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The Kusan people: A systemic cultural history

Simpson, Michael Wayne, Ph.D.

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THE KUSAN PEOPLE:
A SYSTEMIC CULTURAL HISTORY

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE DIVISION OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
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By

Michael W. Simpson

Dissertation Committee

Floyd Matson, Chairman
Wimal Dissanayake
Seymour Lutzky
Reuel Denney
Mark Helbling

ABSTRACT

The present study answers the question: If a community loses their language, culture, and environment how are they still able to preserve and maintain their identity?

In the first chapter the rationale, justification, purpose, and methodology are presented. The Hanis-Miluk, or Coos community, which traditionally inhabited the Coos Bay area of the southern Oregon coast, is introduced, and the thesis and schema regarding their survival and how to best study their systemic processes are elaborated.

Chapter Two presents the historical background of the Coos people; including geographic and ecological systems, prehistory of the human population and their cultural makeup, and a detailed description of the Coos lifestyle from prehistoric to modern times.

Chapter Three examines the experience of the Coos culture previous to contact with the Anglo-Europeans and subsequent developments which have influenced cultural identity in historic times. Also considered are the means whereby the community preserved some of its past and adapted to the demands of modern existence, and how the foundational elements of Coos identity interact in such a way as to produce the present-day community.

Chapter Four presents the conclusions and implications of this study regarding methodology, the Coos community's place in modern America, and intercultural understanding.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER II. SHORE ACRES: LAND OF THE MILUK-HANIS.....	23
CHAPTER III. THE PROCESS OF TRANSFORMATION.....	48
CHAPTER IV. INTO THE FUTURE.....	103
ENDNOTES.....	122
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	143

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

How can a community lose its language, its culture, and its environment and still retain its identity? And how may we study the process of transformation of a culture in such a way as to reveal its details? These are the questions this study intends to address.

Let it begin with a statement of the problem. There is a small community living in the Coos Bay area of Oregon, commonly known as the Coos Indians-but both words are misnomers. The word "Coos" is of uncertain origins, but might be related to the name of their native tongue, Kusan, a dialect of Penutian language spoken by a number of tribes in Southern Oregon and Northern California. The origin of the word Coos is not immediately relevant, because the name the people use for themselves is Miluk-Hanis. The imposition of the misnomer "Coos" upon this group has had a subtle effect on the identity of individuals to whom it was applied, as well as of the group as a whole. The term "Indian" is, of course, of European origin, a testament to the famous blunder of Columbus, who thought he had arrived in India when he had, in fact, arrived on the shores of the New World.

This community, now numbering approximately three hundred members, has undergone a complete transformation since the arrival of the white people. They first

encountered Anglo-Europeans in the late 1700's, were removed from their home territory by 1855 and relocated to at least three different sites, were released from the reservation in the last quarter of the 1800's, then were terminated in 1955, which set off a twenty year court battle to regain federal recognition, which they attained in 1984.

In the process they were stripped of their language, their culture, and their environment. So, why are they still there? Research into their history has revealed a scarcity of materials from which to extract information which would be of use in formulating an answer. In fact, there has never been a book written on the cultural history of the Kusan people. The current study will draw upon all available materials referring to the Coos community and present them in Chapter Two in order to reconstruct part of the Coos history from archival data.

But how shall this history be interpreted once it is completed? In this case, there is very little in the way of existing literature, and what there is of it is not centered on the process of cultural transformation, but rather focuses on ethnolinguistic and ethnogeographic description recorded long after the culture had ceased to be viable. The oral history is fragmented and incomplete. The last living speakers of the language died in the early part of the twentieth century, and the rare audio tapes of the language are scratchy and of poor quality overall.

The intent of this first chapter, then, is to propose the use of a developing method of analysis defined by Riane Eisler as the "systems approach" to "cultural transformation theory."¹ This theoretical approach provides the appropriate vehicle for the interpretation of the historical experience of the Coos community.

First, however, it is imperative that "systems theory" be defined in terms of its use in this study of the process of cultural transformation. There have been, since its introduction by Ludwig von Bertalanffy in the 1940's, numerous applications of "systems theory" developed in a variety of disciplines.

