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THE FISH GOD GAVE US: THE FIRST SALMON CEREMONY REVIVED

PAMELA T. AMOSS

Abstract. Following the 1974 court order restoring their treaty-guaranteed salmon fishing rights, Coast Salish Indians of Puget Sound have reinstated the long abandoned First Salmon Ceremony. The restored ceremony follows the pattern established in the nineteenth century of incorporating Christian symbols into native rituals and appealing to a Supreme Being as the ultimate source of legitimacy. However, it differs from other contemporary Indian rituals significantly, because it expresses a direct connection between ritual and economic power and because it attempts to justify the new economic order to non-Indians as well as Indians by emphasizing the antiquity of Indian association with salmon and the special God-given role Indians play in preserving this resource for all people of the Northwest. Claiming this responsibility marks a new way of characterizing relations between Indians and whites. It represents a shift from the confrontational relations of the mid-twentieth century to complementary relations. Changes in attitudes of whites toward Indians and toward salmon as food indicate a corresponding alteration in the stance of significant elements of the dominant white society. Emphasis on sharing food as the central ritual act makes the Salmon Ceremony an ideal vehicle to represent such complementary interethnic relations.

INTRODUCTION

Coast Salish Indian reservation communities in the Puget Sound region of Washington State are reviving the First Salmon Ceremony, an aboriginal first fruits observance abandoned for over a century. The new ceremony marks the reestablishment of a direct connection between ritual and subsistence economy characteristic of the aboriginal situation. It also symbolizes and interprets the political status of contemporary Indians. Like other modern Indian religious ceremonies, the Salmon Ceremony incorporates Judeo-Christian ideas of God but, unlike the other rituals, the message of the Salmon Ceremony, as interpreted by the elders who direct it, is addressed explicitly to the non-Indian people of the Northwest as well as to Indians. The interpretation of this ceremony represents a shift from confrontational to complementary interethnic relations (Melville 1983).

The aboriginal ceremony was widely distributed over northwestern America from the Tsimshian on the North Pacific Coast south to the Northern Maidu in California, and east to the Paviotso in the Great Basin and the Lemhi Shoshone on the Snake River

(Gunther 1928:137).¹ In the last decade it has been revived or reemphasized among a number of Indian groups, but in this paper I shall examine only the ceremony practiced on the Tulalip reservation on northern Puget Sound.

HISTORY: THE ABORIGINAL CEREMONY AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

There are no firsthand descriptions of the aboriginal ceremony in northern Puget Sound; the existing accounts of ceremonies practiced during the early contact period were collected in the first half of the twentieth century from people whose own recollections went back only to the second half of the nineteenth. Specific elements of the ceremony varied considerably from group to group, but the ritual had three phases: (1) the welcoming of the salmon as it was brought to shore, (2) the butchering, cooking, and consumption of the fish, and

¹The ceremony was close to universal among the peoples of the Northwest Coast. Gunther (1926, 1928) notes the exceptions and attempts to explain why these groups did not practice the ceremony.

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(3) the return of its remains to the river or sea. In most areas the ceremony was performed only for the first of the most important of the five species of Pacific salmon; in a few places more than one species was so honored. The sockeye (*Oncorhynchus nerka*) and the spring or chinook (*O. tshawytscha*) were most commonly singled out.

DESCRIPTION OF THE ABORIGINAL CEREMONY

The following is a composite description based on a number of accounts from Coast Salish and neighboring peoples. Gunther (1926, 1928) surveys the variations and includes a table (1928:147) showing their presence or absence.

