social change and the creation of underdevelopment: a Northwest Coast case

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Aboriginal communities across Canada face serious and difficult problems of the type usually associated with the underdeveloped regions of the world. Life expectancies are ten years lower than the Canadian average. Poverty, suicide rates, alcohol and drug abuse rates, and penal internment and recidivism all occur at levels far greater than the national average and indicate serious social problems. These and numerous other problems typical of the living conditions of aboriginal people have been well documented (for example, Canada, Indian and Northern Affairs 1980; Frideres 1988; Ponting 1986). Of the numerous solutions that have been suggested, the most favored approach has been government intervention. Yet, after 125 years of mediation by the Canadian government, aboriginal people still experience grave difficulties in pursuing their economic and political goals. The Canadian situation is not unique. Parallels exist in the United States, Australia, New Zealand, and other highly developed nations where indigenous[1] peoples live in anomalous pockets of underdevelopment. These nation-states have profoundly failed to ameliorate the crippling social conditions that are pervasive throughout the indigenous part of the national social formation.

Key concepts that have emerged in Canadian anthropology for understanding the unequal relations between aboriginal peoples and Euro-Canadian society are dependency, coercion, and domination. The importance of these concepts is well established, but much work is still needed "to resolve basic questions concerning how and why native peoples became dependent, . . . how they were alienated from the resources . . . and [how they were] prevented from making major decisions concerning their own lives" (Trigger 1988:38). This article contributes to that research agenda. I focus on the Tsimshian, a Northwest Coast society[2] in northwestern British Columbia, to discuss the underlying forces that led to and maintain the economic and social underdevelopment of aboriginal communities. Specific information from the social history of the community of Kitsumkalum is used to examine how Tsimshian society articulated with the world economy, how the articulation varied historically, and how the efforts of the people to make a successful living for themselves were continually undermined. My emphasis is on the regional development of capitalist relations of production, the impact on aboriginal develop-

The situation of many aboriginal peoples in Canada manifests similarities to the dependency exhibited in the underdeveloped world. This article examines changing relations of production, to outline the evolution of the articulation of a northwest coast Tsimshian community with the world economy. The Tsimshians participated in several relations of production, including those represented by various circuits of capital, to develop the Tsimshian economic formation, creating a dependency at the same time as the economic conditions were being appropriated into the emerging capitalist economic formation, out of the control of the Tsimshians and stifling their further development. [social change, development, dependency, Northwest Coast, Tsimshian]

American Ethnologist 21(1):152–175.

ment, and the ways in which the aboriginal participation in the emerging economic order was structured.

Theoretical reference points are derived from studies of the underdeveloped world, in particular from various approaches of the dependency paradigm. This paradigm is very helpful in understanding aboriginal societies because of the insistence that "present conditions are historically derived and must be historically explained by looking at the growth and consolidation of the present world system" (White 1983:xvii). By examining the limitations capitalist development imposes on indigenous people, this approach can avoid the fallacy of blaming the victim. The basic premise can also force us beyond the usual, sharply focused critique of government policy, in particular critiques of the Department of Indian Affairs and the Indian Act, and into the broader societal context that encompasses government itself. The broader context includes, besides the Canadian government, the form and dynamics of the aboriginal economic formation, the regional manifestation of the expanding world market, and the articulation of the local and the regional.

situating dependency and underdevelopment

Early theorists using the dependency approach often explained dependency as the outcome of a set of structural contradictions in metropolis/satellite relationships that govern, hinder, and distort the development of the satellite economy by draining potential economic surpluses to the metropolis (for example, Frank 1969). These structural relationships, which Dos Santos called the "conditioning situation" (1978:76), were seen to determine the limits and possibilities of development in the satellites. Thus, the problems of development were associated with an international division of labor that allowed development in some areas while restricting it in others. More particularly, metropolitan countries were seen to be "endowed with technological, commercial, capital, and sociopolitical predominance over dependent countries—the form of this predominance varying according to the particular historical moment—and can therefore exploit them" (Dos Santos 1978:76). To understand how the conditioning situation can develop some parts of the global economic system at the expense of others, and how resources can be transferred from the underdeveloped regions to the developed centers (for example, Dos Santos 1978:64), analyses were made of the economic relations in the metropolis, the external expansion of the metropolis, the economic relations in the satellite, and the compromises and agreements made between both areas (O'Brien 1975:15).

Critics of the metropolis/satellite dependency model argued that Frank erred by concentrating too much on the distribution of economic surpluses (that is, the market economy), and by locating the origin of underdevelopment in the way the dependent economies are inserted into the world market (for example, LaClau 1977). Critics also noted that the metropolis/satellite dichotomy, with its spatial orientation, did not bring into focus the diversity of local social relationships that connect people in small communities to the broader (regional, national, international) economic formations.

The Frankian approach was useful for macroframeworks and general historical statements but, by itself, was less suitable for microanalysis of economic formations (Foster-Carter 1978:212; Long 1975:263). Alternative analyses examined social relations of production and modes of production, the contention being that the "ensemble of relations of production linked to the ownership of the means of production" (Laclau 1977:34) are the relations for channeling economic surplus, for the division of labor, and for the expansion of the forces of production. Studies of relations of production are now familiar to anthropology (for example, Clammer 1978; O'Laughlin 1975; Seddon 1978; Worsley 1984). They helped clarify the social relations by which resources are exploited (Oxaal et al. 1975:3). This clarification, in turn, permitted

fuller understandings of the ways communities participate in the capitalist economy and of the diverse connections that structure their complex participation.

In many cases, such as the Tsimshian, capitalist development restructured the indigenous relations of production without transforming the economy "effectively and entirely" into a capitalist economy (Frank 1969:5). This is a defining feature of Tsimshian dependency and is a critical conditioning factor for contemporary Tsimshian life. The Tsimshian situation is similar to that reported for other aboriginal groups in Canada, for example, the Beaver (Brody 1983[1981]), the Dene (Asch 1986), and the Cree (Salisbury 1986). By explicating the complexity of the restructured local economic formation, the concept of relations of production clarifies the nature of aboriginal dependency and helps explain the persistence of noncapitalist forms of social production. Methodologically, identification of each of the various production processes, so as to specify the utilization of the means of production and the division of labor, allows identification of the social relationships that control the various means of production, the various allocations of labor, and the circulation of products. Since social change can originate from changes in the ways that the means of production (resources and technology) plus labor are combined, detailed knowledge about the reproduction of aboriginal production over time can show how aboriginal societies transform and become dependent (for example, Meillassoux 1972; Wolf 1983).

Field studies of small communities such as Kitsumkalum have revealed that many diverse processes of production, not simply one, operate to produce the group's total social needs (O'Laughlin 1975:346). Households typically depend on the continuity of several sets of production, and individuals often operate in more than one mode of production. People create various connections and exchanges between all the operative modes of production, and between local economic formations and broader ones (Long 1975). The ways these connections are established are part of the structure of the conditions of dependency and underdevelopment in the community.

Critical to the analysis are changes in ownership patterns, insofar as ownership affects the functioning of the productive and distributive economy. Particular features of property that are useful for understanding dependency involve relationships to resources and control over labor. Two basic forms of ownership can be distinguished: legal and real (Clement 1983:217). Legal ownership refers to the judicial relations, which may or may not entail actual economic control. Real ownership, on the other hand, entails an ability to actually exercise control. The two are not identical, and disjunctures may exist between the legal definition of, and the real exercise of, control over property. This was the case when Canadian legislation was extended to the new province of British Columbia, a decade before enforcement could incorporate Tsimshian resources. The concept of real ownership can be further differentiated into an ability to command the means of production (economic ownership) and a more simple capacity to use the means of production (economic possession). Economic possession permits only limited decisions concerning the labor process. These different forms of property contextualize the relationships between aboriginal labor and the local means of production, the structuring and restructuring of labor's relation to production, and the incorporation of labor in various relations of production. This is the context in which capital expands locally and alienates aboriginal people from control of the production processes. It is also the context in which local economies integrate with regional, national, and international economic formations.

