn 14833)

Plate 5 Man in Costume

(BCPM pn 14826)

Plate 6 Men with Robes

(ECPM pn 14841)

Plate 7 Man in Costume, kneeling (BCPM pn 14838)

Plate 8 Man in Costume (BCPM pn 14825)

(BCPM pn 14823)

Plate 9 Men in Costume

Plate 10 Woman in Costume

(BCPM pn 14830)

Plate 11 Woman in Costume

(BCPM pn 14845)

Women in Costume (BCPM pn 14854)

Plate 12

Capes, Robes and Ponchos (cont'd)

<u>Museum</u>	<u>Artifact Number</u>	<u>Item</u>	<u>Date Sent or Received</u>
Unknown	#284	Pubescent girl's cloak of buckskin	
Unknown	#733	Pubescent girl's cloak and hood of bark	
Unknown	#699	Cape of bark	
NMM	II-C-397	Robe of deer skin	1920
NMM	II-C-395	Robe or pillow of bear skin	1915
Unknown	#717	Blanket of mountain sheep skin	
Unknown	#59	Small poncho of coyote skin	
NMM	II-C-579	Poncho shirt of coyote skin	1915
Unknown	#644	Cloak of bark	
Unknown	#316	Robe of marmot skin	
Unknown	#124	Man's cloak of bark	
Unknown	#110	Man's cloak of sage brush	

of British Columbia and the northwestern United States. He wrote several volumes of the Jesup North Pacific Expedition (1900, 1906, 1909, 1912) and published articles in journals and books.

Teit's documentation has a degree of reliability and validity not often found in material culture studies. He combined an intimate knowledge of the language and culture of the Thompson with an anthropological training and perspective provided by Boas and later by Sapir⁵ (Tepper nd:14). The documentation that Teit provided of the artifacts he collected followed Boas' 'natural history' approach to cultural study (Mead 1959:32). That is, Teit's notes consist mainly of descriptions of the object in terms of the material used in its construction, its imagery and its purpose. In a few cases he compared pieces with each other and some descriptions reveal analytical insight. Nevertheless, the majority of the information is the kind of raw data that Boas sought from his 'technicians' in the field (Smith 1959:56). The documentation thus provides detailed and accurate information on the artifacts that has been gathered by a knowledgeable and trained informant.

Teit collected painted clothing between 1883 and 1920. The material includes items which were made by the

5. Teit's ability as an anthropologist was recognized by Sapir who offered him a position in the Geological Survey Of Canada, Anthropology Division, as an external staff member (Sapir-Teit correspondence, National Museum of Man).

Thompson Indians for their personal use as well as objects which were evidently commissioned by Teit. A few pieces were identified as having been bought from the original wearer, but otherwise there is nothing to indicate which pieces were commissioned and which were not. The material which Teit collected was sent to four principle museums; the Field Museum in Chicago, the British Columbia Provincial Museum (BCPM), the National Museum of Man (NMM) and the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH).

The Corpus

My study is based on an analysis of the artifacts supported by a microfilm of Teit's artifact notes housed in Franz Boas' collections at the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia. Supplemental documentation was found in correspondence; the Boas-Teit letters housed at the American Museum of Natural History and the Sapir-Teit correspondence at the National Museum of Man, National Museums of Canada.

All clothing artifacts, except hats and headdresses⁶ of the National Museum of Man's collection have been included in the study corpus. In addition, Teit sent to Sapir at the beginning of the century photographs of clothing articles in his personal collection. I have been able to link many of these National Museum of Man photographs to Teit's catalogue

6. Caps, hats and headdresses form a large body of material and should be studied in a separate research paper.

notes on the microfilm. The artifact pieces themselves were dispersed over time and, wherever possible, I have traced the item to the museum where it is presently held. The assistant curator at the British Columbia Provincial Museum, Alan Hoover, kindly sent slides of pieces in their collection. Colour and black and white photographs as well as drawings and notes of Thompson clothing in the collection at the Field Museum in Chicago were provided by a student I employed. Other items described in Teit's catalogue notes can be recognized and studied in the costumes worn by his models in the reconstructed photographs. Teit's detailed descriptions were often accompanied by sketches and other designs on clothing are drawn in the ethnography (1900:380).

Though my study of Thompson art and culture has drawn on a range of material objects such as puberty equipment decorated tools, and ritual equipment, the following list gives only the items of clothing analysed for the purpose of this study.

Table 1: Clothing Artifacts

Dresses

<u>Museum</u>	<u>Artifact Number</u>	<u>Item</u>	<u>Date Sent or Received</u>
NMM	II-C-608	Young woman's dress of. buckskin	1915
NMM	II-C-586	Woman's dress of buckskin	1916
NMM	II-C-706	Girl's dress of buckskin	1925
NMM	II-C-605	Woman's dress of buckskin	1916
NMM	II-C-398	Women's dress of deerskin, with fur still on (sometimes used over regular dress for warmth)	1915
NMM	II-C-584	Woman's shirt	1913
NMM	II-C-607	Woman's dress of buckskin	1915
NMM	II-C-626	Woman's dress of buckskin	1915
Unknown ⁶	#347	Woman's dress of buckskin	
Unknown	#209	Woman's dress of buckskin	
Unknown	#344	Woman's dress of buckskin	
Unknown	#340	Woman's dress of caribou skin	
Unknown	#345	Woman's shirt of buckskin	
Unknown	#339	Young woman's dress of buckskin	

6. Where present collection is unknown the artifact number used is that assigned by Teit for his personal collection.

Dresses (cont'd)

20

<u>Museum</u>	<u>Artifact Number</u>	<u>Item</u>	<u>Date Sent or Received</u>
Unknown	#341	Woman's dress of buckskin	
Unknown	#346	Woman's dress of buckskin	
Unknown	#167	Woman's dress of caribou skin	
Unknown	#858	Girl's shirt of buckskin	
Field Museum, Chicago	111784	Woman's shirt of caribou skin	1911
Unknown	#666	Woman's shirt	
Unknown	#7	Woman's shirt of buckskin	
Unknown	#693	Woman's shirt of buckskin	
Field Museum, Chicago	111910	Girl's dress of mooseskin	1910
Field Museum, Chicago	111781	Woman's shirt	1911
NMM	II-C-587	Girl's dress	1916

Shirts

NMM	II-C-353	Boy's shirt of buckskin	1916
NMM	II-C-588	Man's shirt of buckskin	1925
NMM	II-C-590	Man's shirt of buckskin	1916
NMM	II-C-585	Man's shirt of buckskin	1916
NMM	II-C-687	Vest of skins	1920

Shirts (cont'd)

<u>Museum</u>	<u>Artifact Number</u>	<u>Item</u>	<u>Date Sent or Received</u>
NMM	II-C-580	Vest of buckskin	1913
BCPM	#172	Man's shirt of buckskin	
BCPM	#2710	Man's shirt of buckskin	
Unknown	#316	Man's sleeveless shirt of buckskin	
Unknown	#788	Man's shirt of buckskin and bearskin	
Unknown	#309	Man's sleeveless shirt	
Unknown	#314	Man's shirt of buckskin	
Unknown	#318	Man's shirt of buckskin	
Unknown	#320	Man's shirt of buckskin	
Unknown	#735	Man's shirt of moss and buckskin	
NMM	II-C-354	Man's buckskin shirt	1915
NMM	II-C-589	Man's buckskin shirt	1915
Unknown	#54	Man's buckskin coat	
Unknown	#160	Boy's shirt of buckskin	
Unknown	#716	Shirt of mountain sheep skin and rabbit skin	
Unknown	#58	Man's shirt of buffalo skin	

Leggings, Aprons and Kilts

<u>Museum</u>	<u>Artifact Number</u>	<u>Item</u>	<u>Date Sent or Received</u>
Heye Foundation?	#30	Old man's double apron	1905
Field Museum	111769	Man's puberty apron	1911
Unknown	#335	Young man's apron	
Field Museum, Chicago	111904	Men's leggings	1910
Unknown	#732	Man's leggings and painted belt	
NMM	II-C-620	Men's short pants of buckskin	1913
Unknown	#424	Apron (possibly woman's)	
NMM	II-C-622ab	Man's long leggings of buckskin	1916
NMM	II-C-621	Boy's long leggings of buckskin	1916
NMM	II-C-623ab	Man's long leggings of mooseskin	1913
Unknown	#321	Men's leggings	

Capes, Robes and Ponchos

BCPM	2694	Cloak of Buckskin	
NMM	II-C-606	Robe of buckskin	1913
Unknown	#177	Man's robe	
Field Museum, Chicago	11914	Man's blanket poncho of caribou skin	1910

Capes, Robes and Ponchos (cont'd)

<u>Museum</u>	<u>Artifact Number</u>	<u>Item</u>	<u>Date Sent or Received</u>
Field Museum, Chicago	11915	Robe of buckskin	1910
(sent to Newcomb for Field Museum)	#1	Cloak of black moss	1903
(sent to Newcomb for Field Museum)	#2	Cape of sage brush and bark	1903
Field Museum, Chicago	111907	Man's poncho of bear cub	1910
Field Museum, Chicago	111908	Panther skin poncho	1910
Chicago	#274	Man's small robe or cloak of buckskin	
Field Museum, Chicago	111772	Man's cape of buckskin	1911
Unknown	#701	Poncho of buckskin	
Unknown	#734	Man's poncho of bark	
Unknown	#660	Man's poncho of buckskin	
Unknown	#863	Cloak of bear skin	1905
Unknown	#382	Poncho of beaver or marmot skin	
NMM	II-C-604	Cape of bark	1913
Unknown	#384	Pubescent girl's robe of marmot skin	

Capes, Robes and Ponchos (cont'd)

<u>Museum</u>	<u>Artifact Number</u>	<u>Item</u>	<u>Date Sent or Received</u>
Unknown	#284	Pubescent girl's cloak of buckskin	
Unknown	#733	Pubescent girl's cloak and hood of bark	
Unknown	#699	Cape of bark	
NMM	II-C-397	Robe of deer skin	1920
NMM	II-C-395	Robe or pillow of bear skin	1915
Unknown	#717	Blanket of mountain sheep skin	
Unknown	#59	Small poncho of coyote skin	
NMM	II-C-579	Poncho shirt of coyote skin	1915
Unknown	#644	Cloak of bark	
Unknown	#316	Robe of marmot skin	
Unknown	#124	Man's cloak of bark	
Unknown	#110	Man's cloak of sage brush	

Conclusion

Material culture studies have been divided into non-contextual and contextual analysis (Arima 1978:2). Non-contextual analysis studies objects independent of the society which created or used them, as for example the analysis of aesthetic forms. Contextual studies of material culture analyse the data with reference to the social and cultural matrix of the society that made or used it. Recent studies of contextualized material culture have analyzed artifacts in order to understand social and technological change (Brasser 1975); as a means of understanding social action and organization (Zimmerly 1978); and as a source of data for semiotic and structural analysis (Welch 1981; Leach 1974). Arima has further divided the contextual study of material culture into three main focuses: a) a sociocultural context which is an analysis in the framework of a given social or cultural unit; b) comparative context which removes objects from their sociocultural matrices; c) the disciplinary context which applies an analysis in terms of method and theory in anthropology. Of the three, Arima states:

The sociocultural context level of study would seem to be the most profitable for anthropology at the moment by demonstrating the vital social and cultural significances of material culture and building up a body of empirical cases, as it were, for general analytical interpretations (1978:3).