When the run began, no one was allowed to fish until the first catch had been ceremonially welcomed (Collins 1949:296). Freshly bathed, painted with red ocher, and sprinkled with bird down, the children (Jenness n.d.),

or the oldest person (Elmendorf 1960; Thompson 1980), assembled on the beach to receive the fish from the fishermen. The fish was carried on outstretched arms up the bank to the fire pit. There, the fish (some groups caught several fish) was laid on a bed of ferns and daubed with red ocher. Women butchered it, carefully removing the flesh in one piece from the spinal column which was to be preserved intact. The flesh was then fastened to skewers and roasted over the coals (Collins 1949:296). Often, hogfennel seeds (*Lomatium nudicale*) were sprinkled on the fire while the fish cooked. Some groups at the south end of Puget Sound boiled the fish instead of roasting it (Smith 1940:101).

The person officiating, who might be a special ritualist or simply the leader of the people assembled at a fish camp (but see Collins 1974:35), prayed that the fish would look kindly on the people and return in great numbers. Usually, the whole community partook of the cooked fish, although in some cases



Figure 1. "Indian Group at Fish Dance, Lummi Island." This photo was taken c. 1910 by Cort. From the variety of ceremonial dress represented, it appears that the First Salmon Ceremony and other rituals were being reenacted as part of a presentation of tribal history (Wayne Suttles, personal communication, 1987).

only the children, or only the very old, actually ate any. People in ritually contaminated states (e.g., menstruating women, widowers, and widows) ordinarily did not eat any of the salmon (Gunther 1928:148). In most cases, all of the fish had to be eaten. The bones and entrails were carefully collected in a basket or new mat and reverently deposited in the river or sea, so that the salmon would come to life again and lead their fellows to the fishing sites.

FUNCTIONS OF THE ABORIGINAL CEREMONY

Erna Gunther, to whom we owe the most extensive and intensive treatment of the First Salmon Ceremony, interpreted the ritual as a cultural expression of the economic importance of the fish and a special case of widespread rituals representing relationships between human groups and animals (Gunther 1926, 1928).

The ritual also expressed the identification of the human group of producers and consumers, whether a village or fish camp group, with the means of production in the form of fishing sites and fishing gear and tools for butchering and preserving the fish. In addition, it dramatized the complementary roles of men as fishermen and women as processors. It suggested the identification of human reproduction, represented by the children of the fish camp or village, with the annual renewal of the salmon resource. Furthermore, it may have expressed the contrast between the productive roles of adult men and women and the dependent positions of children and old people.²

All the powerful Salish symbols (fire, water, red ocher, white down, and cedar bark) were prominently featured. The aboriginal participants understood the general import of the symbols from their roles in other rituals. The specific significance of the Salmon Ceremony was embodied in the myths explaining how people first learned to catch and preserve salmon. In most of these myths, the salmon people kill a salmon child to provide food for their human guests but subsequently restore the child to life by returning the bones to the river or sea (Gunther 1926; Jenness 1955, n.d.; Lane 1953:78).

The social context in which the First Salmon Ceremony was performed differed from that of most Coast Salish rituals which were sponsored by families for the benefit of individuals. The Salmon Ceremony, though sponsored by the local production unit, a group of people related by blood or marriage, was performed for the general welfare (Suttles 1954:49).

²This contrast was suggested by an anonymous reviewer.

ABANDONING THE CEREMONY

It appears that the ceremony was discontinued in most parts of the Puget Sound region in the late 1850s, after the treaties between the United States government and the Indians had been negotiated. Although most Puget Sound Indians continued to do some fishing at old settlement or camp locations, those who were moved to reservations lost access to many traditional sites. The creation of reservations effectively severed the connection between local communities and their resource base and thereby undermined the significance of the ceremony (Amoss 1978b). In areas where people did not leave their old homes, the salmon were still welcomed. Thompson (1980) suggests that some Skokomish, on Hood Canal west of Puget Sound, were still celebrating the First Salmon Ceremony as late as 1920. South of the Salish area, Wishram Indians at Celilo Falls on the Columbia River were still holding a First Salmon Ceremony in the early 1950s (Butler 1954). They have continued to do so, even after the inundation of the fishing sites at Celilo by the waters of The Dalles dam in the late 1950s (Senior 1976).