The idea of studying whole physical and biological systems rather than parts in isolation developed out of the gradual restructuring of Newtonian and Cartesian mechanistic world views through the disciplines of engineering, physics, and cybernetics. (Thomas Kuhn describes this process whereby a revised "paradigm" takes root in a field and gains validity over time as new empirical data supports the thrust of its contentions.²) As modern sciences developed they needed analytical tools that would allow them to consider whole systems, such as the human organism as a whole, the human mind as a whole, etc. This is because, very often, the action of parts in isolation are not especially descriptive of the system as a whole, while the

relationships between parts can only be described in terms of wholeness.

When the social and technological systems of the world existed (or appeared to exist) in isolation and retained a high degree of distinctiveness it was possible and sufficient to consider them as such. But in a world of ballistic missiles, fiber optic telecommunications, and global economics-wherein things are made of a variety of parts originating in heterogeneous technologies intricately interconnected-the relations between parts must be considered. Thus a "systems approach" was seen to be needed.

No doubt, the tools of the anthropologist, sociologist, or psychologist would be adequate for studying and interpreting the Coos culture and its members in isolation, -theoretically speaking. But in fact the group exists in relationship to the "dominator" culture which has subsumed it, not apart from it. It can only be studied as a part of a greater cultural system, of which it has become an incorporated sub-system.

For purposes of this study three systemic variables will be focused upon: (1) language, (2) culture, and (3) environment. The dynamic interaction of these three constituent elements of identity are chronicled repeatedly in the literature. Culture, for purposes of this study, is the mediating influence between the individuals in the community and the surrounding environment. As one element

changes, so do the others. The system is thus interactive. Geertz describes culture "not as complexes of concrete behavior patterns...but as a set of control mechanisms...for ordering...behavior."³ Within a unitary system of analysis that is synthetic, rather than stratigraphic, the researcher can integrate various types of theories and concepts in such a way as to make possible the formulation of meaningful propositions which combine findings from various fields. Language is the spoken tongue of the community, and thus is the means of storing group experience. Adler says "the life of the soul is in the community" and that "We can only imagine a psychic life bound up with its environment."⁴ (Witgenstein goes further by saying "the limits of my language are the limits of my world."⁵) Adler goes on to define his approach to psychology as one which attempts to define relationships, between self-self, self-other, and self-environment.

The life of the community is embodied in the language and culture of the individuals which make it up. And if the individuals exist apart from the community they, in essence, have no "soul." An individual is not a fully functioning human being unless he interacts with others. Isolated from others the individual will experience distress and eventually die. "No human being has ever appeared except in a community of human beings."⁶ And to be an integrated part of the community one must share the language, customs,

dress, food, etc. as expressed in speech which is "justified only in a community...a product of communal life, a bond between the individuals of the community."⁷

We all need a sense of belonging to a community with which we can identify in order to be healthy and happy people. And it is the changing relationships between members of a community, and between members and the environment which give rise to the dynamic activities that result in cultural transformation as the community undergoes and adapts to new experiences.

Geertz elaborates upon this contention by suggesting "there is no such thing as a human nature independent of culture."⁸ In the Enlightenment man was defined by his innate capacities alone, and in twentieth century social sciences by his behaviors alone. But now we must be concerned with the links between individual capacity, social behavior, and environmental interaction. Within a systemic frame of reference we can see any given culture to be the sum total and expression of the relationships it is the embodiment of. The interactions of culture and mind with environment are the driving force of cultural transformation within the context of this study. Such interactions led to tool manufacture, rapid growth of the forebrain and changes in the interconnections of the neurons, which led to corresponding changes in culture that required further developments in technology, and so on.⁹

Interactive relationships are so important because the individual is born and conditioned, by repetition of characteristic cultural patterns, to a specific language and environment. This conditioning of the human psyche and organism provides the foundations of identity and governs one's relationship to self, others, and the environment. Thus the speech, clothing, and in fact, whole world view are prescribed by the normative conditioning imposed in early life. The individual interacts with the group and acquires a language within the protected confines of first, the family, then, the community at large previous to engaging in passive interaction with natural resources shared by the group, and active interaction with human beings who are "other" and thus defined as outside the cultural system of the individual. Once conditioned responses, such as language, are absorbed and expressed the individual enters into the "communications-unity" or community and becomes part of the larger developmental processes acting on the group from within and without.