This is a study of painted clothing within the context of Thompson culture. The data is drawn from museum collections as painted clothing is no longer made or worn. The socio-cultural context must therefore be re-established from the available data found in the ethnographic writing, in current research, in artifact documentation and in the analysis of the artifacts themselves. The identification of the content and organization of the sociocultural context itself becomes an integral part of the research of painted clothing.

Data relevant to the analysis of painted clothing is scattered through Teit's published and unpublished work. This study brings together the information on Thompson art and clothing as well as background material on Thompson social and cultural organization. The following chapter provides a brief review of aspects of Thompson society and thought relevant to the clothing collection. Chapter three shows how Thompson clothing encodes information on sex, wealth, social and ritual status. A brief review of Thompson art, the visual vocabulary in particular, is given in Chapter Four. Painted capes, cloaks and men's shirts are discussed in Chapter Five showing how personal statements were made by combining art and clothing. A comparison of shirts and dresses in Chapter Six will show how painted clothing was used to carry messages about gender: the example presented is the use of clothing to identify affiliation with social groups. The study concludes with an analysis of the imagery of Thompson cosmology as found on painted clothing.

Chapter 2:

The Thompson Indians

Introduction

The Thompson Indians, the n'fe' kepmx, are an Interior Salish speaking people whose traditional territory was located in the plateau area of British Columbia. Their villages spread along the Fraser River from Spuzzum to nearly Lillooet along the Thompson River approximately as far as the present day settlement of Ashcroft. Hunting territories and sites for picking berries or digging roots extended back on each side of the river into the mountains. Teit (1900: 168) described the land as extremely rugged with steep mountains, deep gorges and heavy forests of cedar and fir in the southern portion along the Fraser River. The land near the Thompson River is less mountainous with occasional plateaus of grassland. The climate is drier, the soil more sandy and the vegetation is scattered forest of pine and scrub.

The Economic Cycle

The Thompson Indian economy was based on hunting and gathering. The main source of meat and of skin for clothing material was deer though men also hunted other large animals such as moose, bear and coyote. Smaller animals such as rabbits, beaver, weasel and squirrel were also hunted and trapped. Fish caught in inland lakes in the spring and summer and during the salmon run in the fall provided an important source of protein. Women were responsible for picking nuts and berries in season and digging edible roots. Fibrous materials such as rushes for mats, cedar

bark, sagebrush and Apocynum cannabinum for clothing, Apocynum cannabinum and nettle for cordage, cedar root and birch bark for basketry and other plant materials were gathered and prepared by the women (see Turner 1979:167).

The winter months were generally spent in semi-subterranean houses called s' s'istkn, built near good fishing sites along the Fraser and Thompson Rivers. Houses were built as needed, either to replace an old structure, or to accommodate a new family in the village. House size and shape was established by the crossing of two ropes 20-40 feet long and drawing a circumference of a circle around the end four points.⁷ Women dug the hole of the structure using digging sticks and other simple implements. Posts were placed at an angle to support a roof of overlapping poles and branches. Soil and sod covered the roof, providing warmth and protection. Access was by a central ladder through the roof, braced at the base by a stone. A second entry way was provided at the side of the house roof used by women between puberty and menopause (Laforet and York 1981:119). Teit notes (1900:192) that 15 to 30 people, all members of an extended family, may have lived in a single winter dwelling. Related family members or friends may have established homes at the same fishing spot to create a small village, but often only one dwelling was constructed at a fishing site.

7. There are several references to square shaped houses as well. See Laforet and York 1981:116.

A girl's puberty ritual was not focussed on the vision quest, but rather on her physical well-being and future success in childbearing, social conduct and female tasks. At the onset of puberty the girl was isolated from the community and performed a series of ritual actions and accompanying prayers. For example, the girl would pray to a long staff asking for a good husband, drop stones down the front of her dress while praying for an easy childbirth, wash herself with fir branches and ask for good health. She performed a variety of women's tasks such as making basketry or moccasins while praying for skill and strength in these endeavours. The girl fasted for the first four days, but could drink water through a bone tube. A scratcher was provided so that she did not touch herself. During the day she squatted in a hole dug in the centre of a small tipi made of fir and bark. At night, the girl would go alone to an isolated mountain, build a fire and dance and pray, sleeping by the fire till morning. However the girl was not expected to have a dream or vision experience at this time. Associated with the girl's puberty ritual were prescribed clothing, hairstyles and pictographs which are discussed later in this study. Traditionally the length of isolation was for one year, but during Teit's research period the time was limited to four months.

Ritual action, prayer and taboos were part of Thompson daily life. Each morning the individual addressed a prayer to the dawn, and prayed while bathing. Hunters beginning a hunt, especially for bears or other large game, would sweatbath

Cooperation between villages was limited. Occasionally men would band together to make war on neighbouring groups or to repel attacks. Deer were occasionally hunted by driving them into nets or corrals requiring a large community effort. People from neighbouring valleys met annually at fishing grounds or root digging sites (Laforet nd. e:9).

Thompson social and political organization was loose and unstructured (Teit 1900:210). There were no hereditary chiefs or councillors and leadership was gained through personal qualities. According to Teit (1900:289) an individual was recognized by demonstrating "wealth, wisdom, oratorical powers or prowess in war". Chiefs were recognized or elected for specific activities: leading a war party, organizing hunting expeditions or directing ceremonies and dances. When a war party or raid was being considered, male members of the tribe were consulted and advice was sought particularly from elders or the popularly recognized chiefs of the area.

The division of labour in the society has already been briefly mentioned with regard to men as hunters and fishermen and women as gatherers. Men made their own weapons and tools while women made clothing, baskets and other household utensils. Women were also responsible for erecting the mat tipis and digging the base of the winter dwelling, while men helped to build the roof.

Another aspect of the division of labour in the community was the recognition of a man's success as a shaman, fisherman, hunter, warrior or gambler. These divisions were more concerned with the nature of the individual's

role in the community and its attendant status, than a man's sole or primary economic occupation. Warriors and hunters were considered of higher status than fishermen and gamblers. Related to this was the status implicit in the specific identity of the individual's guardian spirit. Supernatural beings associated with hunting and shamanism, e.g. wolf and rattlesnake carried greater prestige than, for example, squirrel or martin whose associated powers were less. As Elmendorf notes (1977:68) the guardian spirit's power was the principal means of establishing or enhancing adult standing.

Cosmology and the Guardian Spirit Complex

Information about Thompson cosmology varied in some respects, depending on Teit's informants. Some believed the earth was square with the four corners pointed to the four points of the compass while others believed it to be round like a circle. The centre of the world was considered to be situated near Lytton, an area which is rather flat rising steeply to mountains at the outside edge. The earth itself was surrounded by a body of water, the land resting in its centre like an island in a lake.

According to Thompson mythology the earth as presently existing was arranged by a series of transformers who passed through the land "to put the world in order" (Teit 1900:337). In the Thompson world natural phenomena had supernatural personae and it was these supernatural personae with whom human beings could enter into guardian spirit relationships.

A vision to establish this relationship between a person and his snem or guardian spirit could be sought throughout an individual's lifetime.

The guardian spirit or snem was believed to assist the individual by increasing his ability to perform social and economic functions in daily life (Laforet nd. d:3).

Aside from increased success in his occupation as gambler, warrior, etc., the individual was often left with other tangible manifestations of the supernatural encounter.

The snem taught the person a song to sing on ritual occasions or for healing purposes or for success at gambling, hunting or warfare. An image or design might be given to be used in face painting, as a tatoo or on painted clothing. Men were expected to establish a snem relationship, though women occasionally sought a vision as well.

Vision quests for boys were usually initiated at puberty. Training began when the boy had his first dream of an arrow, a canoe or a woman. He then began a period of vigorous physical training and he spent time in isolated parts of the mountains praying, fasting, and sweatbathing. A boy's puberty ceremonies depended upon his aspirations. Hunters had to shoot in a ceremonial way, warriors fought mock battles and gamblers sang and danced with gambling sticks. Prayers were said asking for good health, strength, agility, wisdom and so on. Only would-be warriors prayed to the sun, others to the guardian of the day. The ceremonies continued until the boy had a dream of an animal, bird or natural phenomenon like thunder, which was then considered his guardian spirit for the rest of his life.

A girl's puberty ritual was not focussed on the vision quest, but rather on her physical well-being and future success in childbearing, social conduct and female tasks. At the onset of puberty the girl was isolated from the community and performed a series of ritual actions and accompanying prayers. For example, the girl would pray to a long staff asking for a good husband, drop stones down the front of her dress while praying for an easy childbirth, wash herself with fir branches and ask for good health. She performed a variety of women's tasks such as making basketry or moccasins while praying for skill and strength in these endeavours. The girl fasted for the first four days, but could drink water through a bone tube. A scratcher was provided so that she did not touch herself. During the day she squatted in a hole dug in the centre of a small tipi made of fir and bark. At night, the girl would go alone to an isolated mountain, build a fire and dance and pray, sleeping by the fire till morning. However the girl was not expected to have a dream or vision experience at this time. Associated with the girl's puberty ritual were prescribed clothing, hairstyles and pictographs which are discussed later in this study. Traditionally the length of isolation was for one year, but during Teit's research period the time was limited to four months.

Ritual action, prayer and taboos were part of Thompson daily life. Each morning the individual addressed a prayer to the dawn, and prayed while bathing. Hunters beginning a hunt, especially for bears or other large game, would sweatbath

and pray. Women digging roots in areas considered to have a supernatural quality would paint their faces as an offering to the spirit. Prayers were offered when eating the first fruits of the season or smoking the first tobacco of the season and ritual actions were performed when baking certain foods. Food taboos were complex, varying according to the individual's gender and reproductive status. That is, there were distinct taboos for adult males, adolescent males or females, menstruating women, parents of twins and so on (Laforet nd. d:24).

Community wide rituals included dances held in the s's'istkn in the winter and outside in the summer and spring. The activities consisted of dances, prayers, feasting and ritual smoking. The festivities began at sunrise with the dancers forming three concentric circles of unmarried men, unmarried girls, and married couples with their children. The dancers on the outermost and innermost circles held the sashes of the middle circle. After a starting prayer the circles moved together from east to west singing a song. When a half-circle was completed, a second prayer was said and the circle was completed with another half circle movement. Four dances were performed in the morning, four more at noon and four at sunset. During the day ritual meals were eaten and other prayers and ritual actions performed.

By the beginning of this century contact with European society had changed traditional Thompson culture. People abandoned their winter dwellings and began to adapt to a wage economy. Missionary activity changed religious attitudes;

new elements began to appear in rituals such as the circle dance (Teit 1900:353); and activities such as the vision quest and puberty isolation began to disappear completely.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented major facets of traditional Thompson society which influenced the construction, design and use of clothing. The climate required that clothing be used for protection from the rain and cold. Animal and plant resources native to the environment provided fabric for clothing and materials for ornamentation. The seasonal availability of such material set the annual economic cycle and its associated pattern of social activity.