In this article I set two questions: (1) How did new social relations, in the form of property arrangements redefined with government intervention, transfer ownership and control of the factors of production to the industrialists and, in the process, redefine local resources, technology, and labor in terms consistent with the development of capital rather than with the development of indigenous Tsimshian goals; (2) how was Tsimshian labor diverted from Tsimshian development into the capitalist economy, where it was transformed and ultimately

incorporated into an imperialist global social formation in which the Tsimshians had little or no control. My time frame is the century after the colony of British Columbia joined the Canadian Confederation in 1871.

Given the differentiation of the Tsimshian political economy, a full understanding of the Tsimshian situation would require examination of all the major sectors of the productive economy together (including hunting, fishing commercially and for food, gathering, gardening, trapping, logging, small businesses, and wage labor). Here, I only describe the Tsimshian articulation with the Imperial economic formation in general terms and provide specific substantiation from evidence concerning the important salmon resource. Documentation for other sectors of the economic formation was presented elsewhere (McDonald 1984, 1985, 1987).

Since my intention is limited to outlining how the old political economy was undermined, I do not deal fully with the Tsimshian response. By concentrating on the establishment of the conditions of dependency and underdevelopment, I do not mean to imply that the Tsimshians acquiesced passively. They did not. However, only relevant moments in their ongoing struggle against colonial domination are mentioned below. Additional information on that history is documented elsewhere (McDonald 1984, 1985, 1990a, 1990b; see also Seguin 1985)

Kitsumkalum today

In the 1970s and 1980s, Kitsumkalum was a small village,[3] home to a band of approximately 110 registered Indians plus an additional 300 or 400 people who could be recognized socially as "Kitsumkalums." This larger community was and still is dispersed residentially, but it is concentrated around the cities of Terrace and Prince Rupert in British Columbia. Some people left the village for education or work; others left to find accommodation; a few simply preferred not to live in close proximity to the community; and for others, their lack of Indian status was an impediment to living on the reserve with relatives who had status.[4]

Today, Kitsumkalum people participate in the regional economy by working for wages. The village is close to an urban center and relatively well positioned for employment. During the period I gathered information on occupations, 1979–81, most men considered themselves to be loggers. Unfortunately, logging is seasonal and subject to layoffs. During periods of unemployment, the men fall back on other types of work (if available), or unemployment insurance, or they simply treated layoff as time off. Other, minor types of occupations for men in 1981 included court worker, cannery employee, office worker, and artist. Most married women were housewives. The few who were employed for wages worked at office work, waitressing, and clerking for stores. Some made crafts.

An important employer for the reserve community is the Band Administration. In the 1970s and early 1980s, a group, usually consisting of seven men, performed administrative and general maintenance tasks in the village. This employment was unreliable because Band funds were subject to a number of external pressures, and sharp reductions in the staff complement were frequent. When layoffs occurred, few alternative jobs were available. The workers and their families suffered. The hardships of unemployment, however, were mitigated by the fact that many wage earners also hunted, fished, harvested wild resources from the land, and maintained gardens—activities that allowed them to retain their Tsimshian identity, even as they participated in the capitalist economy.

Kitsumkalum in the 19th century

A primary source of social identity comes from membership in the village. Traditionally, most Tsimshian communities had permanent winter village locations on the coast. Only aboriginal Kitsumkalum and its sister village of Kitselas maintained winter villages inland. The territorial holdings of these two villages, near the present city of Terrace, were the furthest inland of the Tsimshian properties. Kitsumkalum and Kitselas are approximately 90 miles upriver from the coast and, like their Gitksan neighbors to the east, families from both communities visited the coast only on occasion during the winter. The 19th century settlement pattern is reflected today in the distribution of the seven contemporary Tsimshian villages.

Prior to Canadian Confederation, since time immemorial, fishing, hunting, and gathering, for domestic consumption and trade, were the mainstay of Kitsumkalum's economy. These productive sectors, through the relationships the Tsimshian had to the resources, provided the material basis of the broader social relationships in Kitsumkalum. Traditionally, surpluses of salmon and many other abundant resources supported a complicated class structure with a basic distinction between freemen and slaves. The freemen were further classified along several axes into noble lineages and non-noble lineages, into titleholders (or chiefs and headmen) and commoners, and into graded ranks determined by the relative importance of each title. Titleholders controlled the main productive property of their matrilineal corporate groups. They were individuals of wealthy heritage, trained to their positions, who acquired their status through inheritance and political feasts called potlatches. This system of governance has survived and contemporary Tsimshian leaders use the principles of the feast (potlatch) in their struggles for self government within the Canadian political order (McDonald 1990b; Seguin 1985).

Like other Tsimshian villages, Kitsumkalum was an independent community when Europeans first appeared. Under such circumstances, the Tsimshian had the confidence to take advantage of the new economic opportunities afforded by the expansion of the European economy. When the Hudson Company established Fort Simpson in 1832, Tsimshian lineages sold food to the Europeans: game, fish, cakes of berries, seaweed, and potatoes.[5] They also harvested logs, searched for the minerals the Europeans wanted, and sold various manufactures that the Europeans required for their comfort and work. In return, the Tsimshians received goods that they could not manufacture from their own resources and/or technology and/or goods that were cheaper (in terms of labor time to produce or maintain) than those the Tsimshian could make themselves. In a short period of time, small businesses developed. Freighting became an important commercial interest. Other early commercial ventures involved the manufacture of canoes, oil, nets, handicrafts, and even bootlegged liquor (McDonald 1984:45–46).

Despite auspicious beginnings, the imperialist nature of colonial development soon distorted the evolution of the Tsimshian social economy. Colonial government evolved quickly and asserted its authority in Tsimshian territories, backed by the British military. Nonetheless, the Tsimshian were generally left to mind their own internal affairs, at least until evangelical missionaries arrived in the 1850s. The most notable mission was Duncan's model village at Metlakatla, which was considered one of the great missionary accomplishments of Victorian times. These early influences left their impact, but the most thorough reorganization of Tsimshian life occurred after Canadian Confederation.

The Act of Union (1871) brought British Columbia into the Canadian Confederation and inaugurated a new era for Tsimshian articulations with the world market. Rapid re-organization of property connections brought the means of production in line with the needs of capital. The extension of Canadian and provincial laws and the establishment of a reserve system removed, according to the assumptions imposed by the Canadian legal system, formal legal ownership and social control of resources from the lineages, the titleholders, and the new Tsimshian entrepreneurs. The transfer was not orderly. There were no treaties or other forms of negotiation

to reconcile differences between the Tsimshian and Canadian legal systems. One result was that Tsimshians and foreigners alike claimed many ancient sites for their respective, often fundamentally different, purposes.

Aboriginally, Kitsumkalum's landed property was concentrated in and around the mountainous valley of the Kitsumkalum River. They still use and claim this territory. When the Indian Reserve Commission defined Indian Reserves for the Tsimshian during the 1890s, Kitsumkalum was allotted only three small parcels from the traditional land holdings. Historically, the establishment of the Indian Reserves was an important symbolic step in the Canadian appropriation of the Tsimshian resource base. The allocation and imposition of reserves, along with Canada's assumption that the Tsimshian accept the law of the new regime, indicates the extent to which Tsimshian social goals had became officially subordinated under Canadian hegemony. As such, the advent of the reserves provides a convenient historic benchmark for the transformation of the Tsimshian into a dependent population although, clearly, the reserves should not be viewed as the cause of underdevelopment and dependency but rather a symptom.

Political opposition occurred (for example, the Metlakatla troubles of 1884, see British Columbia 1885) and continues today (for example, Gisday and Delgam Uukw 1989), but the Tsimshian response during the 19th century was conditioned by their recognition of Canada's military abilities. The Canadian government understood this and purposively displayed its strength, and even deployed force on occasion (McDonald 1984). Beyond the military factor, the social organization of capitalist production, which is the focus of this article, had a major corrosive effect that compromised Tsimshian objections and objectives.

With foreign assumption of economic control over the regional resources, Tsimshian abilities to incorporate and reincorporate resources into their changing productive processes, or to develop the resources according to Tsimshian goals, were curtailed by legal restrictions, overexploitation, or waste of materials. New patterns of land use and occupancy emerged and evolved, restructuring the Tsimshian cultural ecology (McDonald 1987). Tsimshian labor found its tools under legislative attack, its resources alienated, and its very existence increasingly tied to the conditions of commodity production. Real control shifted out of Tsimshian hands into those of industry and of a foreign government in which the Tsimshian had no electoral say.