THE CONTEMPORARY CEREMONY

In the early 1970s, Indian groups in western Washington had already begun to reinstitute the First Salmon Ceremony, but in 1974 it acquired additional significance after a federal court settled a long-fought legal dispute over the interpretation of provisions of the treaties of 1854 and 1855 between Indian tribes of western Washington and the United States government. At issue were the provisions assuring Indians the right to take fish at all usual and accustomed grounds and stations in common with all citizens of the United States (American Friends Service Committee 1970). The court ruled that "usual and accustomed places" meant both on and off reservations, and that "in common with all citizens of the United States" meant the right to catch half of the harvestable salmon (*U.S. vs. Washington* 1974).

Controversy over *U.S. vs. Washington*, dubbed "The Boldt Decision" after the presiding district court judge, continues to reverberate in contemporary Northwest Coast politics, even after it was upheld by the United States Supreme Court in 1979 (Walter 1978; Cohen 1986:107-117). Most Indians, not surprisingly, approve of the interpretation. Most non-Indian commercial and sport fishermen do not. Many non-Indians who have no special interest in fishing believe it to be unfair. Here, I do not argue the merits of the decision, but only attempt to show how it fostered the First Salmon

Ceremony revival and shaped the interpretation of the ceremony.

I attended a First Salmon Ceremony held in the spring of 1979 at Tulalip Reservation near the town of Marysville, about 25 mi north of Seattle. Tulalip, the largest reservation in the Puget Sound area, is home to two tribes that signed the Treaty of Point Elliot in 1885, the Snoqualamie and the Snohomish.³ According to the speakers, this was the third year the Tulalip people had celebrated the revived ceremony.

In the late 1970s and 1980s, other reservation groups in the Puget Sound area were also celebrating First Salmon Ceremonies. The Port Gamble Skokomish have had a ceremony directed by a well-known ritual leader from the Lummi Reservation (Olsen 1981a), and the Upper Skagit are performing the ceremony at fish camps (Fernando 1986).

THE CEREMONY AT TULALIP

Guests at the Salmon Ceremony on the Tulalip Reservation included Indian people from Tulalip, nearby reservations, and Seattle, and non-Indians from Seattle and Pullman. Guests assembled about 11:00 a.m. in the tribal dance house. People from Tulalip sat to the left of the entrance, the place always occupied by the hosts at a winter spirit dance. The guests, however, were directed to sit wherever they pleased in the house. In all, there were about 100 people present, including a dozen non-Indians.

The building is a large rectangular wooden structure built in the style of the old Salish longhouse, with a smoke hole in the roof and fire pits in the earth floor. Like all contemporary dance houses, it has electric lights and stepped plank seating around the walls. Indians call the buildings "smoke houses" in reference to the open fires.

Dance houses are used primarily in the winter for spirit dance gatherings or to house a person undergoing initiation as a spirit dancer. Tribal meetings, dinners, and secular gatherings of all kinds are usually held in the tribal hall or some other place, because people feel that the dance house is best reserved for "smoke house doings," ceremonies of the old style Indian religion.

³Not everyone who can trace descent to either Snoqualamie or Snohomish ancestors is enrolled at Tulalip. "Off reservation" Snohomish and Snoqualamie are trying to gain federal recognition as descendants of treaty signers and thereby gain access to treaty fishing rights.

Preliminaries to the Ceremony

Welcoming Speeches and Song

The Tulalip tribal chairman welcomed everyone and explained how the Tulalip decided to host the ceremony. He spoke in English, as is customary at most large gatherings, since few of the younger people can speak or understand the Puget Salish language. He introduced the two old people who had planned the ceremony, Harriet Shelton Dover, from Tulalip, and her cousin, Morris Dan, from the nearby Swinomish Reservation. Both were in their 70s in 1979 and Dan has since died. Dover, the daughter of a tribal leader, was an informal tribal historian and was often invited to speak to school groups or white community associations. She was also considered a fine speaker by Indians and was frequently called to speak at ceremonial or tribal gatherings. Dan was a prominent speaker and was very active and influential in the winter ceremonial activities. He had a sonorous voice that was only a little attenuated by age. Dan was the first to speak, reminding his audience that although the fish supplied a livelihood for people who were not Indians, it was only Indians who know they should give thanks to "Someone up there" who brought the salmon back each year. "Our ancestors always did it." He said, "without it, I believe we'd run short."