The sociocultural context for understanding painted clothing requires the framework of social organization. For example social status and power was earned by an individual through his success at chosen endeavors and through the establishment of publically recognized snem relationships. Later chapters will show how clothing was used to communicate social position and status. Also distinctions between the sexes can be seen in Thompson society in the different preparations required for adult roles as in puberty rituals; in the division of labour; and in the establishment of snem relationships primarily for men. Distinctions between genders also appears on painted clothing and later chapters refer back to this ethnographic context.

Finally, elements of Thompson cosmological belief must be considered as factors in painted clothing. The conception and belief of the organization of the Thompson world, the vision quest and guardian spirit complex are all reflected in the choice and composition of painted clothing.

Chapter 3:

Thompson Clothing

Introduction

Traditionally the same basic articles of clothing, a shirt, leggings and moccasins, were used by both sexes. The shirt was generally made of mooseskin, caribou skin or buckskin dressed or undressed. The body of the shirt was made from two skins, with the hind legs forming the sleeves. In some cases, parts of another skin formed inset sleeves, a yoke or extra pieces to square off the bottom of the shirt. The leggings were also usually made of dressed skin and were either full length and hung from a belt at the waist, or were wrapped around the lower leg and secured with a tie or garter. Moccasins were made of unsmoked buckskin for the sole and tanned skin for the upper moccasin portions. Other common articles of dress included raincloaks, capes or ponchos for extra warmth. Belts were often used by both men and women to tie the shirt close to the waist.

Clothing Indicating Gender

Distinctions between men's and women's clothing were noted by Teit as differences in cut and style. Men's shirts reached no further than the knee and were worn with a breechcloth and leggings held up by the belt around the waist. Women's shirts were usually longer than men's. They came to the knee or below and were usually worn with short leggings tied around the lower leg.

Not only were the cut and shape of women's clothing different, but according to Teit so was the manner of wearing it. Thus maidens "always laced their robes tight in front

with buckskin strings, so that the breasts were not visible (Teit 1900:218).

Certain pieces of clothing were identified primarily with one of the sexes in their use. Only women wore a bodice made of a piece of skin cut into long fringes at the end, or woven from sagebrush with a long fringe. Wrapped around the body, it reached from the breast to the knee. Aprons were worn almost exclusively by men, though old women and girls during their period of puberty training sometimes wore them. Breechcloths were primarily an article of men's wear, though in certain circumstances they were worn by women. Maidens "wore a breechcloth like the men but of a tighter fit and of thicker buckskin" (Teit 1900:217). Other occasions for the wearing of breechcloths by women were as pubescent girls, just after childbirth, and on becoming a widow. "Some women wore a breechcloth made of dry bunchgrass [Agropyron spicatum (Pursh) Scribn & Smith] for several days, that the ghost of the husband should not have connection with her" (Teit 1900:333).

Teit's ethnography (1900) did not distinguish the furs and decorations used on men's clothing from those found on women's dresses. Nevertheless some differences are discernible by studying the collection. Mooseskin, caribou and deerskins form the most common clothing material for both sexes. Women's clothing uses more forms of woven vegetable fibers such as willow, silverberry bark, cedar, sagebrush, hemp and moss. Skins which appear only among the men's clothing are bear, buffalo, coyote and mountain

sheep. Decorative furs and feathers which appear commonly for both sexes are squirrel, rabbit, beaver and marmot. Grouse feathers appear on women's clothing while hawk feathers appear on men's.

Table 2: Materials Used for Clothing and Clothing Decoration

Basic Fabric

<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>	<u>Both</u>
bearskin	sagebrush bark	buckskin
woven rabbit	cedar bark	caribou
beaver	silverberry bark	mooseskin
mountain sheepskin	willowbark	marmot (for
buffalo	twined hemp	pubescent girl's
coyote	moss	robe)
sage and silverberry bark (leggings)		
black moss and silverberry bark		

Decorative Furs and Feathers

<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>	<u>Both</u>
hawk's feathers	rabbit	squirrel
mooseskin	ermine or weasel	
chipmunk	musquash	
	horsehair	
	beaverskin	
	marmot tails	
	grouse feathers	
	goose feathers	

Ornaments

<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>
fish bone	porcupine quills
bird bone	dentalium
animal bone	
shell	

Further sexual distinctions in clothing can be seen in the list Teit prepared of caps sent to the American Museum of Natural History.

Table 3: Materials Used for Headdresses and Caps

<u>Men Only</u>	<u>Both Men and Women</u>
fawn's headskin	dressed buckskin
rabbitskin & feathers	sagebrush bark
beaver skin	rushes
lynx skin	silverberry bark
deer headskin	
musquash skin	
black moss	
cedar bark	
bear headskin	

Clothing Indicating Wealth

The poorer members of the Thompson community may only have possessed a breechcloth, moccasins and a robe or a blanket of dogskin or deerskin for cold weather. Wealthier members of the community supplemented this basic wardrobe with shirts, ponchos and cloaks of various animal skins such as beaver, coyote, lynx, wolf and bear. Socks to go inside the moccasins were also used by the wealthier people and were made from buffalo, bearhair, sagebrush and grasses. Woven vegetable fiber was the main fabric for clothing among the poor. Robes, capes, kilts and leggings were woven from sagebrush bark, cedar bark, willow bark and bullrushes. "Poor people also wore long boots made of sagebrush-bark that reached up to the thighs" (Teit 1900:212). Woven fibers were a particularly common clothing fabric for poor elderly women, who were widows or childless and had no one to hunt or trap for them. Teit notes on the description for dress II-C-586 in the National Museum of Man collection this dress is called an old woman's dress by some, partly on account of the poor skin and absence of much ornamentation and partly because of the style.

Ornamentation on clothing for the wealthy included the use of paint, fur, quills, dentalia and bone beads. The skins themselves provided decorative surfaces as the animal hair was cut in different lengths to provide simple patterns. Later glass beads and horsehair were adopted as decorative elements. An example of traditional bone decorative beads is found in shirt II-C-585 of the National Museum of Man collection. It has a 'necklace' sewn to the front showing a sequence of polished bird bones and bones of other small animals strung on sinew. Moccasins were decorated with porcupine quills, goosefeathers or horsehair.

In contrast the clothing of the poorer people had very little decoration often consisting of only a single red line drawn along the seams and lower hem of the shirt or dress. This simple decoration was frequently used as a charm for good luck by both rich and poor people.

Clothing Indicating Social Role

As discussed in chapter two, the community recognized a man's social role by his success at a specific activity and often attributed such success to his guardian spirit. The individual's social status was also related to the prestige of his sнем. Men sometimes wore the entire skin of their guardian spirit as a poncho or headdress. Often some symbol or sign indicating the person's sнем was attached to the clothing. Thus a fisherman might make reference to water, ducks, loons, fish, canoes, paddles or fishing utensils in the painting or decoration of his clothes.

Social position was communicated through style and cut of clothing as well as by painted image or clothing material. The headband worn by a shaman for example was given a distinctive shape by putting a hoop at the upper rim. Hunter and warrior headbands also appear different in composition and general shape.

Teit, through his writing, collections and photographs recorded information on hairstyles and facepainting as indicators of social occupation and status. In an attempt to record the variety and meaning of hairstyles before the older generation died out, Teit had a series of wooden heads carved to show Boas the fashions. Later he purchased a wig and took photographs showing hairstyles for men and women. (Teit-Sapir correspondence: December 16, 1913, National Museum of Man) Among the variations shown are styles for warriors, and old men. Face and body painting could also indicate social position through reference to the wearer's snem, or for warriors through the presence of war paint.

Clothing Indicating Ritual Status

Clothing was used to indicate the individual's position in certain ritual situations. The simplest indicator was the use of a headband. For example, "immediately on the death of husband or wife, they donned a narrow headband made of the bark of elaeagnus argentua Pursh" (Teit 1900:333).

Appropriate headbands for other ritual states were:

- novitiate - silverberry bark and feathers (men only)
- guardian of twins - silverberry bark
- guardian and father of twins - fir branches and silverberry bark
- ghost dance - cedar bark (both sexes)

Clothing denoting ritual status is also seen at periods of puberty training. Teit described boy's clothing as follows:

During these days their faces were painted red all over, and they had to wear a headband of cedar or other bark or sometimes of deer or other skin with hair on. The band was often narrow and twisted. They also wore deer hoof ornaments round their ankles and knees, and used a tube for drinking through and a bone to scratch their heads. They wore aprons on which were painted designs symbolizing their future occupation (Teit 1900:318).

Girl's puberty clothing was also distinctive and changed during the first few days of their training period. During the first four days:

She was wrapped in a heavy blanket which covered her body from top to toe. This blanket was generally put on over her clothes and fastened round the waist with a sash or string and at the breast with a wooden pin or button. Formerly a heavy skin robe was worn instead (Teit 1900:312).

On her head was a headdress made of the tied ends of four fir branches or strips of woven cedar. This reached from her head to the breast. "Many also wore sleeveless shirts or tunics made of fir branches woven or tied together" (Teit 1900:313). After the first four days the girl put the robe on only at night or when going to bathe. An apron with painted designs was worn by some girls.

Hairstyles were another indicator of ritual status. For example recently bereaved persons cut their hair. Pubescent girls had their hair doubled up and tightly bound near the head. As the training period progressed the hair was doubled and tied at shoulder length and at the end of the training period it was tied at the breast. Teit commented on the back of a series of photographs showing the hairstyles that

"this lengthening of the hair was symbolic of approaching womanhood."

Conclusion

This chapter has brought together information on the traditional usage of Thompson clothing and shows how it made statements through the use of material, cut, style and the presence or absence of certain items of clothing. These distinctions conveyed information about the wearer's gender, wealth, social and ritual status.

As noted in chapter one, clothing can communicate two kinds of statements, those made by the community and those made by the individual. In Thompson society, clothing was used to make both types of statements. Community statements can be seen in the standardized items for ritual clothing such as puberty dress or headbands for the guardians of twins. Personal statements could be made through the selection of skins, the style of headdresses or the designs on clothing. Thus Thompson clothing in its composition, style and use offered multiple and complex symbols to communicate information to the viewer.

Chapter 4:

Thompson Art

Introduction

There has been very little published research on Thompson art.⁸ Teit's monograph on tatoos and body paint (1972), Haeberlin, Teit and Roberts, Coiled Basketry in British Columbia and Surrounding Region, (1928) and Farrand's Salish Basketry Designs (1900) supplement Boas' summary in Teit's ethnography (1900:376-382). References in Teit's correspondence and notes suggest that he was working on a separate monograph on Thompson art, but the manuscript was never published.

Teit's work on the visual imagery of Thompson art provides information on a range of art forms including pictographs, body tatoos, face painting and decorated material culture. He collected drums, spears, clubs, bags, puberty equipment and baby carriers as well as clothing. When he purchased these artifacts for Franz Boas, Homer Sargent or Edward Sapir, he took notes on the meaning of each design. In some cases the meanings were unknown; in others he was told that they were merely for ornamentation. However for the majority of artifacts, Teit recorded the meaning of the individual designs and in some cases of the picture as a whole.

The lack of extensive studies of Thompson art requires an initial survey and summary of the field before beginning a discussion of the appearance of art on clothing. This

8. Not only are studies of Thompson art lacking, but research on the art of the plateau and intermontane areas is also rare. For one of the few examples, see Conn, in American Indian Art: Form and Tradition (1972:71-75).

chapter therefore offers a presentation of the designs found in the Thompson visual vocabulary with examples drawn from tatoos, pictographs and decorated clothing. Teit's analysis of Thompson colour symbolism is also briefly summarized.