Gradually, all the chief productive resources were subsumed by capital, separated from the Tsimshian labor that worked them, and dislocated from the Tsimshian economic formation (McDonald 1985). As more and more wedges were driven into the Tsimshian economic relationships, Tsimshian labor was effectively freed from Tsimshian modes of production and assumed the character of a commodity for its direct encounter with capital. The present article examines this process in detail for the fishing sector.

A transformation has obviously occurred in Tsimshian life, but the change was not simply a movement out of a hunting and gathering condition into the "modern world." The evidence suggests the Tsimshians were originally an integral "part of" regional development, rather than "apart from" it. Furthermore, the original Tsimshian experiences with the expanding world economy had contributed to the development of their own economic formation and had generated prosperity for them.

As I will argue in this article, an explanation for the reversals in Tsimshian economic development can be found in the way the Tsimshian relationship to world capitalism was defined, transforming the relations of production, restricting the growth of the Tsimshian economy, and making Tsimshian development dependent on the dominant economic forces of Canada. The emerging economic order first used and then pushed the Tsimshians aside. The structuring of their relationship to the Canadian political economy stunted the Tsimshian ability to develop their economy evenly and for their own benefit. Even the economic development of the reserve lands quickly became subject to control and approval by the values of the foreign

Canadian economy (mediated through the terms of land leases or the sale of resources) and bureaucracy (embodied in the Indian Act and the Department of Indian Affairs).

The fundamental irony of dependency, typical of the histories of aboriginal groups in the New World, underlies the situation of the Tsimshian. Economic development in the territories formerly controlled by the Tsimshian has taken off and has contributed significantly to the development of wealth in the province. But for the aboriginal people, development failed. The Tsimshian were alienated from the wealth of their territory, and the potential offered by the new economic opportunities was never realized. A detailed example of this history is the changes imposed on the nature of property rights to the fish resource.

aboriginal ownership of fish

Precontact ownership patterns for aquatic resources are difficult to reconstruct from the anthropological literature and archives, but the indications are that ownership was complex and precise. Darling's review of the existing literature found reference to the exclusive ownership by households of cod and halibut banks, sea lion and seal rocks, kelp beds, sea bird sites, and stretches of beach (1956:10–11). The Barbeau and Beynon (1914–56) field notes refer further to a number of specific Kitsumkalum fishing stations along the Kitsumkalum River, especially in the canyon area, and I have documented specific types of rights Kitsumkalum titleholders claimed to aquatic resources (McDonald 1983). Other sources also mention hereditary fishing rights and grounds (for example, Canada, Indian Affairs 1878:68–69). All these rights remain relevant today, as a part of the feast system (McDonald 1990b; Seguin 1985) and as evidence to support Tsimshian land claims.

The Act of Union suppressed Tsimshian legal ownership. Legislation attacking Tsimshian ownership of aquatic resources, by restricting access to the resource and defining the property relationship, was embodied in the Canadian Fisheries Act and in the British Columbia Game Protection Act of 1877, which was replaced by the British Columbia Fisheries Act of 1901. Both levels of legislation are now administered by Federal Fisheries officers in Terrace and Prince Rupert.

The declaration of these laws was not coincident with their enforcement. The Dominion Fisheries Act was not extended to the province until 1874 (S.C. 31V. C60s15).[6] Nonetheless, when foreign interests arrived in the north to exploit the fisheries, they brought their own concepts of property and property law, and conflicts quickly arose over resource ownership. The contempt of cannery owners toward the established Tsimshian tenure system was an early source of troubles. Immediately after the establishment of the first cannery, Tsimshian leaders protested encroachments on their hereditary fishing rights by the capitalist fishery (Canada, Indian Affairs 1878:68). Many of these complaints concerned interference with fishing grounds by cannery directed gillnetters. The 1878 troubles at Kitkatla, which led to policing actions by an imperial gunboat, resulted from the invasion of Kitkatla's fishing grounds by cannery fishermen (Canada, Indian Affairs 1879:114; Canada, Fisheries, Narratives 1878:296). Such encroachments were most frequent on the Skeena River itself, where the capitalist fishery was both concentrated and more intensive (for example, Canada, Indian Affairs 1881:154; Canada, Indian Affairs 1884:277–278, Canada, Indian Affairs 1886, 1890). Other serious problems concerned the establishment of cannery plants on top of shore stations or villages (such plants were protected under S.C. 31V C60 s.3).

To reduce tensions and ostensibly protect Indian rights, the Fishery Inspector suggested the establishment of the reserve system (Canada, Indian Affairs 1879:134). The government hired a commissioner in 1881 to investigate the problems (Canada, Indian Affairs 1881:154), and ten years later he was authorized to allot reserves on the Skeena. In the meantime, the government's

cynical but accurate characterization of the problem was that the Tsimshians felt they owned the country (Canada, Indian Affairs 1886:xi; cf. British Columbia, Sessional Papers 1887).

The method of overcoming such an attitude was, simply, to enforce the Canadian legislation. The next section outlines how the transfer of economic control, from the Tsimshian lineages to capitalist enterprise, was effected.

alienation of economic control

For a number of years after Canada assumed ownership, the government felt a lenient policy was a "suitable" approach (if not expedient, considering the expensive gunboat diplomacy that was involved) to enforcement of the legislated control. This policy changed with the growth of the capitalist fisheries.

Application of the fisheries legislation was gradual. A Fisheries Officer first visited the area in 1877, to show the flag for the canners, in the company of the Superintendent of Indian Affairs and on board the Department of Indian Affairs vessel, HM gunship *Rocket*. This was the same boat that earlier had bombed Kimsquit village to "charred ruins" (Cole 1985:78). The officer returned in 1878 and 1881, again escorted by a force. These were not much more than token visits, but they were powerfully symbolic.

Regulation began in earnest with the appointment of the first resident Fishery Guardian to Port Essington and region in 1885. The office was expanded in 1889 when an additional officer was appointed specifically for the Skeena River. Yet, despite the staff, confusion over Indian rights and the disquiet of the Tsimshians probably resulted in an uneven application of the law, even at the turn of century, especially in the more remote areas.

Nonetheless, by the 1880s there were numerous restrictions upon the fish resource, and tensions were growing between the Tsimshian and immigrant populations. The Guardian had to find some way to enforce, without causing too much trouble, a rather large body of laws governing the resource, technology, and labor (McDonald 1985, 1987).

In lieu of the Tsimshians' original control over fishing, a special set of exemptions—the food fishing clauses that allowed fishing for subsistence—were being developed by the Dominion through Orders in Council of the Privy Council (P.C.) first in 1878 and later clarified by P.C. 26 November 1888 (Canada, Fisheries, Annual Reports 1888:xiv). This legislation recognized the continuing importance of the aboriginal economy for the survival of the Indian, but only in the context of the new property relationship that integrated the salmon into the commodity economy.

Significantly, the recognized rights did not protect the long established Tsimshian (or, more generally, Indian) trade in fish, which also was important to their economy. On the contrary, the law prohibited trading food fish. Nineteenth-century trade in fish had been an early point for Tsimshian articulation with the expanding capitalist economy. A fish market had existed at least since the Hudson Bay Company established its fort on the Tsimshian Peninsula (at Port Simpson in 1834). As at other company posts throughout the continent, the "Baymen" at Port Simpson relied on aboriginal production of fish, meat, berries, et cetera, for a significant part of their diet. This market immediately became important to the aboriginal people, who supplied large quantities of fish and other food stuffs to the fort for many years (McDonald 1985:164–166). Without evidence to the contrary, I assume that Tsimshians engaged in this early trade at Port Simpson for the procurement of other use-values, possibly prestige goods for feasting, rather than for the accumulation of capital. Over time, the trade may have changed into a small business involving petty accumulation in the hands of some individuals, but the archival record lacks particulars. As I will detail later, the trade ultimately involved the canneries, but with the appearance of the canneries, the new property relationships were enforced and refined.