When Harriet Shelton Dover spoke, she also stressed the religious significance of the gathering. Then she described how she and Morris Dan had planned the ceremony and how they had received financial help from the Tulalip Tribal Council. She lamented the fact that neither she nor Dan had ever seen a ceremony performed, but had had to rely on what they had been told about it.

After several of the elders in the audience had responded briefly, praising their hosts for taking up such an important work, Dover sang a "welcome song" that belongs to her family. Accompanied by several drummers, she led all the participants and guests clockwise around the house while everyone else joined in her song.

Blessing the Fishermen

Morris Dan then called a group of young men out on the floor. He dipped an eagle feather in water and sprinkled the group. He explained that this procedure was "blessing the fishermen" and said that it should be done before the first salmon was caught.

*The Ceremony Proper**Phase One: Welcoming the Salmon*

The house fell silent after Dan had blessed the fishermen and they had left the floor. Dan sat down and everyone waited quietly. Then the tribal chairman got up and announced, "I've just received word, a visitor is approaching our shore!"

Dan and Dover began to sing in Puget Salish accompanied by the drummers:

ʔəsʔaʔiləx^w tiʔa yubəč

"The spring salmon is landing now!" Followed by drummers and all the spectators, Dan and Dover left the house and, still singing, walked down to the bluff overlooking the beach. Two of the fishermen were beaching their dugout canoe and carefully unloading a wooden tray covered with astroturf topped by a layer of sword ferns. A large bright spring salmon lay on the ferns. As they started up the path from the beach carrying the tray between them, Dan began another verse of the song:

ʔəsčubətəbəx^w yubəč tiʔa

"The spring salmon is coming up from the beach!"

When the pair of fishermen carrying the salmon had entered the house, Dan sang a third verse:

ʔəsʔələbutbidča yubəč tiʔa

"We recognize the spring salmon!"

Followed by the procession, the fishermen carried their tray counterclockwise around the house, stopping at each of the four corners of the building. They then returned to the center where they set the tray down on the ground and stood beside it.

Women's Dance

The first phase of the ceremony ended with a dance by women from Tulalip. They danced as a group, making their way counterclockwise around the house and turning rhythmically to show off their deep-fringed shawls.

After the dance, the fishermen picked up the salmon and carried it out of the house toward the tribal hall, just up the hill from the smoke house. All the people followed them into the hall and took their seats in the dining room where the tables were already set for a feast. The spectators did not actually witness the butchering and cooking of the salmon.

Phase Two: Consuming the Salmon

Everyone was served a miniscule piece of cooked salmon and a small paper cup of water. Dan asked us to wait until a blessing had been asked and then to drink the water before eating the salmon. Another old person asked the blessing and then everyone rather solemnly drank the water and ate the morsel of fish.

After the ritual food had been consumed, huge platters of salmon, potatoes, and other foods were served, followed by a wealth of pies, cakes, jello, and canned fruits. Young people from the tribe brought the food out from the kitchen, circulated with big pots of coffee and tea during the meal, and cleared away the dishes after the final blessing. The atmosphere was friendly and informal and people laughed and gossiped as they habitually do at any feast, whether a sacred or secular occasion.

Phase Three: Returning the Salmon to the Sea

After the blessing for "closing the table," people went back to the smoke house where the fire was still burning. Shortly, the two fishermen returned to the house carrying the skeleton of the salmon on the astroturf tray. Only the spinal column with the head and tail still attached remained. The Tulalip women who had cooked the salmon and the feast foods brought plates of food to the fire and carefully dumped the food onto the flames. The speakers explained that they were feeding the salmon.