Language acts as both a filter and shaper of experience. Upon our basic perceptions we build our attitudes, values, and beliefs. And "a pattern of learned, group-related perceptions--including...attitudes, values, belief systems and disbelief systems, and behavior--that is accepted and expected by an identity group is called a culture."¹⁰ The way we perceive is the basis for the way

we act, and language is the most basic expression of the shared group identity of the community. One modern theory, the Whorf-Sapir hypothesis, holds this to be true to such an extent that it states if you alter one's language you can alter his perceptions. And by extrapolation, if you alter perceptions you alter everything based upon them, and the changes will be expressed as alterations in the language over time which are an index of cultural change, filtering what is expressed, and shaping what develops.

The terms used in this study-language, culture, and environment-are primary elements of the system of relationships and interactions within the community which provide the medium of growth for individual and cultural identity. As one element of the system is transformed, so are the others. Because of this the validity of a systems approach to cultural transformation theory is evident.

The literature of American Studies is full of references to such a method of interpretation, one which is "holistic" and attempts to deal with elements in interaction rather than isolation. Perhaps a few references are in order.

In Calvin Martin's Keepers of the Game there is an excellent elucidation of the relationship between culture, environment, language and prescribed world view, and how changes in a single element--the biota in this case--can transform a culture, or group of cultures, into something "other" than it was.

In Jamake Highwater's The Primal Mind can be found an important interpretive analysis of American Indian identity and its relationship to the environment, and how this relationship shapes indigenous cultures in profound ways. Pre-contact Americans saw, when they looked around, a decidedly different world than they saw later, after their world view had been altered by interactions with the Anglo-European explorers and colonizers. Their concept of time was cyclic, of nature, continuous. Their rituals and ceremonial life acted to support the continuance of the various cultures in all their distinctiveness.¹¹

The holism of the American Indian vision has been expressed in award winning films such as Broken Rainbow (Florio and Mudd, 1985), and Koyaanisquatsi (Reggio, 1983) which both chronicle the modern exploitation of man and environment so as to express the devastating effects modern development has had on the indigenous communities of North America.

Garrett Hardin, in Nature and Man's Fate, addresses the need for diversity and isolation among segments of the human population because our long-term survival as a species demands differentiation into well separated groups with unique identities. He tells us that homogenization of culture and loss of identity weakens the whole of the human race.¹² And further, he speaks of science and technology as "positive feed-back systems" that are self-governing

sub-systems of the whole of our modern culture systems which make up world civilization.

The Third Wave, Alvin Toffler's popular tome on cultural transformation, refers to systems thinking as stressed by Simon Ramo, who propounded a "total, rather than a fragmentary, look at problems," and to Eugene P. Odum, an ecologist who urges researchers to combine reductionism with holism, to see parts as well as whole systems.¹³

The systems approach to cultural transformation theory seems to be a natural extension of the work of many who have come before, as most good science is. Other authors such as Jeremy Rifkin in Entropy, Theodore Roszak in The Unfinished Animal, and Louis Thomas in Lives of a Cell, all express variations on this basic approach to understanding the changes occurring and to come within American culture.

This approach has not yet been used to describe the experience of any specific Native American community, although it has been used to interpret the experience of a human sub-group; women. Riane Eisler's analysis of women's experience in The Chalice and the Blade chronicles the transformation of western culture in systemic terms, providing a good model for parts of this study. Considering her work, together with that of individuals she has cited, and those I have noted, suggests a summary statement of how to apply this approach to the history of the Coos community.

Stephen Jay Gould, in an article on general evolutionary theory writes: "I think we are dealing with...the very nature of organization--something so general that it must apply to any particular instance."¹⁴ This statement expresses the continuity in the development of general systems theory, the branch drawn upon in this study, originated by Bertalanffy and developed in a series of articles spanning twenty years.

In order to understand the transformation of the Coos culture and identity over time we must be able to draw upon some general rules regarding complex systems made up of a multitude of elements. The laws which have been defined regarding the way any specified system changes from a stable, steady state into an unstable, wildly fluctuating, incoherent, or perhaps even chaotic state, and the ways in which it returns to being coherent, integral, and ordered again are very clear. They are described, in the works of these several specific authors, and developed to their furthest extent as regards their relationship to cultural transformation.