Tatoos

Teit's monograph on tatoos contains a list of images giving both their shape and meaning. This list constitutes a visual vocabulary. The tatoos were applied as aesthetic self-adornment, as love charms, to ward off illness or to acquire the characteristics of strength or agility of the animal the design represented. However Teit (1972:406) argues that "the most common use of tatooing appears to have been in connection with puberty ceremonies, dreaming and the requirements of the guardian spirit".

Table 4 : Tatoo Designs

earthline		dentalia or bead string
snakes		stars/constellations
snakes/woodworm		stars
snake tracks		cloud
mountains		ring in roiko'laxEn or other game
arrowheads or mountains		sweathouse or wheel in game
arrowhead		sun
arrows		moon
mountains or woodworm borings		moon and halo
river & its banks

tracks of animals		moon
rainbow		hill/mound
crossing of trails		beartracks
cardinal points		lake/lake & shore
log across stream		root digger
clouds crossing		unknown
star
fir		

Pictographs

Pictographs were part of the puberty rituals when boys and occasionally girls spent long periods of time in the mountains fasting, praying and waiting for a guardian spirit to appear to them in a dream. Teit writes:

Lads painted records which were pictures representing their ceremonies and their dreams on boulders or often on cliffs especially in wild spots, like cañons near waterfalls, etc. ... It was believed that the making of a rock picture insured long life (1900:321).

The following designs are a selection from the images shown in Plate XX of The Thompson Indians (1900:np)

Table 5 : Pictograph Designs

tree		vision
fir-branches		vision
juniper bush		men
fir-branch		beaver
trench 7 poles		water mystery
trench and dirt thrown out		lakes and river

unfinished
basketry

lakes connected
by river

arrowheads or
cedar branches

mountains
and glaciers
in valleys

crossing of
trails with
sacrifices

unknown

rainbow

unknown

trails

crossing of
trails with
sacrifices of
food

face with
tears

Clothing Designs

The following list of painted designs on clothing is drawn from the corpus studied. Similar vocabulary lists could be made from a selection of painted surfaces such as drum heads, pouches, gambling mats and cradle boards.

Table 6 : Painting Clothing Designs

earthline

rainbow

earthline & timber
or sides of valley
& trees

navel string

earth & trees

sky line

earth & fallen
timber

lakes

grass

lakes and
stream

trails (especially) ascending mountains		lakes & stream with timber
mountains		hearts
mountains and stars		tipis
stars		mountain
clouds		clouds or star
rocks		

The Visual Vocabulary

The imagery presented in figures 4, 5 and 6 and that found on other object surfaces constitute a surprisingly small visual vocabulary. The designs can be divided into two groups: geometrical and representational forms.

Geometrical Forms

The images in this group are quite uniform in appearance and are composed of three design units: the straight line, the circle and simple geometric shapes such as the square or triangle. These basic shapes vary by the addition of lines or changes in form: Thus the circle is used as a half circle, an arc, or a U shape. A square is turned on end to become a diamond, half of the diamond becomes a triangle. These simple designs often have multiple meanings. A single dot or circle is defined on different objects as a star, moon, cloud, raindrop, bullet hole or simply as ornamentation and as a good luck sign. A cross can represent

a star, crossed trails, fallen timber, a log over the stream, the four points of a compass or clouds crossing.

Complex images are built by the addition of basic units to themselves or to each other. A straight line with short vertical lines added at a right angle is commonly identified as earthline and trees. The vertical lines at a slant are interpreted as the earthline with burnt timbers. A broad straight line between two narrow horizontal parallel lines becomes a river flowing between two banks.

The images can grow in complexity and meaning. Teit gives an example of a compound tattoo design consisting of a straight line (earthline), a semicircle (hill) and cross (star). This conveys the idea of the morning star rising behind a hill or, in effect, the coming of dawn (Teit 1972:414). Dawn is a designated time of prayer and is a central symbol in Thompson cosmology, carrying the meaning of life and birth.

It should also be noted briefly here that symbolic imagery can be created by a combination of drawings and other decorative elements. For example, a girl's shirt (#838) is described as follows:

The decoration of beaver skin strips and red paint on the breast represents ribs, probably those of the beaver which is represented underneath by a beaver tail. The half circle at the back of the neck stands for a cloud from which is descending rain (the perpendicular lines) and the spots represent raindrops. The whole is a rain decoration as the beaver is a rain or water animal.

Table 7 : Thompson Visual Vocabulary

<u>CIRCLES</u>	<u>SHAPES</u>	<u>SHAPES</u>
stars (t,c)	—	lake (c)
rain, bullets missiles (c)	~	lake & shore (t)
clouds (t) star, moon (c)	—	lakes along creek (c)
cap with fringe (p)	—	tipis (c)
rainbow (t) rainbow (p) rainbow (c)	***	heart (c)
zenith (c)	—	heart (c)
lake (c)	—	arrowhead (c)
lake & river (p)	—	piece of gambling game (bone of lehal game) (t)
lake & shore (t)	—	unknown (t)
tattoo designs clothing design pictograph designs	—	stones used by adolescents when sweat bathing (t)

t - tattoo designs
c - clothing design
p - pictograph designs

Representational Forms

A wide range of drawings showing people, animals or vision/dream images appear on artifacts, pictographs and are mentioned by Teit for tatoos and face paint. The most common subjects drawn free-style on clothing are deer, bears, men, women, salmon, weapons, dogs; fish and specific kinds of vegetation. Other examples of vision imagery in the representational style can be seen on the list of pictographs. Drawings range from simple stick figures to the outlines of animals or people. The expertise of the drawing varies from artist to artist with some fairly crude in outline while others are animated representations of dogs or deer in flight. They are often decorated in detail, showing the important aspects or qualities of the animal or vision experience.

Colour Symbolism

The traditional Thompson colours came from a variety of natural dyes made of plants, clays and chalks. White was made from burnt deer bone and black from charcoal. These substances were mixed with melted deer grease and applied with a stick or drawn on with a finger.⁹ (The following figure is adapted from Teit 1972.)

9. For a list of various paint resources see Teit 1900:182.

Table 8 : Colour Symbolism

RED -

"signified good in the general sense. It also expressed life, existence, blood, heat, fire, light, day. Some say it also meant the earth. It appears also to have had the meaning self, friendship, success"

BLACK -

"meaning opposite to that of red. It meant evil, death, cold, darkness, night. Probably also the lower world. It appears also to have implied 'person the opposite of self', enemy, antagonism and bad luck"

YELLOW -

"had the general meaning of an earth colour. It stood for the earth and whatever is connected with it, grass, trees, vegetation, stones, soil, water, land and water mysteries, sickness coming from the earth. When an 'earth line' was painted yellow it meant simply the earth, if painted red or black, it meant something additional something used synonymously with red for fire, day, daylight, dawn and the heavenly bodies."

GREEN¹⁰ -

"was used in the same sense as yellow, but was probably more strictly an earth colour. It was seldom or never used for fire, daylight, dawn and the heavenly bodies. Occasionally it was used for rainbow. It was little in vogue and long ago possibly not used at all in face painting."

BLUE -

"had the meaning of sky colour. It was used for the sky or upper world in contradistinction to yellow for the earth and black for the underworld ... A few people appear to have used blue in the same sense as black, but not black in the sense of blue."

WHITE -

"had the meaning of a 'spirit' colour and stood for ghost spirit world, dead people, skeletons, bones, sickness coming from the dead."

10. It should be noted that Thompson does not distinguish lexically between yellow and green.

Design Choice and Composition

Geometrical and representational designs appear both individually and as part of more complex patterns. Tattoos and pictographs show a greater use of single images, while material culture usually has a combination of designs to form a decoration or picture. Though the choice of design and composition on clothing is discussed in the chapters that follow, let us consider this subject as it affects other items of material culture.

The choice of designs is usually related to the function of the object. Deerskin bags (see table 9) were used as containers when the people move between hunting, fishing and vegetable gathering areas. The designs are representations of the land, mountains, lakes, grasses, vegetation and trails through which they travel. The drums, (see table 10) used for ritual purposes, have pictures related to Thompson cosmology, the sun, moon, stars, earth and sky as well as vision or dream imagery.

The object's surface is treated as if it were a flat canvas with part of the design often serving as a border or frame. The designs are symmetrical and balanced along horizontal and vertical axes. On the rectangular bags, the designs are mirror images on the left and right of the central vertical axis; a horizontal axis is less obviously indicated by the design motifs. The circular drum designs create a strong vertical and horizontal axis in the shape of a cross, which may act to align the cosmological imagery to the four cardinal points.

Table 9: Design Choice and Composition - Bags

Number II-C-363

- a. lake with shores of sand or rock
- b. unknown, possibly bluffs of rocks with sky outline

Number II-C-362

- a. low rolling country
- b. rocky bluffs or mountain country
- c. outer design is trails; dots are tracks of animals

Number II-C-228

- a. earth/burnt timber country
- b. grassy country
- c. lakes surrounded by grassy hills
- d. low rocky hills
- e. forest
- f. lakes with rocky shores

NMM II-C-363

Bag

Colour Plate 1.

Chapter 5:

Painted Clothing As
A Personal Statement

Colour Plate 5

Drum

NMM II-C-238

Table 10: Design Choice and Composition - Drums

Number II-C-235

- a. outside circle earth - red
- b. inside circle grass or ground yellow
- c. inner circle water or lake - blue
- d. otter in lake
- e. four lines trees

Number II-C-238

- a. sun
- b. moon
- c. rainbow
- d. evening star
- e. stars
- f. clouds
- g. outer circle earth - red
- h. inner circle sky - blue

Number II-C-234

- a. growing and waning moon
- b. morning star
- c. evening star
- d. two other stars

NMM II-C-235

Drum

Colour Plate 4

COLOURED PICTURES
Images en couleur

Colour Plate 5

Drum

NMM II-C-238

COLOURED PICTURES
Images en couleur

NMM II-C-234

Drum

Colour Plate 6

Conclusion

Thompson art has a small visual vocabulary composed chiefly of circles, lines and geometrical shapes. Representational designs are often used to show people, animals and weapons. Though a single image could have multiple meanings, a degree of uniformity of design shape and meaning is found in designs used for pictographs, tatoos and on material culture. Complex paintings, usually found on the larger surfaces of drums, shields or bags, are composed of several designs. The meanings assigned to the images reflected the function of the object on which they appeared. Compositions were usually symmetrical with balanced repetition and mirror imagery.

Chapter 5:

Painted Clothing As
A Personal Statement

An analysis of Thompson painted clothing requires us to consider both the meanings of the clothing itself and the meaning of the art forms applied to the clothing. As seen in the discussion of clothing in Chapter Three, the object and its material and shape identifies the individual's sex, and social and ritual status in the community. Thompson art permits this identification to be further expanded, refined and reinforced. The amount of painting on clothing varies from a single red line to complex sequences or combinations of designs. I have termed the more complex pictures 'narrative art' because they often show events from a person's life which are germane to his or her social position.

This chapter analyses a small body of painted capes, cloaks (see Table 1) and one man's shirt, #735, decorated with 'narrative art'. A discussion of how the imagery carries the message leads to the uncovering of a pattern of relations between clothing, and art.