As the young men carried the salmon out of the house, Dan took up another verse of the song:

ʔəsʔux^wəx^w tiʔa yubəč

"The spring salmon is going toward the water!"

The drummers and the people fell in behind them as the entire procession went back down the trail to the beach. Dan and Dover and the rest of the people stopped on the bank overlooking the canoe. Gently, they set the salmon amidship in the dugout, got in, and pushed off with the handles of their paddles until the canoe was floating. As they cleared the beach, Dan and Dover took up the concluding verses:

ʔuhuyəx^wčəx^w 'siʔab

"You are departing, Noble one!"
And then:

ʔutuk^wəx^wčəx^w siʔab

"You are returning home, Noble one!"

The fishermen paddled out toward the deep water of the bay, where they would return the salmon skeleton to the sea, and the participants on the bank continued to sing until the canoe was out of sight.

Coda: The Happy Song

The people waited outside the longhouse until the canoe returned from the bay and the fishermen landed. Dover then sang a song she calls "the happy song," bringing the ceremony to a close.

INTERPRETING THE CONTEMPORARY CEREMONY

COMPARING THE NEW AND OLD FIRST SALMON CEREMONIES

Many of the elements of the aboriginal ceremony were present in the revived observance: feathers, red ocher, fire, reverent treatment of the fish, special butchering and cooking (although the guests were not able to observe this), communal consumption of the fish, and special ritual invocations in the form of the songs in the old language as well as the prayers Morris Dan offered silently while he blessed the fishermen.⁴

The revived ceremony, like the ancient one, expresses a connection between ritual and economy made possible once more by the definition of legal rights to a share of the salmon harvest, a connection not present since pre-treaty times. Both old and new Salmon Ceremonies are atypical Salish ceremonies because they are celebrated to benefit the local group rather than individuals (Suttles 1954:49). Beyond these general similarities, however, the functions of the current ceremony differ completely from those of the aboriginal one whose form it replicates.

The old ceremony symbolized the rights and duties of the local group—a small, flexible, kin-based community—to exploit and maintain the preeminent resource. The contemporary

⁴The sprinkling of the fishermen is not reported in accounts of the old ceremony. The feeding of the fire also appears to be an innovation, although the Lummi practiced a ceremony at the close of the sockeye season in which they named their fishing sites and put portions of food in the fire for each as they did so. Feeding the spiritual powers is consistent with general ritual practices, both ancient and contemporary. The songs sung before and after the ceremony and the women's dance are not reported either, but appear to be an appropriate elaboration.

ceremony symbolizes the legal right to take fish and a moral duty to preserve fish, vested in members of the treaty tribes. As legal entities, the tribes were created by the treaties and have been perpetuated by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Most of the recognized treaty tribes are associated with reservations, but not all tribal members live on the reservations.

The aboriginal ceremony spoke only to the members of the group; the modern one speaks to insiders and outsiders simultaneously. The old ceremony drew on all the sacred symbols to emphasize the interdependence of humanity and nature. The modern one adds to those ancient Indian sacred symbols themes drawn from the introduced Judeo-Christian heritage to justify a special relationship between Indian and salmon and to propose a new relationship between Indians and non-Indians.

COMPARING THE FIRST SALMON CEREMONY WITH OTHER CONTEMPORARY RITUALS

Although virtually all contemporary Coast Salish are Christians, there are many who also participate in the aboriginal-style winter spirit dancing, who seek help from shamans for spirit sickness or soul loss, who burn food to comfort their dead, and who respect the power of spells. Indians refer to the totality of these practices and beliefs as "the Indian way" (Amoss 1978a:46). The First Salmon Ceremony features many of the symbols that appear in rituals of the Indian way (e.g., fire, red ocher, feathers, water, and drumming) and uses them in a way that is congruent with their use in other rituals. Fire, for example, is used in a number of contemporary rituals to transform food or other objects so that it is available to the dead or to nonhuman spiritual forces. The feeding of the salmon by burning food in the presence of its remains is consistent with these other practices.