A basic description of the meaning of general systems theory can be found in Bertalanffy:

The meaning of this discipline can be circumscribed as follows. Physics is concerned with systems of different levels of generality. It extends from rather special systems, such as those applied by the engineer in the construction of a bridge or of a machine; to special laws of physical

disciplines, such as mechanics or optics; to the laws of great generality, such as the principles of thermodynamics that apply to systems of intrinsically different nature, mechanic, caloric, chemical, or whatever. Nothing prescribes that we have to end with the systems traditionally treated in physics. Rather, we can ask for principles applying to systems in general, irrespective of whether they are of physical, biological or sociological nature. If we pose this question and conveniently define the concept of system, we find that models, principles, and laws exist which apply to generalized systems irrespective of their particular kind, elements, and the 'forces' involved.¹⁵

Bertalanffy goes on to state later that "systems principles are also used in population dynamics and ecologic theory."¹⁶ In fact, he finds applications for systems theory in nearly every branch of science. But the applications significant for this study are in the area of psychology, anthropology, and communication theory. Bertalanffy even goes so far as to note the dynamic interaction between language, culture, and the environment in his chapter on the relativity of categories, wherein he supports the Whorf-Sapir hypothesis and concludes "the categories of our experience and thinking appear to be determined by biological as well as cultural factors."¹⁷

Another notable thinker who likewise adopted the systems approach in his work is Gregory Bateson who, in his book Steps to an Ecology of Mind, notes the "unity of phenomena of the world" and proceeds to explain how the concept of a whole system as applied to the study of nature can be

likewise used to study and define mind. Both Geertz and Bateson have remarked on the symmetrical, steady-state culture in Bali, and how the nature of the language, the environment, and the people within it are combined to create a sort of social symmetry which maintains order, coherency, and integration in the personal, social, and environmental spheres.

Bateson's model of cultural interaction, which is incorporated into the basic thesis of this study, suggests that when cultures meet and the dynamic equilibrium, or "steady-state" is disturbed, there will be fusion between the groups, elimination of one or both groups, or the persistence of both groups in a reformed dynamic equilibrium within a major community. When cultures are considered as a whole it is possible to study this interaction and determine the results in what Bertalanffy called an "empirico-intuitive" manner.

The "patterns of culture" to be dealt with herein are complex, and, once stabilized, difficult to destroy, as was noted earlier in this century by Boaz, Mead, and Benedict, and more recently by writers such as Geertz and Eisler. But, once these patterns are disrupted a process of cultural disintegration sets in that is systemic, and which therefore cannot be attributed to any special cause. Here the general systems theory approach is most useful. The researcher is able to choose those variables deemed of greatest importance

within the cultural system and study the relationships and interactions between them in such a way as to arrive at valid conclusions about the process whereby a community is transformed from steady state to chaos and back again.

In a 1983 interview, Dr. Carl Leifchauber, who had received a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship for his work in defining the equations which described the descent of a system from steady state to chaos, was asked if such theories could be applied to changes of state in social and cultural spheres. He concurred wholeheartedly, and went on to state that American society was only at the beginning of the process of cultural transformation, and that things would basically have to get far worse before there could be any improvement.*

Such theorizing is based on earlier work in the physical sciences by scientists such as Heisenberg, with his "uncertainty principle," and Prigogine, with his work in thermodynamics and entropy, in which he described self-organizing systems as "dissipative structures" and society as a good example of a system winding down the inexorable path towards entropy. One of the best explications of the development and use of systems theory in modern thinking is in physicist Fritjof Capra's work The Turning Point.¹⁸

*Interview with the author of this study.

In the last couple of decades, work has been proceeding to further expand the "holistic" or systems view of the world, especially as applied to culture. "The systems view looks at the world in terms of relationships and integration," according to Lazlo¹⁹...and thinkers such as John Dewey noted the value of doing studies of transactions within the social system even before Bertalanffy.

In sum, the systems approach is reflective of a paradigm shift away from particularism, which allows us to study culture as a whole system, and to describe and interpret changes within it in systemic terms. This is the answer to the question of how we can study the Coos community and the transformation it has undergone in terms of changes in individual identity, the language, the culture, and the environment. Then it will be possible to determine which of Bateson's alternatives we find in evidence, and to describe how and why these changes have occurred in response to the loss of spoken language, cultural practice, and environmental constancy.

According to Eisler, the Coos can be considered a female-centered, environmentally oriented, culturally conservative community which was ravaged and transformed during the invasion by another cultural system which was male-dominant, environmentally exploitative, and culturally unstable. The Coos, a "partnership" culture, like the women

in Eisler's study, were not completely destroyed by the "dominator" culture.