Teil's notes about these examples of narrative art vary in completeness. Sometimes he simply lists images from a piece of painted clothing; sometimes he interprets the message itself. Where his notes are complete they tell us what is meant by the drawings and how the message is conveyed as well. For example, ⁱⁿ the descriptive notes for poncho #734 he notes, "all these things are drawn close together showing they are happening at the same time".

Representational designs are generally found in

"narrative art". Nevertheless, the designs must be read broadly. A drawing of a tool, for example, may indicate its possession by the individual or it may indicate the activity which is being undertaken. Thus a root digger, net design or an arrow indicates food gathering activities. Drawings of deer or bear show what kind of hunting is being done and salmon, show fishing. Some drawings are clear indicators of the activity: for example the painting of a woman holding a berry branch shows berry picking. Other images require Teit's notes in order for us to understand them. Thus a man riding a horse stands for people raising horses, and a man smoking a pipe in this picture simply represents people being sociable rather than the more common association of smoking with prayer.

Analysis of Teit's notes reveals that narratives usually contain indications of time, place and the activity expressed in the visual images. The time of year is expressed by the drawing of certain animals; a salmon may indicate the period of the fall migration upstream, or a fawn may show early summer. Certain human activities represent a season such as a woman shown picking berries. Indication of the season of the year can be made more specific by the drawing of a moon in one of its phases.

The placement of an activity during the day or night is indicated by the drawing of the sun, moon or stars. Often the morning and evening star are drawn on opposite sides of the cape or shirt front. Such placement may indicate the passing of time expressed visually on the clothing.

An indication of location where the action is occurring is given in two ways. One is the use of geometrical designs showing a mountain, forested area, grass or lake. Often the location is made more specific by the drawing of certain vegetation around the lake or the combination of certain plants or trees nearby. Furthermore, the Thompson believed certain places had supernatural qualities or power. The geometrical images may therefore relate to an actual place and/or to the supernatural qualities of that location.

Animals painted on clothing give another indication of place showing areas where deer or bears are abundant. Again, the indications may relate to specific well-known hunting areas or simply to an idealized environment with good hunting. Drawings of activities such as berry picking or fishing may also indicate traditional sites.

The painting drawn on each shirt and cloak appears to focus on one activity. This can be a puberty ritual, social or seasonal activities or an individual's experiences. Two major kinds of illustration appear. One expresses activities in which members of the community in general are involved. Several human figures are engaged in various activities, often seasonal events. These I have labelled community designs or narratives. A second kind of illustration shows the activities of the wearer of the clothes and may be an expression of his position as a warrior or hunter or his dream or vision experience. Such shirts also record the ritual experience of the boy or girl during their puberty training. These are

Table 13: Shirt

Material: Buckskin/moss
Article: Shirt
Number: 735

<u>Description</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Community</u>	<u>Individual</u>
collar; horse, 2 men horse and dog				
shoulder: owner who is warrior and carries ball club, next his wife, arrow pipe, ball war club, spear, spike war club (his favorite things)				man good in war and peace as shown by club in one hand and pipe in mouth, it shows identi- fication as warrior and of favorite things
bows and arrow buffalo				he kills buffalo with bows and arrows as shown, these and buffalo under- neath
2 men fighting with knives and spears woman in tipi				
right side: hunter moon and stars, buck, deer, fawn, lake, bush, bear, duck flying, warrior, pine, 2 deer	fawn time- spring moon shows early in season	near a lake, bears and other animals, deer in bushy country and tall pines		goes to war show by men fighting his wife stays in tipi
				this means he hunts buckdeer in fawn time as shown by him holding bow & arrow & the fawn Early part of fawn month

Table 11: Poncho

Material: Bark
Article: Poncho
Number: 734

<u>Description</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Community</u>	<u>Individual</u>
neck fringe: yellow pine, hunter, bush buck deer, grouse doe deer, woman, rabbit, stars and moon with mythological frog, horse, man, buckdeer ascending a hill, moon and stars, hunter.	moon newly full when people go to this place - stay until 1/2 moon	part of country people now living in with certain animals country in which some of men hunt has pines and bushes	general hunting activities	
lower fringe: grouse, woman, service bush, pine, buckdeer, woman, black bear, salmon, rattlesnake, young snakes, wasp, moon and stars, man, coyote, pine and bush	early in season moon in salmon season, young snakes and wasps abound - in season bear search for salmon all these things drawn close together showing they are happening at same time as they happen in same time seasonally	place with pine service berries abound people in another place - women pick berries shown by women grasping berry bush		

Table 12: Puberty Cloak

Material: kwois bark

Article: puberty hood/cloak

Number: 733

<u>Description</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Community</u>	<u>Individual</u>
hood band: woman, girl's tipi, x trails buffalo				
neckband: woman with root digger, wounded buffalo chased by 2 hunters on horseback, tipi with 2 men and woman that remains at home	man hunts in daytime (sun)	3 places out of view of each other	3 activities: rootdigging, hunting, people at home	
bottom fringe: sun, 2 buckdeer followed by hunter 2 snakes, man on horseback, service tree yellow pine man scout, spoon with woman, man holding pipe		service berry pine & snakes show where people live	they are there for hunting deer preparing berries, raising horses & gathering tobacco or to have sociable time-- on the alert as shown by the scout	
mountains - home of deer		near mountains		
man on horseback shooting buffalo with arrows people in canoe		some of people away in canoes	chief of people - great buffalo hunter (buffalo painted on chest)	

Table 12 (cont'd)

<u>Description</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Community</u>	<u>Individual</u>
snake, man, deer		where these animals are numerous		
right front: pine tree, service bush, sunflower, scout, snake				
left front: pine tree, bushes, deer, man and woman at the tipi, sunflowers, pine, service bush, deer, snakes		all characteristics of country through which people roam		

Table 13: Shirt

Material: Buckskin/moss
Article: Shirt
Number: 735

<u>Description</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Community</u>	<u>Individual</u>
collar; horse, 2 men horse and dog				
shoulder: owner who is warrior and carries ball club, next his wife, arrow pipe, ball war club, spear, spike war club (his favorite things)				man good in war and peace as shown by club in one hand and pipe in mouth, it shows identi- fication as warrior and of favorite things
bows and arrow buffalo				he kills buffalo with bows and arrows as shown, these and buffalo under- neath
2 men fighting with knives and spears woman in tipi				goes to war show by men fighting his wife stays in tipi
right side: hunter moon and stars, buck, deer, fawn, lake, bush, bear, duck flying, warrior, pine, 2 deer	fawn time- spring moon shows early in season	near a lake, bears and other animals, deer in bushy country and tall pines		this means he hunts buckdeer- in fawn time as shown by him holding bow & arrow & the fawn Early part of fawn month

Table 14: Puberty Robe

Material: Marmot
Article: Puberty robe
Number: 384

<u>Description</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Community</u>	<u>Individual</u>
bottom: mountains where girl travelled, line along base is earth and other one water		mountains		place travelled for puberty rituals
Stars seen above mountain top on top of central mountain is the fire which the girl made of black logs	(night?)			(built fire)
girl's lodge of 4 poles, root digger				
4 fir branches in front of lodge and 4 sticks show number of days fasted				fasting
her future husband centre row - cross trails, trench with dirt thrown out, basket work, mat work fir branch probably the one in her lodge from which she plucked needles				ritual activities associated with puberty training

Table 15: Blanket/Robe

Material: Mountain sheep skin
Article: Blanket
Number: 717

<u>Description</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Community</u>	<u>Individual</u>
center: owner with snake				snake is owner's manitou
right: man hunts in region full of big game, big mountain with stream running into small lake of water fowl. Hunts elk bear, deer		mountains lake, water		man hunting big game

night

left: from this region at night - moon and stars the game travels into low land at left where he catches them in spinsin net. One deer travelling along it

right corner: bad lake, mysterious or sickness painted yellow full of frogs, etc.

bad lake

By studying the narrative imagery of the preceding examples, it appears there was a relation between the messages and the media. Some of the messages, those found on #734 and #733, convey community activities with their seasonal cycle and food gathering territories. Drawn on vegetable fiber clothing and to some extent on buckskin, the images show men and women hunting, berry picking, travelling together or otherwise engaged in shared community actions. The shirt #735, and the puberty robe #384, communicate information about the individual, his success as a hunter or warrior or the experiences of a puberty ritual. These are individual achievements, but are presented in the context of socially recognized and approved behaviour. They are painted on dressed buckskin which may be decorated with the furs of animals or bones and feathers of birds. The sheepskin blanket/robe has imagery relating the interactions of the owner with the supernatural. Here the individual's guardian spirit is shown in the centre. He has encountered or is somehow concerned with a location of supernatural power at the 'bad lake'.¹¹ Indeed the entire imagery suggests that it was seen in a dream or vision quest.

11. The places of supernatural mystery were considered bad because they could cause physical or mental illness and even death for those who did not have protection from their own guardian spirit or could not appease the spirit in some way.

Conclusion

Clothing can express more than the social or ritual status discussed in Chapter Three. Narrative imagery permits an individual to make a personal statement about his experiences or those of his community. Furthermore there is a link between the statements and clothing surface. Community oriented narratives are drawn on vegetable fibers, while individual achievements in a social context are drawn on dressed skins. The supernatural encounter or dream experience is drawn on undressed animal skin. Clothing material and imagery thus make complementary statements.

Chapter 6:

Painted Clothing as
Gender Statement

Introduction

The artist/wearer who painted imagery on his clothing expressed his standing to other members of the community. Such clothing indicated relations between the individual and the group. Thompson clothing, however, also contained information about relations between groups. This chapter compares women's dresses and men's shirts to show how painted clothing visually expresses the different but interrelated roles of men and women in Thompson society.

Dresses and shirts have been chosen for analysis because they were worn by every adult member of Thompson society except the very poorest. The material, cut and shape of the shirt and dress are similar and allow comparative analysis. The items analysed in this chapter, ten women's dresses and eight men's shirts and a vest, are all of dressed buckskin with decorations which include fringes, painted designs, cut out areas and pinking at the hem. Photographs of the shirt or dress are provided.

Women's Dresses

The dress front when viewed as a plane surface is divided into two main decorative areas and several minor ones. The hem or bottom of the dress is usually heavily decorated, with a second principle area of decoration at the neck. Minor decorative areas of the dress are the seams, sleeves, and waist. These often have motifs or design elements from the hem or neck. One design common to all dresses is a single line drawn at or near the hem and

identified as an earthline.

The hems or bottoms of Thompson dresses have a painted area across the entire front of the dress which is usually divided into three bands, each showing a different design. For example, dress number II-C-608, plate 21, has three broad stripes of colour painted above the earthline. Number II-C-607, plate 15, has an earthline forming a bottom border, then three separate design patterns; snakes and grass, mountains and lakes, clouds and stars.

The waist is sometimes demarcated by a fringe or simply a design of painted dots or lines. A "belt design" appears on separate belt pieces or is painted on the buckskin. It is usually identified as mountains and stars.

A few dresses do not have a design at the waist, but use a series of fringes or painted designs between the hem and neck. These often divide the dress into three sections as, for example, on dress number 344, plate 29.