The refinements of a 1908 Order in Council placed further restrictions on Indian fishing by requiring Indians to report where, when, and how they had fished (Canada, Fisheries, Annual Report 1908:15; Canada, Canada Gazette 1908:3209). To complete the restrictions, P.C. 11 September 1917 placed limits on the number of food fish taken and the time of the fishing (Canada, Canada Gazette 1917:3397). The limits were regulated by the Inspector. This attack on Tsimshian control of the resource and of their labor was so thorough that officers were empowered to inspect, without warrants, buildings, boats, and cars for evidence of a violation of the Act (R.S.B.C. 1911 C89 s.27).[7] Any such evidence became prima facie evidence of the violation (R.S.B.C. 1911 C89 s.29). Salmon, the symbolic heart of the aboriginal economy, was now totally embedded within and defined by capitalist property relations.

Thus, the situation at the time of my fieldwork in the 1980s was that most forms of control over the fish resource had been alienated from the people of Kitsumkalum. Only the food fishing rights preserved a modicum of a legal property relationship, albeit one that was also embedded in and defined by Canadian legislation and one that was fraught with tensions over political and ecological concerns. Relationships between the Federal Fisheries and food fisherman were badly strained. Throughout the 1980s, governmental supervision of the fisheries was perceived to be strict, and Indian fishermen generally assumed they were under continual observation while they tended their nets. While we can treat this perception as a rhetorical exaggeration, the political protest around the problem has cited a surprising number of incidents of clandestine operations against Indian people. And, exaggeration or not, this police shadow seemed ever present when one discussed the fishery or accompanied an Indian fisherman.

erosion of possession

During his tour of inquiry in 1891, the Reserve Commissioner promised the Kitsumkalum people that the fish in their district would not suffer interference from the newcomers (Public Archives of Canada 1891). Thus, Kitsumkalum would continue to exercise economic control over their inland fisheries as if, the implication was, no change had occurred. The reality of the situation was different, however, as the growth of the fishery regulations and further industrial development meant a gradual depletion of the resource by business and other interests. There were other changes, notably in the size of the runs.

From the start, the capitalist fishing industry had a major impact on the population size of the fish resource. In the 20th century, further harm was inflicted on the fish, this time at the inland spawning grounds, by settlers, saw mills, and gravel borrowing (Canadian National Railway 1975:7–23; McDonald 1985). The Kitsumkalum River salmon runs suffered from some of the earliest of these injuries, but the Fishery Narratives indicate large salmon populations survived in the Kitsumkalum system up to World War II (Canada, Fisheries, Narratives). At that time, the province revised its forestry policies and multinational forest corporations entered the area with new techniques that included highly destructive practices of clear-cutting and river log-running. Data in the annual Fisheries Narratives clearly connect the extension of such logging operations, which was rapid in Kitsumkalum Valley, to the simultaneous near extinction of the salmon run in each of the streams that passed through the affected areas (Canada, Fisheries, Narratives). In other sensitive river valleys, the problems were compounded by road and power line construction (Canadian National Railway 1975:7–24).

The depopulation of streams in the Kitsumkalum Valley obviously affected the people's ability to procure fish. To exercise their fishing rights, the community had to go to new fishing areas in the Skeena River. Consequently, the old fishing stations at their former main town site and along the Kitsumkalum River, once highly productive and famous, are now overgrown and nearly forgotten—the fish simply are not there and the people have left to fish elsewhere.[8]

These comments describing the alienation of the fish resource illustrate how "traditional production" in one sector was wrenched out of the social totality provided by the former social relations of Tsimshian society and slowly dissected by other interests in Canadian society. The transformation of the property relations caused these and other (formerly Tsimshian) resources to be redefined and valued primarily for their commercial usefulness to distant businessmen. The 19th-century Tsimshians had started to exploit the same resources for their own commercial goals, but the way their resources were redefined as commercial resources occurred in a manner far different from the vision those earlier participants had. Tsimshians today argue the change occurred in a manner far more disruptive then Tsimshian society would have allowed had the Tsimshians retained control over the resources and over development.

aboriginal rights

Another vexing change associated with the path of capitalist development was the colonial redefinition and restructuring of the Tsimshian economic formation along the dual lines of a "traditional sector," supposedly governed by the aboriginal culture, and a "modern sector," to be governed and developed by Canadian laws and society, that is to say, by capitalist reproduction. The "traditional economic pursuits" were then placed under various degrees of control by regulations that responded to the needs of industry (for example, for stock protection) and that suppressed development in that sector.

From the Canadian laws that define traditional economic activities come a set of aboriginal rights: the food fishery rights, hunting rights, and so on. These protect an important core of what remains of the "traditional economic relations" and constitute a set of contemporary traditional activities that Indians still fight to preserve. Social tensions have always plagued these rights. Historically, as long as the needs that capital might have for the resource associated with each aboriginal right do not become too aggressive, and so long as the aboriginal political organizations maintain their struggles, then aboriginal rights continue to exist. Their continued presence and importance in Canadian law is a testament to the political struggles of the aboriginal peoples.[9]

Aboriginal rights protect activities that are central to the survival of Kitsumkalum as a Tsimshian community within the dominant Canadian culture. As I have discussed elsewhere, these activities are the location of relations of production that both link contemporary individuals to each other as members of the community and link the contemporary community to its heritage (McDonald 1985). Despite the commodification of many of their resources and much of their labor, assimilation can be resisted at this location. The importance I ascribe to these activities with regard to Kitsumkalum also seems typical (to varying degrees) of other aboriginal communities (for example, Asch 1979, 1982). Such ensembles of relations of production within contemporary aboriginal economic formations appear to be the basis for the persistence of aboriginal communities as distinct societies in Canada.

commercially oriented activities

Commercial activities (fishing, logging, trapping, small businesses, wage labor) make important contributions to the economic totality and link the community to capitalist production in ways that sometimes benefit and sometimes harm the community.[10] Two aspects of the history of Kitsumkalum's articulation with the emerging capitalist social formation are especially useful for understanding the community's current situation. The first concerns the concentration of more and more of the means of production into the capitalist economy, an imperialist process manifested as the progressive commodification of the resources, technology, and labor-power

necessary for social production. The history of the appropriation of these factors includes the destruction of the regional economic formation dominated by the Tsimshians and the dispossession of the Kitsumkalum people. I have already discussed these aspects of the articulation.

The second concerns the evolution of the form of the articulation itself. Like other Tsimshian communities, the people of Kitsumkalum were historically willing to become involved with the various circuits of capital that operated in the region, making the reproduction of their community a structurally more complicated process, practically since the initial contact situation. Early evidence reveals Tsimshian participation in the fur trade with an effective monopoly over certain regions, and their quick reevaluation of the forest resources as a commercial resource to supply the Hudson Bay Company post at Port Simpson. Forty years later, when industry developed in Tsimshian territories, Tsimshian entrepreneurs recognized the industrial importance of the forest and exploited it, accordingly, to supply sawmills. These are examples. A broader survey would demonstrate Tsimshian participation in several modes of production, including forms of small commodity production, small business, and wage labor. As I have documented elsewhere, new opportunities were integrated with older forms of production into a dynamically changing economic formation (McDonald 1984, 1985).

The Tsimshian economy became increasingly complex during the 19th century, but with the suppression of their control over their means of production, such growth was restricted. The subsumption of their resources and labor by an imperialist Canada structured Tsimshian participation in capitalist production and, outside of that type of production, left the Tsimshians to exploit an atrophied list of resources in a much regulated way.

the evolution of capitalist production

The global expansion of the capitalist economy from Europe, its establishment and further growth in the (pre-Confederation) Canadas and United States, and the development of the British imperialism in the North Pacific, offered the Tsimshians new opportunities for economic development. Indigenous economic pursuits, resources, and technologies were regeared for production for new markets, and Tsimshian trading expanded as a commodity economy grew. Simultaneously, the evolving imperialist system asserted itself in Tsimshian territories. Property arrangements were transformed, as legal ownership was usurped by the Imperial Crown and legal control was assumed by the interests it represented. Commercial initiatives by Tsimshian freighters, merchants, business men, commercial fishermen, and handloggers were repositioned under the direction of powerful, foreign, monied interests. Indian harvests of fish and logs, for example, became the commercial fishing and forestry industries as the purpose of production changed from goals indigenous to Tsimshian society, including both subsistence and the expansion of Tsimshian social practices, to the goals of accumulating capital and reproducing capitalist production.