So just exactly what is a "cultural systems" within the defined limits of this study? It is the nucleus of thought and belief that forms the core, or memory of a community. It is expressed in the form of ritual, ceremony, myths, legends, stories, and in daily behavior regulated by shared customs and taboos expressed in interactions with oneself, others, and the surrounding environment. These are passed on generationally through the medium of the community's language. The closest analogy is that of the cell, with its nucleus, body, and shell or boundary layer. Identity is defined by the limits of growth of the cell, and external boundaries are defended to protect the inner parts and overall integrity. This analogy is taken to its furthest extension in books like Lewis Thomas' Lives of a Cell, where he uses the cellular system model to describe our personal, cultural, and environmental systems in integrated terms. The sum total of human cultural systems is civilization.

This concludes the survey of the literature of the systems approach to cultural transformation theory and establishes the validity of this approach in the discipline of American Studies. Next, the present study will consider the available materials by application of the general theory to the special case of the Coos community. It is important, in closing, to note the fact that there exists a body of

literature critical of certain aspects of systems theory as applied in various disciplines.

One of the most salient critiques of general systems theory is that it cannot take all the elements of a system into consideration, which means that it is not a useful tool for predicting outcomes. However, this in no way diminishes its power as a tool for studying processes. The "Rome Club" found this out when they attempted to build a global model of human resources which would define what this group of scientists called The Limits of Growth.²⁰ Their predictions were not considered hard data, and many of them did not prove out, simply because they had failed to consider one or another element that was hidden or deemed unimportant.

In this descriptive study of the process of cultural transformation there is no need for either prescriptive or predictive conclusions. The situation of the Coos today is blatantly obvious, currently stabilized, and is such that it would have been hard to predict based on the sketchy historical data available.

In conclusion it will be made clear just what the elements, variables, and schema behind the proposed thesis are in this case. What is the most reasonable thesis in approaching the problem of why the Coos still exist when they lost their language, culture, and environment? The Coos community and culture were what Eisler calls "gylanic"

or female centered, while the Anglo-European culture, as she describes it was "androcratic" or male centered and exploitative. It has been the nature of male centered, "dominator" cultures to displace or destroy the more conservative cultures they contact, but the Coos, somehow, adapted and survived.

Bateson believed there were three alternatives when cultures meet:

If we consider the possible end of the drastic disturbances which follow contacts between profoundly different communities, we see that the changes must theoretically result in one or other of the following patterns:
(a) the complete fusion of the originally different groups
(b) the elimination of one or both groups
(c) the persistence of both groups in dynamic equilibrium within one major community.²¹

The thesis of this study is that, when consideration of the history of the Coos is complete, the evidence will show that the third end has been the result. This result has to do with the interactive relationships of the variables I have chosen to focus upon in this study.

Given the historical and present-day systemic variables in the two opposing cultures, and the central question of this study, which will be a recurrent theme throughout--why are the Coos still extant and what is the nature of their identity considering their losses?--this thesis can be further detailed by relating it to changes in (1) language,

(2) culture, and (3) environment. These are, based on the literature, the crucial variables, in cultural transformation. Culture acts as the mediator between the individuals which make up the community, and the environment within which they exist. Normative language in the native tongue acted as the means through which cultural conformity was maintained and their relationship to the environment thereby preserved. The sum total of this dynamic interaction of variables shapes the identities of the individuals and the community of which they are a part.

As the language is altered through contact with colonizing cultures the perceptions, and the values, attitudes and beliefs based upon them, will be altered as the Whorf-Sapir hypothesis states. The alteration in language brings about changes in perception which affect the relationship of the individuals and community with their environment. This leads to corresponding changes in behavior and an alteration of one's sense of self, or identity. The disintegration of the state of dynamic equilibrium leads to incoherence in world view and the need for reformation, reconditioning and a return to integral coherence that allows for the development of a stable personality and community.

Identity is thus, in this schema, a function of language and environment with culture as the mediating influence in its development. Identity in a stable culture can be very

strong if the elements of the system are highly integrated and the core of the cultural system is protected with sufficient redundancy to bear the stress of having its outer layers stripped away. An example of this is when the missionaries came into indigenous cultures and altered their world view through the alien means of cultural mediation inherent in the Christian tradition.