The bibs at the neck may combine several decorative features including fringes, quill work, beadwork, painting, tassels, and so on. The bib is frequently a rounded triangle or U shape made from part of the buckskin folded down or from an additional piece sewn on. In some cases the U shape is simply painted or embroidered at the neck. A common pattern of the bib decoration sequence is a series of borders forming an outer edge, a middle and an inner border. In the centre of the piece is a single image or picture. For example, number II-C-607, plate 15, has a fringe along a line of quills on the bib edge followed by a semicircle of dots

enclosed between a row of quills and glass beads. The central image is of a beaded X. Number II-C-626, plate 13, has long fringes around the bib with a row of beads and dentalium forming a semicircular line around the bib. The central image is a circle with four spokes.

Design elements on the seams, shoulders and sleeves are usually simple with fringes at the shoulders, under the sleeves and down the side seams of the dresses. Lines are usually painted at the seams for good luck. In several examples, elements of the hem design or bib design are carried along the seams, across the shoulders and down the sleeves.

The back of most of the dresses analysed lacks the decorative bib, but retains the general composition of designs at the hem, waist and across the back near the shoulders. Only the back of number II-C-626, plate 14, closely mirrors the front of the dress showing designs at the hem, waist and a bib of fringe, quill work and painted designs similar to the front.

The overall visual impact of the designs on the back is generally quite distinct from that on the front. However, the majority of dresses use the same or a slight variation of the front design. Thus on dress number 339, the belt motif is carried around the back and the mountain and star design on the front bib is repeated in a curve across the back shoulders.

The design elements on several occasions change key symbols on the back and the front. The front of number II-C-626, plate 13, mirrors the design placement on the

back except for a sun on the front bib compared to moon and stars on the back. Also the bordering designs of trees along the seams of the front is shown as burnt or fallen timber at the back. Another reversal is found on number II-C-608, plate 21 and 22, which shows the same pattern of circles (clouds) and bands (earth both front and back). However the central design on the breast at the front is the sun, while the design at the back is identified as rain. The front and back designs of women's dresses show complementarity. The images are either variations on a theme or a reversal of central symbols within a similar visual framework.

The composition of imagery on women's dresses shows a highly structured, symmetrical pattern. The visual vocabulary of geometrical designs is repeated in balanced sequences usually of four repeats. The repetitions are usually given a left/right/left/right heading. Thus grass is shown and snakes are shown head to head, tail to tail.

Bilateral symmetry on the dress is created by an equal repetition of designs on either side of the centre. These designs may be a single design repeated four times, a set of similar designs repeated or a series of fringes. Odd numbers of repetitions, say five or seven, place the third or fourth design in the centre to create symmetry. The designs which are drawn in a series of horizontal rows are placed one above the other to maintain bilateral symmetry. Some designs have a central or middle unit which is larger than

22

OF / DE

or different from the lateral shapes. Thus lakes and streams are shown as with the middle lake in the centre of the dress.

Further visual structure is given to the dress by the designs at the seams and sleeves. The lines of dots at the edges create a visual sense of boundaries to the dress front and back. These side images contain, frame and order the imagery. On some examples the seam designs provide a thematic and visual continuity between hem and bib of the dress, binding the image together from side to side and from top to bottom.

Plate 13 Dress, front (NMM31001)
NMM II-C-626

Plate 14 Dress, back (NMM 31000)
NMM II-C-626

Plate 15 Dress, front (NMM30971)
NMM II-C-607

Plate 16 Dress, back (NMM 30972)
NMM II-C-607

Plate 17 Dress, front (NMM 27086)
No. 339

Plate 18 Dress, back (NMM 27088)
No. 339

Plate 19 Dress, front (NMM 27034)
No. 346

Plate 20 Dress, back (NMM 27096)
No. 346

Plate 21 Dress, front (NMM31002)
NMM II-C-608

Plate 22 Dress, front (NMM31003)
NMM II-C-608

Plate 23 Dress, front (NMM73-1409)
NMM II-C-706

Plate 24. Dress, back (NMM73-1409)
NMM II-C-706

Plate 25 Dress, front (NMM27095)
No. 340

Plate 26 Dress, back (NMM27094)
No. 340

Plate 27 Dress, front (NMM27090)
unknown

Plate 28 Dress, back (NMM27091)
unknown

Plate 29 Dress, front (NMM27087)
No. 344

Plate 30 Dress, back (NMM27085)
No. 344

Plate 31 Dress, front (NMM31005)
NMM II-C-398

Plate 32 Dress, back (NMM31004)
NMM II-C-398

Men's Shirts

The majority of men's shirts have the designs painted in the middle of their front. Vertical symmetry of placement on either side of a central axis is usually shown. However placements are often inexact and the sizes of images on right and left sides may differ. In addition the subjects shown on each side may differ. For example on shirt number II-C-590, plate 33, the painted heads of Indians with pipes and feathers face each other in the middle of the shirt, but the left side figure is slightly lower than its counterpart. A figure of a running man is on the left shoulder while a small crescent moon is on the right shoulder. The rosettes are spaced unequally with one in the middle, two rosettes with fringe below and a red rosette off to the right. Still elements of vertical symmetry are maintained on this shirt in the perfect centralization of the pendant necklace and the bottom spacing of dots.

Shirts with simpler designs usually show a strong sense of vertical symmetry (see numbers 169, 172, 314 and 318, plates 40 and 41). The vest II-C-580, plate 8, places the vision figure directly above the middle deer and the images of number 588 are placed to the right and left of the middle.

The horizontal axis is emphasized on a few shirts. Number 314 has the traditional painted designs at the waist, called a belt design with stars. The pattern on number 320, figure 52, is a sequence of broad areas from the cut and decorated hem to solid bands of colour at the base, middle

and upper areas.

The neck area is generally the most decorated part of a man's shirt. A U shape motif is found at the neck of several shirts as either a painted, fringed or decorated area. Circular neck lines are seen in several examples with the painting consisting of a series of concentric rings.

Of the eight shirts in the collection, seven have fringes along the side seams. Painted vertical lines appear only along the sleeve joinings of number 169, plate 41 and earth and tree designs on number II-C-590, plate 33. Distinctive designs along the shoulder piece are found only on number 314, plate 40 with two rows of evenly spaced dots from neck to shoulder. Small red dots completely cover the front, shoulders and the outside strip of sleeve.

Men's shirts show a wide variation in the relations between front and back design imagery. Two examples show painted images on the back only. The vest number II-C-580, c.plate 7, has fur on the front and painted images on the back. Shirt number II-C-585, plate 38 and 39 has a bone necklace on the front and painting of stars and moon and the morning star on the back.

Five shirts (numbers, 320, 314, 318, 169, 172, plates 36, 40 and 41, have designs on the back which show related elements from the shirt front. Only one shirt, number II-C-588, plate 35 introduces a new design on the back, a self-portrait of the wearer, while the front of the shirt has designs showing his exploits.

Plate 33 Shirt, front (NMM35396)
NMM II-C-590

Plate 34 Shirt, back (NMM35397)
NMM II-C-590

Plate 35 Shirt, front (NMM75-13407)
NMM II-C-588

Plate 36 Shirt, front (NMM27084)
No. 320

Plate 37 Shirt, back (NMM27083)
No. 320

Plate 38 Shirt, front (NMM 35398)
NMM II-C-585

Plate 39 Shirt, back (NMM35399)
NMM II-C-585

90

Plate 40

Shirt, front
No. 318

leggings

Shirt, front
No. 314

Shirt
BCPM
No. 172

Shirt
BCPM
No. 169

Plate 41 Shirts, front (NMM27071)

Plate 42 Shirts, back (NMM2708)

NMM II-C-580

Man's Vest, front

Colour Plate 7

Viewed as a plane surface, men's shirts offer a relatively unbounded framework for the placement of designs. The line at the hem of the shirt (if present) is usually a simple, single one. Although the images are centrally placed in the middle of the shirt, lines at the seams or edges are visually unimportant or absent. Vertical and horizontal symmetry is followed through a general alignment of designs along a set of axes. The symmetry is reinforced in several cases by careful placement of design elements at the neck and hem.

Visual Vocabulary

A comparison of the visual vocabulary painted on these ten dresses, eight shirts and vest, as well as other shirts and dresses in the corpus (see table 1) indicates differences in the choice of imagery for men's and women's clothing. Women's dresses contain more imagery with reference to aspects of the environment such as earth, mountains, lakes and water and vegetation (see table 16 next page). For example, of the nineteen dresses in the corpus ten have an earthline or earth and trees design compared to two men's shirts with this theme out of twelve. Also, women's dresses have approximately twice as many references to mountains and valley and to vegetation designs than are found on men's shirts. However, men's shirts have a greater number of drawings of animals, people and weapons. For example, of the twelve shirts, six have pictures of animals as compared to four of the nineteen dresses with animal drawings.

Conclusion

Men's painted shirts and women's painted dresses give out quite different visual messages through their choice of imagery and the composition of the design. Women's dresses contain information in primarily geometrical designs showing the Thompson environment in a highly structured and organized composition. On a painted dress the Thompson world moves from earth to sky as the dress goes from hem to neck. The sides have lines or related designs which create visual boundaries. Men's shirts use mainly representational designs in a flexible often unstructured composition. Designs at the hem or sides are often missing and the imagery has no visual boundaries or fixed appearance of order. The visual vocabulary is primarily representational designs of men, women, animals and spirit figures. They show the inhabitants and activities of a Thompson man's world.

These different visual messages encoded in Thompson dresses and shirts suggest links to the roles of men and women in the society. A women's economic activities are closely tied to the earth and its seasonal cycle while her fertility is set to a regular menstrual cycle. Her economic and social prestige does not usually come from obtaining a snem and access to supernatural forces but is inherent in her fertility and in her relationship to the fertility of the earth. Thus a woman's world is ordered and structured by her link to the Thompson world and its cycles. The designs on her clothing re-create a structured and ordered world. Man's role in Thompson society is the result of his

Table 16 (cont'd)

#340 - dress	star, arrowheads, tipis with fire, stream or water, earthline, vegetation, trees, navel string or rainbow, painted heart, water, vegetation
#584 - shirt	earth, stars, mountains
#341 - dress	netting or woven material
#398 - dress	skyline, earth and trees, 2 men meeting, earthline, snakes, earth and trees, large trees

Table 17: Visual Vocabulary - Men's Shirts

#580 - vest	vision figure (male), doe, buck, fawn
#585 - shirt	stars, moon, sun or morning star, earthline
#590 - shirt	necklace of pendants, bullets, 2 men's heads with pipes, man holding club, moon, earth and trees, fringe (painted on)
#314 - shirt	moon, belt design, stars, clouds, stars, clouds rain
#318 - shirt	raindrops, male and female deer, mountains and stars or clouds and stars
#320 - shirt	stars, sky, earthline and trees, sun and rays, zenith, mountain, snake or navel string, stars clouds
#169 - shirt	eagle, rainbows, stars, sky, clouds, arrowhead stars
#172 - shirt	2 men in costume holding spears, 2 suns, 4 stars
#588 - shirt	man with spear, moon, stars, arrowheads, 2 deer heads, arrows, moon, stars, grassy country, timber, deer, 2 dogs, hunter and tipi, rattle, snake, bear
#788 - shaman's shirt	heart and lungs or bowels, sickness or disease
#735 - shirt	sunflower, willow grouse, horse, 2 men, horse dog, owner (warrior) with club, his wife, arrow pipe, club spear, spike club, buffalo, bow and arrow, 2 men fighting with knives and spears, woman and tipi, hunter, moon, star, deer, fawn, lake, bush, bear, duck flying, warrior, pine, 2 deer
#309 - shirt	stars

Though the sample here is very small, it does provide some indication of the choice of imagery for shirts and dresses.