Tsimshians made important contributions to early capitalist accumulation in the northwest. Before Canadian settlement, Tsimshian labor provided an essential source of variable capital to industry in the region. Tsimshian economic organization as small commodity producers assisted the early accumulation of capital by providing support services, commodities, and even some investment. On the other side of the coin, Kitsumkalum's involvement in the capitalist formation was dependent upon the level of development of capital. Their dependency was affected by two especially notable factors: (1) the more capital available, in terms of both quantity and variety, the greater the opportunities for Tsimshians; (2) however, the historic form taken by each type of capital, which was the product of its own moment of development, structured the manner by which Tsimshians were able to enter production.

The level of the development of capital, in turn, depended upon the ability of the region to provide for needs in the global capitalist social formation and/or on the ability of the capitalists

to fulfill these needs. Again, the salmon fishery can provide an example. The hunger of the workers of Britain in the mid-19th century, themselves suffering from the commodification and devaluation of their labor during the industrial revolution, created a need both to locate a cheap source of protein and a market, and canned salmon from North America became part of the solution (as did corned beef from the Argentine). This sparked the development of the canning industry, provided an imperial market for a Tsimshian resource, led to the reduction of salmon stocks and the growth of state involvement, and ended with the appropriation of this Tsimshian resource and associated labor into a form of production dominated by capitalist principles of organization. Similarly, other needs in the capitalist social formation were tended by other sectors of the imperial economy growing along the Skeena River.

The intervention of the state (Great Britain, the Colony of British Columbia, Canada, the Province of British Columbia, international state relationships) served to define, regulate, and encourage the development of production along capitalist lines. As I have shown for fishing, state policy played an important role in the transformation of the regional economic formation, by the restructuring of the Tsimshian economy, and by dismantling their dominance. The state not only gave the game away to capital, it specified the rules for Tsimshian participation by creating legislation and policies premised with racial assumptions (for example, the Indian Act and the Anti-Oriental laws). In other words, government intervention structured the relations of dependency and exploitation, and conditioned the Tsimshian articulation with the world economy. Postconfederation legislation usurped the authority of Tsimshian governing practices, for example, the potlatch, and ended Tsimshian ability to develop either the local resources or the emerging economic opportunities according to their own cultural values and priorities. Since the 1970s, the need to regain control over these matters has emerged as a major focus of the political agenda of the community as it struggles to overcome the problems caused by the underdevelopment of its own economic potential and its dependency on the market economy. The transformation of the fishing resource illustrates how the Tsimshians were inserted into industrial production.

the case of commercial fishing

The fishing industry was once a key part of Kitsumkalum's existence. Yet, when I first became acquainted with the village in 1979, there were no active fishermen or shore workers.[11] In the nonstatus community, the situation was somewhat better. Some still fished—less than half a dozen, plus wives and other family members—and an undetermined number were employed as shore workers. To understand how this reduction occurred, we need to review the changes in the means of production. In this part of my discussion, the dispossession of Kitsumkalum from ownership of the resources is assumed, and the focus is on the subsumption of Indian labor under capitalist relations of production.

As mentioned earlier, the history of Tsimshian commercial fishing began with the arrival of the Hudson Bay Company fur traders. Tsimshians were already involved in a fish market when the salmon canning companies arrived in the 1870s. They were in an excellent position to supply the canners and also held an advantage over nonaboriginal fishermen who were in a frontier situation. Although we have few details about the earliest fishing period, there was a clear and deliberate attempt on the part of the government and canners to separate the aboriginal and commercial fisheries and to ensure the distinction would not be confused by Indians selling fish they had caught by any means that bypassed the canners. As early as 1878, the Inspector of Fisheries stipulated to the Indians of the province that, while their own fisheries would not suffer interference (which I already have discussed), their participation in commercial fishing would be fully governed by the general law (Canada, Fisheries, Annual Report 1879:293). The "problem" of illegal independent fishing by Indians for sale to the canneries was an immediate

concern for the first resident Guardian (Canada, Fisheries, Annual Report 1888:vii). Indians were soon explicitly forbidden (P.C. 4 May 1916 [Canada, Canada Gazette 1916:1971]) from transporting fish caught above tidal boundaries to areas below, unless the fish was in processed form and thus of no value to the canners. This order was tightened the following year with P.C. 11 September 1917 (Canada, Canada Gazette 1917:3397) to forbid the purchase of any food fish and placed on the Indians the burden of proving that any fish they possessed or otherwise disposed of was not food fish. The two realms of food fish and commercial fish were to be kept clearly separate as production for use values and production for exchange values.

fishing technology

On the Skeena, the salmon industry was, from its inception, derived from British and American capital. From the start, the fishermen of Kitsumkalum encountered the industry as part of a global division of labor, already structured in many ways (McDonald 1985:271ff.), and were fitted into it accordingly, even as they struggled to adapt it to their own needs.

Ralston states that in the beginning of the Fraser River fishery, Indians were the chief, if not sole, source of labor and that their skill as boatmen and as salmon fishermen allowed them to adapt quickly to gillnet skiffs (1965:11). Ross found the same situation in the north (1967:14). It is not clear, however, whether northern fishermen worked from cannery-supplied commercial boats and gear in the first seasons of the 1870s or relied upon their own aboriginal craft and techniques. Lawrence mentions that Tsimshian fishermen used canoes, sometimes with the wife rowing as the husband tended the net (1951:28–29). The report of an officer on the less-isolated Fraser River, that "Indian fish" were being bought openly by canners up to 1881 (Canada, Fisheries, Annual Report 1882:203), suggests a transitional phase in the technology, as labor was subsumed by cannery capital; but when it came, the transition in gear was undoubtedly quick.

So too, the Tsimshians were quickly disadvantaged in the industry. The year after the first Skeena River cannery opened (1873), the prohibitions on aboriginal technology were in place, thus transferring control of technological development to people (canners) pursuing a different economic rationale. The technological underdevelopment of Tsimshian fishermen can be traced to this appropriation of control.

The government recorded that in 1887, there were 240 fishermen and 77 fishing boats valued at $3,120 (Canada, Fisheries, Annual Report 1887:262–263). Gear and boats were owned by the companies. Aboriginal labor belonged to the lineage. These fishing boats were generally towed out to the fishing grounds by company-owned steam or gas packers and left in the water with a two fisherman crew for a 12-hour shift, drifting with the tide and fishing until the steamer returned to pick them up. If the men had to sleep on the boat, which they might do between sets, especially at night, there was a canvas tent that covered a portion of the boat but not much of the fishermen and provided little protection or shelter from the rain. Even today, some fishermen start their careers under similar conditions, although individual motors have replaced the steamer as the means of power.

The acceptance of gasoline-powered boats in the north was hesitant. People in the industry feared the boats would overcapitalize the industry and reduce profits, and the boats were periodically prohibited between 1910 to 1923 (Ross, n.d.; Sanford-Evans 1917). The main opposition to motorization came from canners who did not want to convert their fleets for economic reasons, but Indian and white fishermen on the Skeena and Nass Rivers also feared higher costs for gas and for rentals with no financial benefit (Duff 1922:9). Racial tensions complicated the issue further. The well-organized Japanese were expected to convert most easily and squeeze out the other fishermen, especially Indian (Duff 1922:9). The final decision to allow the more comfortable gas boats was not made until after the number of Japanese

fishermen was limited and a campaign had been mounted to induce more whites to fish. After this, only Indians opposed the new regulations (Sinclair 1978:21).

From this point on, as "development crowded upon development" (Pritchard 1977:68), the race for new technology that would increase productivity and efficiency took off. Each innovation was necessary to remain competitive, but this expensive race left Indian fishermen further and further behind (Pritchard 1977; see also Hawthorn et al. 1960:111). In the decades following the war, many Tsimshians were driven out of fishing by the cost, leaving scars in their social economy.