Another example of the way in which identity can be significantly altered can be seen, not only in America proper, but also in developing nations, by the introduction of technological innovations among undeveloped communities. In order to use the new apparatus the culture must adopt new words and concepts about the way things work. In order to maintain and repair the introduced technology the members affected by its use must learn a new "high-context" language with a technical vocabulary so exclusive to those in the know that they can displace an established spiritual order, priesthood, or shamanistic clan as the repository of the knowledge of how to obtain, use, and fix the powerful technology which is introduced, often without concern for local customs, ownership systems, or cultural norms. As noted earlier in reference to Geertz, the dynamic interaction of systemic variables acts as a sort of motor, or at least stimulus which motivates cultural transformation. Again, Eisler uses the example of the "Kurgan" cultures of the northern steppes of Asia coming

down and altering the mythological and ethological core of the already established glyanic Cretan civilization. By altering the primary symbol system, which is rather like a sort of metatechnology which allowed, as with the Coos, the conservation of an interactive relationship with the environment and the continued maintenance of the community, the culture was transformed from one whose central symbol was the female receptive chalice, to one whose central symbol was the male exploitative/dominator blade of the sword.

On the other hand, if the identity of a culture is too weak to stand such onslaughts the identity of the individuals and the community begin to disintegrate and decay as the perceptions, values, beliefs, and attitudes upon which the group is based become incoherent, leading to a loss of contact with the roots of the culture in both linguistic and environmental terms. Then the crisis begins to emerge and spread, conflict sets in, and the culture, as Bateson theorized, will either be destroyed, or it will destroy the invader in a period of massive violence, or, as Leifchauber would say, chaos sets in which leads to entropy, or extinction of the culture.

In considering the history of the Coos it will become evident what has occurred in their case, and how the culture has responded in order to survive. And further, it will be demonstrated that the systemic approach to culture

transformation theory has an important and valuable application in the case at hand, not only as a tool of description, but even more so as a tool for interpretation which might allow future researchers greater leeway in suggesting means towards revitalization of the culture, and ways in which that revitalized culture might be fully integrated into the diverse "salad" of which America is made up.

At this point the present study will redirect its focus away from methodological concerns relating to the social sciences, and towards the historical data regarding the Coos community and their cultural identity.

The research for the next chapter represents combination of archival inquiry and review of historical materials relating to the Coos cultural system, and of field study of the environment including interviews with tribal members and administrators. This has allowed for as complete a compilation of information as is possible regarding the transformation of Coos language, culture, and identity resulting from contact with Anglo-European colonizers. With the aid of the systemic approach to cultural transformation theory, the history of this community can then be interpreted in such a way as to illuminate the dark path they have followed towards, and then away from the brink of extinction.

CHAPTER 2
SHORE ACRES: LAND OF THE MILUK-HANIS

A complete history of the Coos community has never been written. There are numerous materials available on the Northwest culture complex which (depending upon the author to which one chooses to refer) extends from southern Alaska in the north to Cape Mendocino in the south. The consistency of the environment over this area is such that there are a number of common culture traits among the aboriginal peoples, such as marine and estuarine livelihoods leading to the varied yet highly consistent canoe building techniques that are so widespread. Yet there are only a few books which so much as refer to the Coos community in particular. Thus, in this chapter, the materials generally available on the environment, cultures, and languages of the area now widely known as Coos Bay, Oregon, will be reviewed for the purpose of detailing the life of the Coos culture until the early contacts with the Anglo-European community which eventually nearly displaced (in fact nearly destroyed) the indigenous inhabitants of this unspoiled ecosystem.

The North Pacific Coast Culture Area extends from Yakutat Bay, in southern Alaska, south to Cape Mendocino in northern California. The coastline is rugged, with many deep inlets back of which, in the northern half, mountains

rise several thousand feet directly from the edge of salt water. Offshore there are numerous small islands, but there are few beaches or low, level areas convenient for village sites.

Climatic conditions along this coastal strip are characterized by even temperatures and heavy rainfall, up to one hundred inches a year in many places, resulting from the proximity to shore of the Japan Current, which flows down from the north. Arising from this current is a warm vapour which prevailing westerly winds blow on shore. These moisture-laden winds rise as they impinge on the mountain ranges, and in doing so they cool into clouds and heavy precipitation results.