The visual vocabulary as discussed in Chapter Four appears as both geometrical and representational designs. The comparison of images on women's dresses and men's shirts suggest that these two forms were used for two different purposes. The geometrical form is used to indicate place, i.e. mountains, lakes, forest; time of day, i.e., sun, moon, stars and life giving sun and rain. These images, as in 'narrative art', define the frame of communication while creating an image of the Thompson world. The representational drawings permit the expression of personal experiences such as dreams, vision quests, hunting activities or success at war. The representational imagery shows the occupants, both human and animal of the Thompson world.

Table 18 : Visual Vocabulary - Design Form

<u>Geometrical Forms</u>	<u>Representational Forms</u>
mountains and valleys	men
lakes and streams	women
earth and trees	weapons
stars	animals
clouds	vision figures
sun	moon
moon	salmon
raindrops	
rainbow/zenith	

Conclusion

Men's painted shirts and women's painted dresses give out quite different visual messages through their choice of imagery and the composition of the design. Women's dresses contain information in primarily geometrical designs showing the Thompson environment in a highly structured and organized composition. On a painted dress the Thompson world moves from earth to sky as the dress goes from hem to neck. The sides have lines or related designs which create visual boundaries. Men's shirts use mainly representational designs in a flexible often unstructured composition. Designs at the hem or sides are often missing and the imagery has no visual boundaries or fixed appearance of order. The visual vocabulary is primarily representational designs of men, women, animals and spirit figures. They show the inhabitants and activities of a Thompson man's world.

These different visual messages encoded in Thompson dresses and shirts suggest links to the roles of men and women in the society. A woman's economic activities are closely tied to the earth and its seasonal cycle while her fertility is set to a regular menstrual cycle. Her economic and social prestige does not usually come from obtaining a snem and access to supernatural forces but is inherent in her fertility and in her relationship to the fertility of the earth. Thus a woman's world is ordered and structured by her link to the Thompson world and its cycles. The designs on her clothing re-create a structured and ordered world. Man's role in Thompson society is the result of his

own active, often aggressive behaviour in seeking out social and supernatural power. Prestige and power are gained through warfare, hunting and encounters with a guardian spirit.

A man's actions are less structured and less bound by seasonal cycles or fertility cycles. The imagery shown on a man's shirt shows flexibility in his representation of interaction with the Thompson world. Visually and perhaps symbolically, these women's dresses with their structured geometrical designs showing the Thompson environment, offer visual complementarity to men's shirts with their flexible, representational designs of the inhabitants and activities of Thompson society.

Chapter 7:

Painted Clothing as
Cosmological Statement

This chapter explores how Thompson painted clothing visually restated the society's cosmological beliefs. Two approaches to the analysis of the corpus are presented. The first is a description and interpretation of a man's shirt on which the motifs are combined in such a manner that they recreate an image of the Thompsons' physical and symbolic world order. The second approach considers a single image, the circle and half-circle, which appears to act as a multivalent symbol representing a conceptual order of the world. In this section we move away from specific consideration of designs within the context of their use on clothing towards a more abstract consideration of cosmological motifs as they appear both on clothing and in other media such as dance and ritual.

Man's Shirt

A man's shirt number 320 (plates 43 to 45), is described in Teit's artifact documentation and visual documentation was found in the photographic collections at the British Columbia Provincial Museum and the National Museum of Man. The painted designs used on this shirt are primarily geometric in form and is similar to designs on other men's clothing which Teit identified as vision images (see for example the man's apron in figure 2).¹²

12. Teit also identified certain designs on women's dresses as dream or vision designs, e.g. the bib designs on dresses in plates 17 and 19. It is interesting to note that identified vision designs on men's and women's clothing is the reverse of the usage described in Chapter Six.

Description

The front of the shirt has two wide horizontal blocks of colour at the hem and main body while the upper chest is unpainted. The middle of the upper chest has a circle with an arc above it and a triangle shape below. The bottom of the shirt has an area of cut skin which combines fringe and areas of cut-out decorations on either side and in the middle.

The back of the shirt has one broad horizontal area of colour. The top half has painted designs on an unpainted area. A long fringe at the hem of the shirt has one strip of cut-out designs in the middle. Fringes also go up the side seams and under the arms. An additional piece of mooseskin at the neck is pinked along the shoulders and hangs in ~~two~~ triangles in front and in a curved piece in the back. Attached to the mooseskin in the front are long pendants of beads and polished buffalo bone with a bunch of horsehair wrapped at the upper end in buckskin. On the back, the mooseskin has pendants of beads, twisted dyed goat hair, ermine skins and twisted strips of hare skin with woodpecker feathers. A single pendant of beads and buffalo bone with horsehair tufts are on the front.

Plate 43 Man in Costume (BCPM pn 14837)

✓

Plate 44 Shirt, front (NMM27084)
No. 320

Plate 45 Shirt, back (NMM27083)
No. 320

The Visual Vocabulary

Teit notes that the cut designs on the bottom sides are all of stars, the large one on the shirt's right-hand side representing the morning star and the one on the left, the evening star. The cut design in the middle is a 'tail'. Above, the blue painted area representing the sky and above that, is a yellow area signifying earth and vegetation. The circle on the chest is the sun, with the short lines and the fringe being rays and the blue line on the outside the sky. Beneath it, the triangle, is a mountain divided into areas of white, red and black rocks. The mountain rests on a painted design of earthline and trees. Within the white section figures represent either snakes or navel string.

On the back of the shirt, the middle cut-out strip is called the tail in Teit's documentation. The yellow painted area represents grass and earth. The remainder of the back and sleeve backs are painted with blue areas and circles representing the sky and clouds and red dots representing stars. This shirt thus contains a large visual vocabulary in designs and decoration.

Table 19: Visual Vocabulary

Painted imagery: sky, earth, vegetation, earthline and trees, sun, stars, clouds, zenith, mountains, morning star, evening star

Added decoration: dressed buckskin, mooseskin, horsehair, goathair, woodpecker feathers, buffalo bones, hare skin, beads, grasses, beads

The painted symbols show the earth and the heavens, but not water (unless clouds are meant to represent rain water). The added decorations include skin, hair and bones from animals, feathers from birds and vegetation, but nothing from lakes, or rivers.

The visual vocabulary of the painted designs is similar to what was described in Chapter Four. The sun is ; the zenith ; the mountain ; stars ; earth and trees ; clouds ; morning star ; evening star ; naval string or snakes .

The colour symbolism also follows that shown in Chapter Four.

yellow for vegetation / earth
red for earth / life qualities / stars
blue for sky / clouds
black for death
white for ghosts / spirit world

The shirt has bilateral symmetry. On the front the sun, the centre line of the mountain triangle and the tail form a visual vertical axis. Balance on left and right is created by the cut-out areas at the hem and the two tassels at the neck. On the back the vertical axis is created by the tail at the hem, the narrow passage between the cloud designs followed by the long pendant in the middle of the mooseskin. Balance is given by the symmetrical drawing of clouds and equal numbers of ermine skins on either side.

A symmetrical relationship between the back and front is evident in the arrangement of pendants and other decoration on the mooseskin.

In the circle dance the circle is empty. The chiefs move from the outside of the circle to the middle ring, not to the centre. They have merged visually with the rest of the community. But the application of the circle and half-circle to clothing is that the circle and half circle encircle the person himself or the visual representation of the person. On some pieces of clothing, the individual is encircled by lines around the collar waist or hem. On other garments, the U shape frames the image of the person's snem, dream, or record of the vision quest.

The analysis of imagery on clothing shows two distinctive encircling motifs which are analogous to the Thompson view of the world as land surrounded by mountains and water. One of the most common of these motifs is a zigzag line or single peaks identified as mountains. This is usually found as a design on belts and headbands. An excellent example is a vegetable fibre cape (II-C-604). The zigzag lines become an encircling which completely wrapped the wearer in much the same way that the visual imagery of the earth is wrapped by the mountains at its borders.

The mountain motif is also expressed as a series of separated rounded peaks. A bear skin cloak which served as a pillow for a vision quest, has rounded shapes which form the border for the central image of the individual's guardian spirit.

A second type of encircling imagery is found around the shirt collar, e.g. a series of three lines, red, green and blue which are identified as earth, vegetation and water

may be symbols of life and birth represented by the navel string design:

Noon is also a special time for prayer and for performance of the circle dance. The sun, at the highest point of the sky, the zenith occupies the centre of the shirt. Associated with the sun and noon are the red rocks at the pinnacle of the mountain. The colour red symbolizes life.

The appearance of the evening star marks another period of prayer and dance. The black part of the triangle and the evening star which sets in the west are represented on the left side of the shirt. Black is associated with death. The west or setting sun is the direction in which souls travel to the house of the dead.

Thus the imagery on this shirt portrays central concepts of Thompson cosmology regarding the passage of sun from sunrise to sunset, of life from birth to death and possibly of rebirth.

The representation of the earth and heavens are also clearly structured.

Table 21: Design Organization

<u>shirt front</u>	<u>shirt back</u>
sky - sun	sky - clouds, stars
earth - vegetation, mountains	earth - vegetation
sky - stars	

The shirt front presents a view of the world as earth and vegetation with a border of earth and trees out of which

risers the mountain, reaching into the sky. The sun and zenith are above; below the earth are the morning, evening and other stars. Since the morning and evening stars are not visible at noon, the artist/wearer has placed them as if they were under the earth. The shirt back tells us that it is night since there is no sun and the stars are out.

When worn this garment's symbolism corresponds to aspects of the wearer's body. That is head and tail, east and west, day and night match the head and body, right and left, front and back of the person.

The Circle and Half-Circle

Nancy Munn (1973) has suggested that in certain societies simple visual shapes and arrangements are consistently repeated through a variety of media. Art, dance and housing structures for example may all show the repeated forms of a circle, cross or concentric design. To these visual images are bound the society's ideas about the order and structures of their world. For Thompson society I would suggest that the central image found in a variety of media is the half circle and the circle.

The half circle is a symbol which appears on many of the Thompson artifacts seen in the museum collections. Teit documents this image on navel string bags¹³ and notes that the navel string designs are always horseshoe form and often appear as three concentric half-circles. The

13. Navel string bags were small decorated pouches which held the navel string of the baby and were attached to the child's cradle board.

design of a man on another navel string bag show his legs as an inverted U. This is interpreted by Teit's informants as the navel string from which he has grown.

The half-circle or U shape appears in several different positions in a sequence of images on the collar of a poncho.¹⁴ This is a personal narrative of the wearer's hunting trip in the mountain where he encounters a mysterious supernatural being or land mystery. This evil spirit draws the hunter's breath away. A friend of the hunter, an old man. who possesses mysterious knowledge sends forth his dream, magic or spirit and saves the hunter.