References to a Judeo-Christian God are common in other types of ceremonies that perpetuate or revive aspects of the old religion. References to God and even to Jesus Christ are often heard in the speeches made at spirit dance rituals, burnings for the dead, and curing rituals. Speakers in the smoke house often say, "This is what God gave us Indians" (Amoss 1978a:167). God is invoked, however, to justify Indian separateness. The same speakers who claim divine legitimacy for aboriginal-style rituals are likely to remind their audience, "This is all we have left, the white people have taken everything else." The references to the Judeo-Christian God in the First Salmon Ceremony are unique because only in the First Salmon Ceremony do speakers claim a divinely sanctioned special role for Indians as part of

a multiethnic Northwest Coast society. In this respect, the Salmon Ceremony contrasts markedly with other rituals of the Indian way.

INTERPRETING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SALMON CEREMONY

The Salmon Ceremony is unique among contemporary rituals because it communicates a message to outsiders, whites, as well as to insiders, Indians. At a more basic level, it is unique because the message it communicates is specifically explained to both insiders and outsiders in the speeches given on the occasion. At the Tualip ceremony described here and at the Skokomish ceremony (Olsen 1981a), speakers spelled out the significance of the ritual.

Although speeches by prominent ritual leaders are an integral part of ceremonies in the Indian way, exegesis of symbols is not. My investigations revealed that participants often had rather different understandings of the meanings of important symbols (for example, face paint colors; see Amoss 1978a:71). Because public discussion of such questions is not encouraged, people seldom learn that their interpretations are not generally shared. Some areas of ritual practice, the meaning of a particular spirit dancer's song, and items of his or her costume are the individual dancer's secret and are never to be revealed. But other elements, not directly associated with anyone's spirit vision, are almost never discussed either.

Fernandez (1965), commenting on a comparable diversity of interpretation in an African religious movement, attributed it to a focus on the emotional rather than cognitive aspects of the religious experience. He postulated a systematic neglect of symbolic exegesis in social settings where social integration, in the form of coordinated action, was more valued than cultural integration. The Coast Salish resistance to systematic theologizing seems to fit his model quite well; there is no pressure to ensure cognitive conformity and in fact there is an explicit rejection of such a goal. Everyone is free to think what his or her spiritual experience teaches. Systematic approaches of all kinds are discouraged. Writing and written accounts are viewed with suspicion. Indians speak "from the heart" and "in the spirit."

Although this stance is characteristic of the participants in the other rituals of the Indian way and in rituals of the Indian Shaker Church—a Christian-Indian syncretic religion launched by late nineteenth century Puget Sound Indians (Amoss 1978b)—it is not adequate to the Salmon Ceremony. The other rituals have their effect on participants

through the emotional associations of the powerful, condensed systems operating in a predictable context. Although the Salmon Ceremony utilizes many of these same symbols, its message, that there is a new role for Indians in Northwest Coast society, requires explicit interpretation.

As if the explanations offered during the ceremony were not enough, they became part of what was to be interpreted. The Tualip and the elders who planned the ceremony arranged to have it videotaped by a musicologist from Washington State University who produces educational and documentary films and videotapes (Olsen 1981b). While the elders were speaking, the people were singing or dancing, and the young men were carrying the salmon up from the beach or around the house, they were all followed closely by the camera crews. The fire-lit dimness of the house was sacrificed to the glare of television lights to make the filming possible.