The abundant rainfall and moderate temperature of the region produce a distinctive and dense vegetation. Conifers are predominant and consist of firs, spruces, hemlock, two varieties of cedar, yew, and to the south, redwoods. There is also a scattering of deciduous trees such as maple, oak, and the soft but even-grained alder. Forests extend from the shoreline to near the highest ridgelines. Individual old growth trees grow to a tremendous size, and some can live more than two thousand years, as in the case of the redwoods. Along the margins of streams and in marshy areas there are also some varieties of deciduous bushes, shrubs, and plants.

Moderate temperatures are the rule in this area, and the influence of the Japan Current guarantees an absence of prolonged or extreme cold, even in higher latitudes. The continual rains guarantee an abundance of water resources, and consequently innumerable streams and small rivers with their sources in the high country of the Coast Range flow into the sea along with the major drainage systems such as the Columbia, the Fraser, and the Skeena rivers whose sources lie further east of the mountains.

As one goes southward the terrain of the area changes from towering mountains of raw, naked rock cut by deep canyons, gouged out by glacial flow and watercourse turbulence until, around the upper Puget Sound, and along the Oregon and northwestern California coasts, one sees steep but rounded coastal hills, not mountains rising from the sea; estuaries resulting from the buildup of sand bars formed at the river mouths, indicating the gentler gradients of the lower portions of the stream and river beds. There are stretches of beach that go on for many miles, interrupted only by the mouths of watercourses. The land is densely vegetated and largely the forests are very still and quiet, as most life in the region occurs in open areas bordering forest and stream, in high meadows, and in the open areas around the many bays along the coastline.

Amidst the lower lying vegetation are a number of plants that were used for food and medicine by the indigenous

inhabitants. Among these are the many species of berries, some nuts such as acorns, where oaks grew, or the seeds of conifers elsewhere, the highly prized camus root (a starchy tuber similar to the potato of South America), and a number of edible greens.

In pre-contact times wildlife and game of all sorts was plentiful. In fact, the incredible abundance of natural resources in this area gave rise to a high degree of civilization without the emergence of agriculture as it developed elsewhere in the world in such places as the Indus Valley, the Middle East, and Middle America. The culture which emerged from this abundance was therefore somewhat anomalous in its lack of domesticated plants and animals (other than tobacco and the dog respectively). At the same time the cultures, and by extension the languages of the people, were directly dependent upon, and completely integrated into, the lushly provident environment.

From the sea came the most important of food supplies in the form of the perennial salmon--five species of them--and the halibut, herring, smelt, and the olachen, or "candle-fish" (which is so rich in oil that a dried one with a wick threaded through it burns like a candle) which thrived in the offshore fisheries. There were numerous other species of fish available, though many were seasonal, and they were all easy to preserve. The sea also provided a tremendous quantity of edible mollusks, gathered at low

tides; and even more spectacular was the marine game such as the hair seal, sea lion, sea otter, porpoise, and an occasional whale. Mollusks included clams, mussels, sea urchins, abalone, various univalves, and crustaceans. Fresh water streams and rivers provided trout.

Land game was limited to ruminants such as elk, deer, and occasional moose in the north along with some goats, and to carnivores such as the wolf, black and grizzly bears, brown bear in the north, mountain lion, and coyote. There were many smaller, fur-bearing animals upon which the people depended during off seasons when the migrators and hibernators were not in evidence. These included the beaver, mink, marten, land otter, racoon, opossum, and porcupine.

The coastal flyway for migratory birds follows the coast for much of its course and so provided seasonal bounties of duck and geese. They would darken the skies in their passage.

The land this amazing diversity of plant and animal life inhabited was essentially basaltic stone eroded into a hilly range of mountains, and covered deeply with ages of rich soil deposited by vegetal debris and rainwater runoff. The Coast Range is not recent, or actively volcanic, and seldom rises over three thousand feet above sea level.

The lush environment of the North Pacific Coast was complex, incredibly rich in resources and often difficult

to exploit. Hunting on land was often hampered by the ruggedness of the terrain and the density of vegetation. Travel through the mountains just inland from the coast was accomplished, for the most part, on long-established elk and deer trails, or along the ridges bordering watercourses.

Fishing and sea-mammal hunting were more profitable but required an intricate technology which allowed hunters to use the available natural resources to the utmost, and possible only when the hunters had developed the complex tools and skills necessary for success. And the peoples of the coast did exactly that. They used the moderate climate and wealth of resources well, and managed to develop elaborate ceremonial practices and intricate arts of a highly symbolic and abstract nature. They honed their skills all year around, and their lives moved with the rhythms of nature's cycles and were imbued with the knowledge of peoples deeply and profoundly involved in a rich environment. Their needs were supplied by the forest and the sea, and all the materials needed for the construction of much of their material culture was readily available and at hand, although they did engage in some trade with other groups.