Almost every piece of clothing in the study collection has a horseshoe design usually in a triple or double image. It forms the neck piece or bib, or is drawn to outline the collar. On some dresses, it frames a symbol or representational scene from a dream or vision encounter. On the men's shirts it may just encircle the collar.

The U is often found inverted as in the man's legs on the navel string pouch, but also appears as an arc, rainbow or zenith, and may symbolize the passage of the sun or the passage of time. The arc was also drawn as the entrance to the lodge of the souls of the dead. ¹⁵ Thus the image of the half circle appears in various positions: upright U (birth, navel string), sideways (breath, spirit, super-

14. This poncho was described by Teit with the accompanying drawings, but I have been unable to discover its present location or a photograph of the poncho.

15. Teit-Boas correspondence, October 8, 1898, American Museum of Natural History.

natural) and inverted (death, passage of time, growth).

The image of the half circle can be further developed when viewed as a full circle. Looking at another medium of cultural life, the clearest image of the navel string in the triple form is found in the circle dance. Here the half circle becomes a full circle but still moves or functions as a half circle.

As discussed in Chapter Two, the circle dance is an important occasion in Thompson society, bringing together everyone in the community. Everyone participated, even those who in other circumstances would be ritually isolated such as menstruating women or people in mourning. The dancers formed three concentric circles containing three groups: unmarried men, unmarried women and married couples with their children. Two chiefs stood outside the circle, an elderly chief at the west and a younger man at the east. The dancing was started by the eastern chief, then both chiefs stepped to the middle of the three rings to lead the dance. With only a half circle completed, the dance stopped for prayers, then began again completing the circle with another half circle.

For Thompson society this half circle, particularly in its triple form was a focal visual symbol. It represented the life of the individual and the life of the community as a whole. But the circle and half circle appeared in two forms sometimes as an empty circle and sometimes containing an image or object.

In the circle dance the circle is empty. The chiefs move from the outside of the circle to the middle ring, not to the centre. They have merged visually with the rest of the community. But the application of the circle and half-circle to clothing is that the circle and half circle encircle the person himself or the visual representation of the person. On some pieces of clothing, the individual is encircled by lines around the collar waist or hem. On other garments, the U shape frames the image of the person's snem, dream, or record of the vision quest.

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The mountain motif is also expressed as a series of separated rounded peaks. A bear skin cloak which served as a pillow for a vision quest, has rounded shapes which form the border for the central image of the individual's guardian spirit.

A second type of encircling imagery is found around the shirt collar, e.g. a series of three lines, red, green and blue which are identified as earth, vegetation and water

on shirt number II-C-353. These lines encircle the wearer in the same way that three rings are found on the rim of the drum II-C-235 shown in chapter four. These concentric circles of red, yellow and blue encircle the form of an otter.

Conclusion

We see, then, the circle, an underlying image of the conceptual order, expressed both in imagery painted on clothing and in the integration of the form of the clothing with the form of the wearer's body.

The man's shirt (II-C-320) discussed at the beginning of the chapter presents imagery more diverse than the circle: sun, earth, mountains, sky, clouds and stars, and the image of the shirt is conveyed through both the connotation of the images and the organization of the painting. What is most striking about the composition of the painting on the shirt are the oppositions or complementarities presented:

sky

earth

east $\longleftrightarrow$ west

The composition on the back is separate from that on the front. Both preserve the relative positioning of sky and earth at polar ends of a vertical axis. Although it is not absolutely certain, back and front may represent day and night.

The painting on the front presents the critical points of progression in the day. In addition to the vertical axis of sky and earth is the horizontal axis, east at one end, west at the other. Central to the painting is the sun. The other images reinforce the symbolism: morning star - the beginning of the day, evening star - the inauguration of the night.

Each day sees the progression of the sun from east to west. Dawn and dusk were times for prayer, and the prayer songs and accounts of encounters with guardian spirits which Teit recorded (Teit n.d.) make it clear that the imagery of dawn and dusk, east and west, stood in Thompson thinking not only for day and night, but also for life and death.

This larger significance is expressed, too, in the circle dance, a dance initiated by a vision of the end of the world and conducted through imagery of continuing life (Laforet n.d. c). The circle is a progression from east to west, from birth to death, always with the promise of renewal. The polarities east and west, expressed in the imagery and composition of the shirt, are points in the cycle. Earth and sky, mountains and clouds, are frame and context for the cyclical progression which is central to the experience of life.

The circle is also an image of containment. The dance circle is empty in the centre. All of the dancers move in concert around the periphery to complete the

half circles that take them from east to west and back again. Clothing, however, allows the individual to occupy the centre and to make his status known through a visual statement. The circle dance is a shared community statement. Clothing in Thompson society permits the individual who wears the clothes to inhabit the centre of a visually drawn circle and place himself into his world.

Chapter 8:

Conclusion

Introduction

This study has organized and placed a museum collection of Thompson painted clothing within the socio-cultural context of the society that created it. In doing so it demonstrates the role that art and clothing played in traditional Thompson life and provides insight into the social and symbolic organization of the society.

Thompson Art and Clothing

Art and clothing, two independently existing systems of non-verbal communication, were combined in Thompson culture to create a rich medium for visual information. My analysis has shown several kinds of statements which were made on painted clothing and has discovered some of the means by which the messages were presented.

As message bearers, art and clothing could each be used alone. The clothes of poor people or other simple undecorated articles of dress still contained information about the sex, wealth, status and ritual position of the wearer. Images were painted on many surfaces aside from clothing and encoded information about Thompson culture. When clothing acted as a canvas for art, the content of one system extended, enhanced and reinforced the other.

The messages communicated through clothing contained information which was considered important in the society. Thus it was apparently necessary to know not only that an individual was female but also to indicate through clothing

differential status in regard to child-bearing potential. Pre-adolescents, pubescent girls, unmarried maidens, widows and women just after childbirth dressed differently from married women of child-bearing age. It was also important in Thompson society to be able to recognize successful men who served as leaders or advisors. Men's clothing made statements of social status, wealth and personal achievement. Ritual status of the individual was important information and a system of codes in clothing and art existed to indicate shamans, fathers and guardians of twins, widows and pubescent children. The drawing of a vision quest or reference to a snem informed the viewer of a person's association with a powerful supernatural guardian. All of these visual messages expressed on clothing influenced the pattern of behaviour of the community to the wearer.

Clothing can also be seen as making statements about the social and cosmic order. Painted clothing imagery reinforced the individual's identity with the common experience by stating his position and activities within the accepted framework of actions and communication. Men's shirts, for example, show their activities, weapons and tools. Imagery on pubescent children's clothing often showed the behaviour expected of the individual upon entering the adult community. A girl's dress showed pictures of her future husband while a boy's shirt showed the weapons or tools of his future activities. Painted clothing also restated the cosmic order, through single images acting as

multivalent symbols and through composition and imagery of complex designs.

The study of Thompson painted clothing has shown patterns in the choice of imagery, composition and material surface. Paintings on clothing used the same general visual vocabulary that was applied to a variety of other surfaces. However, clothing, like other items of material culture, e.g. drums, hats, puberty equipment, required formulation of designs and composition reflecting the object's use and shape. For example, the placement of certain motifs such as the U shape at the neck and lines at the seams and boundaries, appears fairly constant. The clothing material or design surface must also be considered as part of the message, reinforcing the design imagery by making a related statement in different ways. The skin of a person's guardian spirit animal, for example, immediately tells the viewer that the wearer, usually a man, has a special relationship with the supernatural persona, while the painted imagery contains information regarding the acquisition of this power or the person who has acquired it.

Through clothing a member of Thompson society made a statement about himself, his community and the cosmological beliefs by which he lived. Following certain visual patterns complex messages were encoded in painted clothing to reveal personal information while reflecting and reinforcing models of behaviour and belief. Thompson painted clothing bound

informants will verify or correct the interpretation of painted clothing as social and symbolic communication.

Material culture studies are also becoming increasingly important to native revitalization movements. Museum collections are a primary source of traditional objects and designs that can be copied for contemporary use. Members of the Thompson community have expressed interest in this study of painted clothing and in a recent catalogue of Teit photographs (Tepper n.d.). A Thompson person visiting Ottawa stated to the author that he hoped traditional Thompson clothing styles would one day replace the Northwest Coast and Plains costumes used for powwows and dances. This material culture study, by organizing and describing artifacts from four museums in Canada and the United States, has made one aspect of Thompson traditional culture more accessible to the contemporary society.

Alternative Focuses

As noted in Chapter One, the analysis of material culture within a sociocultural context was selected as one of three possible focuses (Arima 1978:2). This focus was chosen of necessity because of the lack of previous research which could provide an "empirical base" for a comparative or disciplinary focus. The research on painted clothing as visual communication has helped to establish a framework of traditional Thompson social and cultural organization for further research and analysis. There are

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possibilities for the study of Thompson material culture within a comparative context. Several methodologies within the discipline could be applied to the analysis of painted clothing which might provide further insight into Thompson society and with this insight bring implications for the anthropological handling of material culture.

Semiotics

Welch (1981:327) has commented on the semiotic nature of material culture.

Artifacts are especially well suited to semiotic analysis: they have meaning, they are structured both internally and in relation to other objects, and they are employed with effect on the physical environment and on social interaction. These three qualities of material objects correspond to the semiotic dimensions defined primarily for the analysis of language, of syntactics, semantics and pragmatics.

This study has shown that painted clothing contains meaning and has an internal structure with regard to patterns of use and application of design to object. Further work on Thompson material culture could establish the syntactical framework of communication, define the semantic content of the painted clothing and increase our understanding of the functions that painted clothing had in the society. The application of this approach would offer a well documented case study of material culture as semiotics.

Structural Analysis

Painted clothing could also be defined as a component of a data base for a structural analysis of Thompson society. The symbol system which is expressed through art and clothing "categorize(s), organiz(s) and reveal(s) the structure of specific aspects of a cultural world" (Washburn 1981:3).

Although much of the most recent work in areas related to the study of visual imagery has concentrated on art as symbolic structure (Munn 1973; Leach 1974), a recent study has applied structural analysis to clothing (Schwartz 1981).

The specific aspect of the Thompson world to which painted clothing relates is the position of the human being not only in society but also in the cosmos. It is evident that the relationship to the cosmos, especially, was not a single, closed issue but a matter for constant thought, definition and concern in Thompson life. In the composition of design and the choice and manipulation of imagery we see balanced, repeated symbolic sequences, with an implication of cyclical progression. We have seen this in the context of highly individualized expression of personal relationships with the supernatural. The implications of this pattern remain to be explored, not only in clothing, but also in other domains of Thompson life.

Conclusion

Material culture identifies topics of concern within a society, incorporating patterns and encoding messages discernible in other aspects of life. This thesis has integrated artifact, documentation, archival sources and ethnographic writings and in doing so has placed Thompson painted clothing into a sociocultural matrix in which it can be effectively seen and analysed.

Through the analysis of the organization of each composition, the meanings associated with painted symbols and the implications of the placement of symbols within the design and of the organization of the design in relation to the wearer's body, the thesis has explored clothing as a means of visual communication within Thompson society. Ethnographic material relating to other aspects of Thompson life has been of considerable importance in understanding the important features of this visual communication. In turn the patterns inherent in composition and symbolic meaning of paintings on artifacts point to themes which promise to be critical to a general understanding of traditional Thompson thought.

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