Filming a ceremony is a striking departure from current practice. Although local Salish people are as susceptible to the flattery of the television camera as are their non-Indian neighbors, they do not permit cameras or tape recorders at rituals of the Indian way.⁵

For the taped version of the ceremony, Dover created a commentary to be dubbed onto the tape to explain and interpret the process. Dover's commentary, like the speeches given at the gathering, had two main themes: a subtle message to insiders that their right to harvest fish depended on maintaining not only an Indian but a tribal identity, and a frank message to outsiders that Indians discharge a divine commission to ensure the preservation of the salmon by performing the proper rituals and giving thanks.

It is significant that the claim to a special relationship with the salmon appears also in the preamble to the charter of the Northwest Indian Fishery Commission, representing the five groups of treaty tribes covered by the Boldt decision. It lists among its primary

⁵I have only seen them allow such an event to be filmed on one other occasion, which was the 1979 ordination of a Canadian Catholic priest, a ceremony combining Catholic and Indian rituals. Although otherwise quite different, it shared with the First Salmon Ceremony one important characteristic: it was a message to outsiders.

Apparently the aversion to photography and recording dates from the end of World War II. Ethnographers working with the Coast Salish in the 1940s report that they were allowed to record and photograph spirit dances. (I am indebted to an anonymous reviewer for this information.)

goals preserving the salmon, "not only for the benefit of our own people but for all the people of the Pacific Northwest" (Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission, Annual Report: 1). It may also be of more than a little interest that Dan and Dover met at the home of a fishing rights activist, Bernie Gobin, to develop their plans for the new Salmon Ceremony (Dover 1986).

Indians of the age of Dover and Dan have seen relations between Indians and whites change significantly during their lifetimes, and they now anticipate another change in a new direction. Relations between the ethnic categories of Indians and whites were relatively egalitarian in the early contact period at the end of the eighteenth and the early part of the nineteenth centuries. Following Melville's (1983) scheme, they would be considered complementary, since each provided the other with needed goods and services and neither saw the other as dominant.

By the middle of the last century, whites had taken economic and political initiative away from Indians, and by the 1880s the relationship had become colonial. Indians were limited to certain types of production, providing goods (fish) to whites that whites did not produce for themselves. By the mid-twentieth century, the economic and social position of Indians had deteriorated further as economic opportunities vanished. In the 1960s and 1970s, confrontational relations prevailed between the two groups as Indian consciousness of disadvantages and loss began to generate active protests which took the form of fishing rights agitation. In 1974, the Boldt decision laid the foundation for a return to a complementary interethnic relationship. Paradoxically, by restoring control of the salmon to the Indians, it recreated some of the salient characteristics of the early contact period because it gave them control over a commodity they had once provided to early settlers.

Dover described some of the cultural consequences of the colonial relations that prevailed in her youth. She said that native ceremonies had been repressed because the priests had said they came from the Devil. She pointed out that when the women of the tribe danced around the salmon on its bed of ferns, the fishermen should have danced too, but "most of them are reluctant because they grew up without knowing much about these things."

Dover's personal history of active advocacy for traditional practices and traditional language illustrates the mid-twentieth century shift from colonial to confrontational relations. Her interpretation of the significance of the Salmon Ceremony represents another shift in process, this time to complementary relations.

Transforming confrontational relations to

complementary ones has been made possible by changes in white society as well as Indian. Middle class, urban whites have begun to value Indian things. Among middle and upper class collectors, the value of Northwest Coast Indian art objects continues to rise. Even the passion for Indian style dress and "Indian wisdom" current among many young people during the 1960s and 1970s lingers on in an attenuated form.