The great switch to gas boats occurred in the interwar period. Indian people were generally slow to make the change due, in part, to the attitudes of the canners who were hesitant to finance Indian purchases. Canners thought Indians had lower standards of care and efficiency (Hawthorn et al. 1960:111), which may be true, if for no other reason than that Indians usually purchased the older and more obsolete cannery boats (Hawthorn et al. 1960:111); they started in a technologically disadvantaged position. Furthermore, Indians tended to use their boats more intensively, treating commercial fishing boats as a versatile element in their multifaceted means of production. Boats had many roles in the overall economic life of the Tsimshian owner. When the boats were not fishing commercially, they were used for logging the coastlines, hunting, trapping, or food fishing (McDonald 1985). In Kitsumkalum, people generally remember their fathers acquiring their first gas boats around 1940. These were usually inexpensive and often were old cannery boats. When possible, sons or other partners contributed to the purchase price with earnings made in fishing and elsewhere.

The first gas boats did not change labor's organization. Although the motor made it easier to move about in the water, a boat puller was still required to handle the 14-foot oars that positioned the skiff for the net puller. Technological improvements after the war had a greater impact, permitting fishing by solitary individuals. This change slowly led to the attitude that there was something wrong if you needed a partner to gillnet from a gas boat—after all, it cut profits by half. Today the boats are larger and require individual fishermen to employ a deck hand.

The technological changes after 1945 (power drums, electronics, new construction materials) also drastically intensified the capitalization of fishing and led to larger, faster boats (Hawthorn et al. 1960:112). Fisherman who fell behind in this expensive race found it increasingly difficult to stay in the fishery. One by one, the Kitsumkalum fishermen quit.

Tsimshian underdevelopment and marginalization in fishing corresponded to the technological development of the industry, but this was only one aspect of the problem. Legislation was also important. Official control of commercial gear began in 1874, from the context of conservation issues. The first regulations defined net mesh size and banned highly efficient aboriginal gear such as spears and traps. Constant changes in the regulations and poor communications often caused problems for fishermen who were in villages not centrally located to the industry. For example, some fishermen only learned of the 1888 regulation changes governing mesh size at the start of the fishing season, after preparing for the upcoming season according to previous regulations. Regardless, they had to comply before fishing (Canada, Fisheries, Annual Report 1889:255), causing costly delays and wasting earlier preparations.

After 1889, and especially after the turn of the century, regulations were increasingly specific and inclusive of ever more fish. With capitalist fishing firmly established, and fish stocks becoming a pressing problem, regulation strategy employed the conservation measures of reducing the efficiency of fishermen (Ross, n.d.:71) and of limiting individual fishing efforts by managing the amount and types of gear and openings (Sinclair 1960:23–24).

Once subsumed into the structure of capitalist fishing, the organization of Tsimshian labor was not greatly affected by the further evolution of the regulations standardizing gear except insofar as the regulations kept pace with technological changes, which could be deadly. This

combination of regulation and "modernization" caused many individual fishermen to leave the business.

subsumption of labor by the first canneries

Aboriginal peoples were the original backbone of the northern fishing industry, to the point that the availability of native labor often meant the success or failure of a cannery operation, and canners took often remarkably creative steps to ensure their labor supply. One canner, Mr. Cunningham, acquired title under Canadian law to a portion of the territory near his Port Essington cannery and granted the land back to the Tsimshians as a special residential reserve, thereby establishing a special relation with Tsimshian labor. Notably, the recipients of this gesture were not the community who claimed ownership of the general area, and who probably would have been too insulted by the action to accept his gift graciously (which is to say: they would not work for him in the cannery in return for the "gift" of their land), but to the Kitsumkalum and Kitselas people who claimed a specific fall campsite there and who, I suspect, had less to lose (that is, property) and more to gain (that is, wages). These two "tribes" were not the only aboriginal people working at Port Essington, but they became the most closely identified as the "Port Essington Indians," and undoubtedly formed an important core for the aboriginal social structure because they had been named specifically on the deed to the Special Reserve.

This grant was made in 1882, and within a few years the resident population in the Kitsumkalum inland territories declined: first to 150 in 1885, then to 60 in 1897 (Dorsey 1897:185). The old capital village of Dalk ka gila guoex was deserted, and only a few Kitsumkalum remained in their valley until, with the decline in the fortunes of Port Essington, the population reestablished itself in the valley, at the modern village site that is now Kitsumkalum.

Production relations between the Tsimshians and the canners varied by job and changed over time. Shore employment, such as the net work by women, was originally on a piecework basis. Similarly, women were paid to pack cans according to how many cans they filled, which was measured by the "ticket." A ticket consisted of 150 trays of cans, with two dozen one-half pound cans to a tray. In 1980, I was told that at the turn of the century people received $3 per ticket; after World War I, they got $9 per ticket.

Piecework could also incorporate child labor. Children could assist their parents by performing light tasks, such as filling mending needles or bringing empty cans. Entire family units became familiar sights, working around the female native labor. When technological advances eliminated many of the light jobs, the children were kept in the residential area of the cannery, under the care of an older sibling or an elderly woman.

Over time, line work in the cannery was fully converted to a wage base, leaving only net work on a piece-rate basis. Wages varied according to job and racial considerations. Chinese and Indian workers were paid much less than Euro-Canadian (or "white") workers, and subjected to other working conditions not acceptable to Euro-Canadians. These conditions lasted until very recently (for example, Hawthorn et al. 1960:110).

contractors

Another early structure that incorporated Tsimshian labor into fishing was the position of the labor contractor. His function was to ensure for the cannery a seasonal supply of reliable fisherman. Different groups (Japanese, Gitksan, different villages, but not "whites") generally had their own contractor, usually one of their own fishermen. Kitsumkalum people were generally grouped as "Port Essington Indians" at the time. During the fishing season, the

contractor's responsibilities were for the welfare of the fishermen and the profit of the canners. He carefully selected his fishermen and ensured they worked well, without "monkeying around." In season, he negotiated with management on behalf of his fishermen for gear and prices, had influence on where the women worked in the cannery, and even arranged child care. For all this, he received a commission (sometimes a percentage, around 5 percent, of "his" fisherman's catch) for the number of fishermen he brought, and a certain amount of political power within his community as a result of the important position he occupied in the structure of their political economy.

Contractors were a mixed group of people. Pritchard mentions that education, especially literacy, was an important characteristic for the position, but that traditional social rank was not (Pritchard 1977:260ff., for example). Although this generally applied at Port Essington, the Indian contractors who were identified to me by name would also have had the right to assume important names in the Tsimshian system, had they not been Christianized. Significantly, their titles (and therefore their ranks) were not the highest.

Contractors had an odd structural relationship in the regional social formation. They ensured canneries a reliable set of workers, ran packers, and so on, as if they were managers. Their movement into these positions was in many ways a lateral one. Associated as they were with status in Tsimshian society, they were also involved in management functions as Tsimshians. The transfer of their functions to industry was probably easy, and probably practical for minor chiefs who could, in this way, raise their statuses by placing one foot in the old ways and the other in the new.

the first commercial fishermen

Unlike the shore workers, the original native fishermen at the canneries were mainly paid on a daily wage basis, not on piece rates. Another method, that initially only involved a few early fishermen, was the contract system (not to be confused with the system of contractors). The contract system generally referred to a relationship between individual canneries and fishermen in which payment was given on a price-per-fish basis. Originally, the prices varied between canneries and even from day to day, possibly even from fisherman to fisherman in true free-market style. This fluctuation was stabilized with the growth of labor organizations, but unionization led to new tensions focused by the annual bargaining rates (Gladstone 1959).

My earliest reference to Indian contract fishing comes from an Indian Affairs Superintendent in 1880 (Canada, Indian Affairs 1881:154). The practice was not widespread until the end of the century, when all fishermen seem to have been paid on a price-per-fish basis and, not long after that, on a price-per-pound basis. The transition period from wage to contract as the dominant form of employment for fishermen was between 1887 and 1894 (Hayward 1982). These years also witnessed a major change in the ethnic composition of the fishing fleet. Fishermen from other aboriginal nations, especially the much more rebellious Gitksan, worked in the canneries in greater numbers, and a European labor force was also emerging, enticed into the north by various schemes, including the contract system.

Overall, the aboriginal fishermen were held in the wage relation the longest. During the 1893 Fraser River strike, independent (which usually meant "nonaboriginal") fishermen were demanding higher prices per fish, but the Indian fishermen were demanding a higher daily wage (North and Griffin 1974:2). When the change came for the aboriginal fishermen, it was rapid. During the 1894 strike, all bargaining was on a price-per-fish basis (Gladstone 1959:28).

This covers the transition in the salmon fisheries. Wages lasted longer in other fisheries. For example, the pilchard fishery (now extinct) maintained a wage relation until 1929 (Ralston 1965:168).

The articulation of Tsimshian labor in commercial fishing appears to have had an unusual history in that it was first based on the trade of goods (fish), then the sale of labor power, and later on the sale of goods. One would expect the epitome of capitalist relations of production, the wage relation, to appear as the final stage, not an intermediary one. A popular explanation of this anomaly claims wages were first instituted to ensure the canneries a steady supply of fish and were accepted by the market-naive natives who had low income expectations. Such arguments make unfortunate and unnecessary assumptions about native mentality. The Tsimshians, who had been able to out-trade the otherwise successful Hudson Bay Company traders, nearly to the point of disaster at Port Simpson, were a people with a reputation for competitiveness that disturbed even the most energetic European merchant. They had been selling their labor power to foreign businessmen since the 1830s on a wage basis, and must surely have been capable of making some rough assessment of the labor market in fishing. The first "strike" for better pay occurred in that first decade, and their militancy as labor was notable in the 19th century.

Instead, I see three factors contributing to the anomalous way Tsimshian fishermen worked with the canners: the aboriginal economy, the attitude of the canners, and the property issue. First, the aboriginal Tsimshian economy was still viable. Industrialization was at such a low level in the north (and in the province) that, despite certain instances where Tsimshian labor was subordinated to capital under a wage, the bulk of the reproduction of Tsimshian labor power and society was accomplished outside of capitalist relations of production. After fishing season, fishermen returned to their fish-drying camps and reentered a very differently organized production cycle. This was a critical difference from the transient European fishermen, few as they were, who mostly returned south by company steamer to work in factories, to return to their college studies in Ontario, and so on. Kitsumkalum's mixed economy (then as now) was a source of resistance to labor's commodification, even as it contributed to the process.

Second, there was the role of the canners themselves. The question of the wage may be put this way: Why did the canners prefer a wage relation? The answer seems to be that they never tried an alternative, not even an elaboration of the previous trading relation. Undoubtedly, there were many reasons for the canners' apparent behavior. They may have brought with them a wage-labor mentality from England and San Francisco. They may have been so tradition-bound that they did not think to employ any other form. More concrete possibilities include the likelihood that the Indian labor force demanded daily wages, fearing that otherwise they would be in an exposed bargaining position as they sat in their boats with a catch of dead fish trying to negotiate a decent price with an obstinate buyer. There is also the possibility that given the often-noted strategy of canners to hire fishermen in order to gain the employment of the rest of their families on shore, the wage system contributed to a steady supply of shore workers. An independent producer could quickly capture the equivalent of his personal and productive consumption requirements during the fishing peak and leave, but a man on wages, if the wages were at a suitable level, could be required to stay to the end of the season in order to obtain an adequate income to satisfy his consumer requirements.

By this time, Tsimshians were deeply involved in a commodity economy and had growing 19th-century needs in their productive and personal consumption (for example, traps and cloth). In 1876, the market was not a mere flirtation, and a canner could strategically manipulate wages to ensure there were fishermen available during the slow periods. Even though they would be less productive in those times (Hayward 1982:55), the average productivity for the season would be profitable, especially if the fishermen helped out on the lines and processed fish during the peaks, as they often did. (The Sanford-Evans Commission hinted at these points in analyzing wage and contract prices.)

Canners needed both fishermen and shore workers throughout the season, and an additional benefit of the wage system was that the shore working families of the fishermen would more

likely stay until the time the fishermen felt they had earned sufficient money to fulfill their needs. Not only would these people be available, but they would be available under poorer working conditions and lower wages than would exist if the canners had to entice unaligned shore workers to sell their labor. Any trading or piece-rate system would upset all this for the canner.

The third factor, involving property issues, dovetailed with these other considerations. Tsimshian commercial fishermen were in a contradictory situation. The continuing viability of noncapitalist sectors in the Tsimshian economy and the integration of new sectors meant that the development of the capitalist fishery offered not only a new source of economic potential but also a threat. There were disputes over the expropriation of resources and also over the propriety of the various state taxes being introduced (such as cannery licenses). Canners were apprehensive over possible "troubles" if they converted the Tsimshian fishermen from wages to contracts. The concern was not abstract. In the minds of chiefs (and *contra* their alleged naivete about money, their perceptions were accurate), the contract system was associated with the development of licensing and boat rating. Consequently, they demanded that any tax revenues from licenses (and other taxes) be paid exclusively to them because they, not the foreign government of Canada, owned the fishery (Canada, Fisheries, Annual Report 1888:249–250). At first, the canners paid license fees for Indian boats to avoid problems, but in 1888 chiefs from the Nass River also protested against this practice as undermining their authority. The next year, the Dominion forced compliance by seizing boats and ordered the canners not to buy from unlicensed boats. A variety of problems erupted as a result and had to be controlled with means that included the military (see Canada, Indian Affairs 1888:lxxxi, xci, 115; McDonald 1984, 1985:291). In the end, the Canadian government won.

government structures

As this last point suggests, the government had an important role structuring the relationships between canner and fisherman, in particular, Indian fishermen. Originally, the salmon fishery operated on an open access basis. Anyone could enter, although the canners exercised control as the purchasers of the fish. The canners, in turn, were controlled by the canning capacity of their line, which was usually limited to a technological maximum of 1,000 cans in 1883 and 1,200 by 1893 (Stacey 1978:28). After 1882, canners were also controlled by the Dominion's licensing system, which attached fishermen to canneries.

Government conservation policy in the 1890s used the principle of limiting entry of fishermen (Sinclair 1978:16) by using license limitations. One set of licenses was allocated to the canners in each area, while another was left independent for outside fishermen to take. Thus, some fishermen became "attached" to a particular cannery, from which they rented boats and gear on the understanding that all of their catch would be sold to that cannery.

Ralston argues that the attach/contract system was used to attach and hold Indian fishermen in order to guarantee the participation of their families in shore work (1965:17). However, given what was said above about the history of the wage relation, it seems doubtful that many Tsimshians participated in the system before the mid-1890s. Interestingly, in 1889 the government found that the shift away from wages was not even. For example, there were unattached Nisga'as fishermen on the Nass who owned their boats and fished independently (Canada, Fisheries, Annual Report 1889:256). Arrangements such as the attach/contract system may have been useful as a way to guarantee the presence of families for shore work and may have been applied more frequently to Gitksan and other inland native fishermen, who migrated to the canneries in Tsimshian territory.

Initially, the canneries monitored themselves, limiting the number of fishing boats according to mutual agreements. Their agreements were incorporated into the provincial boat rating legislation of 1910 (Sanford-Evans 1917) to define boat distributions. That year 850 boats were

attached to the 11 named and operating canneries of the district encompassing the Skeena. Boats and gear were supplied to fishermen on a contract/share basis, with the canner taking one share as compensation for the use of his equipment (Canada, Fisheries, Annual Report 1903:G33). For the canners, shares were a way inexperienced fishermen could learn fishing at minimal risk to their own equipment and to that of the companies (Ralston 1965:66). Prices paid were considered good, and it appears that all native fishermen were on this system by the early part of this century. Fishermen with their own boat and gear received better prices, but had a large capital outlay and additional expenses for a license. This undoubtedly deterred some native fishermen.

Free entry replaced the attach system in 1927 (Knight and Koizumi 1975:23), putting into place the basic pattern of the productive relations between fishermen and canners as they exist today. Payment for fish was determined by industrial bargaining and distributed to boat crews on a share basis. Canneries still had their own fleets of fish boats that they rented out to fishermen who, in turn, landed their catch at the cannery. With the legalization of gas boats in the 1920s, however, there was a gradual shift towards fishermen-owned boats. As mentioned earlier, natives were slower to acquire these boats, and even when they did, they tended to stick to a particular cannery, usually the one that had provided the long-term financing for the boat purchase (Hawthorn et al. 1960:111). This left the Indian fishermen, essentially, in the rental position. Their debts for the boat, gear, and supplies often held them, but other factors were influential, such as the belief that the canner would help them out over tough times, provide them with slightly better service based on personal acquaintance, or allow them exceptional privileges such as use of tools.