More recently, Indian treaty tribes, spurred by continued opposition to the Boldt decision, have begun to make allies among environmentalists and advocates of good government. In 1984, Washington State voters passed Initiative 456 by a narrow margin. Designed as a referendum on Indian fishing rights, the initiative had no practical effect, but Indians and environmentalists saw it as a device to mobilize public opinion to allow unfettered commercial exploitation of fish and other riverine resources. A loose confederation of treaty tribes and environmental groups organized a "Nix 456" movement in an effort to block the initiative. Although they failed, the cooperative effort was a new experience for the treaty tribes. In January, 1985, the tribal organizations put on a dinner at Daybreak Star Indian Center in Seattle to express their appreciation to people from the groups that had cooperated with them. A speaker from southern Puget Sound thanked the people:

"You see people working together, you get energy. You start to trust each other. If the salmon were watching, he could see that energy move. In the next ten years we're going to continue sitting down and talking with one another. The mountains are watching us here. They are our power. We've got to use that power and talk about it, try to keep the energy going. We've got a lot of work ahead of us" (Cohen 1986: 188).⁶

White attitudes toward salmon as food have also undergone a change from the early decades of the twentieth century when canned salmon, at least, was considered "poverty food" (Charlene Allison, personal communication, 1985). Marian Smith reported that, in the 1930s, her Indian consultants were:

quite aware of the opprobrium in which the designation 'fish-eating' is held. Many

⁶An authoritative treatment of the campaign to defeat Initiative 456 can be found in Fay Cohen, *Treaties on Trial*. Cohen also gives a full background of the legal maneuvering leading up to and following the 1974 Boldt decision.

times, when I have first arrived unannounced at the home of a Coast Salish family the house has smelled unmistakably of fish. But later, when I have returned by appointment, the house has been aired and the odor of fish has disappeared (Smith 1949:7).

In the 1980s, fish, and particularly salmon, is not only socially acceptable but has become quite fashionable. In the northwestern U.S., the Indian method of roasting the fish is now considered a superior way of cooking it. There are even a few restaurants that specialize in Indian cuisine, a thing unheard of 20 years ago.

As Van Den Berghe (1983) has pointed out, ethnic cuisine, which can be a device to exclude outsiders, can also be one of the easiest and most effective ways to establish good relations with them. Furthermore, in modern postindustrial society, the recognition of the food preferences and cooking methods of another group as a "cuisine," producing suitable, if exotic, things to eat, is a major step in the process of defining a complementary relationship with them.

Obviously, not all whites favor complementary relations with Indians, and those who perceive their economic interests to be damaged by the redistribution of salmon resources are particularly recalcitrant. Similarly, some local Indians from the treaty tribes are still firmly committed to confrontation and separation. Dover, in her memoirs, commented that when the ceremony was still in the planning stages, she at first recommended against publicizing it because outsiders might show up (Dover 1986). Nevertheless, the design and interpretation of the Salmon Ceremony at Tulalip (and, as far as can be determined, of the Salmon Ceremony at Skokomish) show that local Indians have developed the ideological and symbolic underpinnings for a shift to complementary relations. On the other side of the equation, the willingness of a number of organizations as diverse as the League of Women Voters and the Northwest Steelhead and Salmon Council of Trout Unlimited, a major sports fishing organization, to join the treaty tribes against Initiative 456 shows a growing acceptance among middle class whites of the idea of a special relationship between Indians and salmon.

CONCLUSION

The contemporary Salmon Ceremony, as presented and interpreted, offers a moral charter for the salmon allocation ordered by federal courts. It invokes both the ancient roots of Indian culture and the Judeo-

Christian beliefs shared with whites in arguing for a new interethnic relationship based on reciprocity instead of hierarchy. To express such a complementary relationship between Indians and whites, the structure of the Salmon Ceremony is particularly appropriate. Of all the Salish rituals, it is the only one in which a communal meal is the heart of the matter. Hospitality and food are offered with every Indian gathering, but the feasting is separate from the actual invocation of supernatural power. In the Salmon Ceremony, eating the salmon is what establishes the bond between people and fish and perpetuates the relationship.

When whites join Indians in the First Salmon Ceremony and consume their morsel of the First Salmon, they ratify Indian claims to the salmon and renounce their resentments. Insiders and outsiders alike not only hear the message, but they also participate in creating it.

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