The introduction of stricter regulations for boats after the reintroduction of license limitations in 1968 forced many Indian fishermen, especially in Kitsumkalum, out of the industry (for example, Freidlaender 1975). Their boats, rarely the best available because of difficulties in obtaining financing, were also subjected to some of the most difficult conditions throughout the year. Whereas other fishermen tied up their boats and spent the winter repairing them, Kitsumkalum fishermen often used their boats as an active element in many parts of their economy, most notably logging and trapping along the coast. Sometimes, fishermen arrived for fishing with logging equipment still on the boat, with only enough time to make the basic adjustments for capturing and holding the fish. Under such circumstances, they were hard pressed to meet the standards.

declining way of life

The history of Indian participation in fishing in this century has been the history first of the subsumption of the Indian resources and labor, then their gradual displacement out of the industry, a process that especially characterized and hurt the people of Kitsumkalum. Their displacement was dramatically finalized by a series of destructive fires around 1960 that destroyed the declining cannery center of Port Essington and forced Kitsumkalum residents to leave to find employment elsewhere. Many chose to seek a new life as loggers in their original territories in Tree Farm Licence #1, near Terrace. For a while, some fishing families continued to migrate down to the coast in fishing season, following the old and established pattern of their upriver cousins, the Gitksans, but circumstances were not responsive to their needs. In 1979, the last fisherman in the village decided he could not afford to fish that season.[12]

An important contribution of the dependency theorists was their thesis that development problems could not be studied in isolation from the history of capitalist development. My study dealt with the articulation of an aboriginal society with an emerging world social formation. Perhaps, in the case of Canadian Indians, to remark on the existence of the capitalist economy in the context of ethnographic reporting is to state the obvious, but it seems important to do so. As Knight (1978) pointed out in his provincewide study of the articulation of Indians in British Columbia to the capitalist economy, ethnographers have not noted this fundamental aspect of aboriginal life adequately or often enough in their descriptions and analysis of native societies. Not only from the position of development, but from that of ethnography and, not to forget, of contemporary Indian politics in Canada, aboriginal societies must be treated as part of a larger (and ultimately global) social formation. The conditioning factors that define that articulation not only structure the relationship of aboriginal societies within the Canadian social formation but affect the internal dynamics of the aboriginal social formations themselves.

During their recent history, Tsimshians have participated in several different types of relations of production, including forms derived from their original (aboriginal, in the literal sense) economic formation, forms of simple commodity production (trapping, logging, commercial fishing), small businesses, and wage labor. I focused on the food and commercial fisheries to examine how Tsimshians participated in the evolving regional economic formation. Capitalist relations of production came to have hegemony in the region, but the social formation still retains a complexity that precludes a complete transformation and homogenization of the economy. For the Tsimshians, a variety of economic activities were integrated to create the Tsimshian "way of making a living." Perhaps a better rendering of this popularized description of their economic formation is to call it a "way of *trying* to make a living," since the ground rules, which are outside of Tsimshian control, keep changing as capitalist development proceeds.

It is true that a great transformation has occurred since the time when their original, independent participation allowed the Tsimshians to take advantage of the opportunities presented by the local appearance of the capitalist economy. In particular, the evolution of the conditions for capitalist production progressively commodified the various means of production. Property relations legislated after the Act of Union established a legal and economic framework that conditioned the transition in ways that were sometimes subtle, sometimes harshly direct. As a result, by the turn of the century, the people of Kitsumkalum no longer cut trees for trade but worked as loggers; the fish they once used to create a spectacular northwest coast culture, had been transformed into a "food" and a "commercial" fishery. The basic property arrangements governing the means of production had been redefined to suit the needs of capital. Eventually, this redefinition of the various forms of production, which the Kitsumkalum people engaged and integrated into their social formation along with the associated reorganization of the conditions of production by imperialist forces, left the community dependent and underdeveloped.

Today, most of the community's resources, technology, and labor-power are under the hegemony of the dominant capitalist social formation. Those few residual aboriginal elements that are not commodified are protected by "aboriginal rights" (for example, food fishing rights). Even though these rights are sharply restricted in scope, the special legal status of the Indian in Canada, which is entrenched in the constitution, prevents the total elimination of Indian control over aboriginal means of production and over the associated social relations. These social relations provide the economic foundation of the community as well as the basis for its unique historical and social identity. Without them, a complete transformation and assimilation of the Kitsumkalum community might occur. More optimistically, the extension and restoration of

aboriginal rights through the reform processes could be a source of strength for the Kitsumkalum—one that would reinforce their identity, help develop a stronger community (Gisday Wa and Delgam Uukw 1989; McDonald 1990b), and allow Tsimshians a better chance to make a life of their own choosing.

notes

Acknowledgments. The author wishes to acknowledge the generous support of the Kitsumkalum Band Administration for financial and other contributions to this research; the Social Science Research Council of Canada for financial support; the University of British Columbia and the Royal Ontario Museum for support while writing; and numerous individuals, including anonymous reviewers, and especially Cliff Bolton, Alex Bolton, Michael Kew, Blanca Muratorio, Martin Silverman, Michael Asch, and Jim Freeman for their advice and suggestions.

1. I use the term "indigenous" as a generic equivalent to "aboriginal." In Canada, "aboriginal" is a preferred, constitutional term for Indian, Metis, and Inuit peoples.
2. At the time of this research, the Tsimshians were united in a political organization called the Council of the Tsimshian Nation. At the time of publication, the CTN has reorganized into the Tsimshian Tribal Council.
3. This research was conducted between 1979 and 1985, which is the present tense for this article. After 1987, changes to the membership clause of the Indian Act have allowed an immense increase in the number of Indians that are officially registered as belonging to the legal entity of the Indian Band. The growth is still occurring. At the time of writing, there were 240 registered band members. This represents a tripling of the Band size and is causing numerous strains on the reserve's infrastructure.
4. Since 1987, following liberalization of the membership clauses of the Canadian Indian Act that defined who had official status and rights, including the right to live on the reserve, the number of Band members living in the village has doubled, as individuals regain legal status as Indians and return to live in the community. The information in this article pre-dates these changes.
5. Elsewhere, I compiled information that suggests the Tsimshian not only gathered wild crops but also tended plants, to a certain extent, prior to the establishment of Fort Simpson (McDonald 1985:184ff). Whether their activities constituted "horticulture" is a moot question.
6. S.C. refers to Statutes of Canada.
7. R.S.B.C. refers to the Revised Statutes of British Columbia.
8. A salmonid enhancement project, run by the Band Administration during the late 1980s, managed to reintroduce a small spawning population of fish by 1990, but the project was canceled by the government in the summer of 1990.
9. As this article goes through revisions, the Tsimshians and other First Nations in northwestern British Columbia are effecting a transformation in their relationships (legal, political, productive) to the fish resource. The Skeena River Fisheries Commission, under the directorship of a Kitsumkalum leader, is moving in the direction of exercising self government over the resource and establishing management that could include commercial as well as food fishing activities. These changes will make an interesting article, but they do not alter the historical information presented in the current work.
10. I should note that if this presentation appears to split Kitsumkalum's economic formation into dualistic "traditional" and "modern" sectors, that structure is an artefact of Canadian legislation, of the existence of aboriginal rights that provide some protection for these aboriginal activities, and of the history of the development of the economy that embedded some activities in "tradition" (e.g., food fishing) while prohibiting the application of tradition to others (e.g., commercial fishing techniques and exchange).
11. Eight years later, by 1987, one man had become an active fisherman. His efforts had an impact in the village through his employment of Kitsumkalum women as net menders and by occasionally introducing younger band members, who had never been fishing, to the industry as deck hands. Since the redefinition of the membership clauses in the Indian Act, several new band members who fish now (1990) live in the village.
12. Today, some men have returned to fishing, but that story requires analysis of recent restructuring of the industry and numerous political changes to encourage Indians back into the industry. The fact that the tradition survived indicates the importance of fishing to the community and the severity of the difficulties that resulted in the 1979 situation.

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submitted June 6, 1990
revised version submitted February 21, 1991
accepted April 20, 1991