Drucker, going contrary to prevailing trends in anthropology writes of the region and its culture:

Few modern students of human society
will subscribe to a theory of
environmental determinism of culture.
Yet while the geographical background

of aboriginal Northwest Coast civilization can by no means be said to have defined the culture patterns of the area, it can be shown to have had a certain influence, by permitting, and even inducing, development along some lines, and inhibiting that along others. Some of the environmentally affected cultural elaborations are included among the patterns that make the areal culture as a whole distinctive, as compared with other native civilizations of North America.

He goes on to consider the "area-wide patterns" in which no "environmental factors can be detected." Then in further notes that, though this is so, those patterns "in which the physical setting played a part are worth mentioning."¹

Population density was influenced directly by the degree of successful technology for harvesting water resources. Availability of cedar trees shaped the canoe building traditions all along the coast, and led to tools, methods of crafting, and materials usage shared by nearly all groups who shared dependence on the forest and the sea. Techniques of food preservation, once perfected, created a large surplus of time that shaped community life and influenced the development of art and ceremonialism.

Inhibiting factors in the environment included the rough terrain which discouraged farming and animal domestication, hard-to-work stone prevented development of more advanced forms of tools making, and lack of excessive surpluses due to lack of farming influenced trade patterns.

However, in spite of the environmentally determined aspects and expressions of culture as it developed in this region, many other features of coastal culture in general, and of Coos culture in particular, that served to mark them off from most other Indian civilizations in North America can be traced to solely historical factors, or to the selection of certain solutions to problems posed by functional relationships of strictly cultural, not environmental phenomena.

As Marvin Harris puts it, "similar variables under similar conditions tend to give rise to similar consequences."² Likewise for the lack of certain conditions. In this case the Coos lacked the need to "intensify" their investment of time and energy in such a way as to deplete the environment and threaten living standards--which, according to Harris, "leads inevitably to decline in living standards which in turn leads to heightened competition among groups, an increase in warfare, and the evolution of the state."³ The Coos culture remained, along with its neighbors in the region, resource-rich, free from want, conservative in their use of resources--although their conservation was based as much on the limits of their technology for harvesting natural resources as on any desire on their part to maintain their abundance--and remained at peace for the most part, except for slave raids or minor skirmishes over territory.

The rich, moist climate, the abundant resources (salmon reportedly "could have provided for the entire population of the area by itself"⁴ and, in fact, did often provide the bulk of wintering over food for the communities) led to the development of a culture with roomy, solid houses, seaworthy boats and canoes, elaborate art, intricate rituals and ceremonies, and a generally affluent and highly complex society. The people had none of the European concepts of "tribe" or "nation" later introduced by the explorers and colonizers, and they lived in familial and kinship groups, or clan units that were small and autonomous while being highly integrated into the overall cultural pattern of their own areas. Thus the village, and the community it contained, was of great significance in the social fabric.

the land of the Miluk-Hanis people was of the Northwest Coast Culture Area, and shared in many common elements that were consistent from Alaska to California. These lands shaped the people of the area and their cultures. The Coos community is on the southern Oregon coast, about one hundred miles north of the California border, situated on a large bay fed by an intricate system of streams and rivers. They are an estuarine community, with some seagoing capability, but not nearly as much as evidenced in cultures further north.

In the beginning, before people came into the area, there was mostly only ice-and in the end there were

upwards of one hundred thousand peoples populating the area--thousands of feet of ice until about thirteen thousand years ago, when the ice began to melt and to open new vistas for the spread of plant, animal, and human populations. Green covered the once-white land with a blanket of verdure so lush we can hardly imagine it today. And somewhere in time, between three and eight thousand years ago, the first humans most likely entered the area. Probably by foot, but quite possibly by boat as well, they came seeking to spread into the lush, inviting area,-which has been capable of supporting human habitation for as long as forty thousand years. Conceivably they could even have walked along exposed portions of the continental shelf at a time when ocean levels were lower, before the subsidence which led to the drowning of the coastal pathways and the filling of the fjord-like coastline with rising seas.

During the in-between time the lushness of land increased to a degree unknown to modern Americans; the vegetation spread, the animals followed, and then came the human beings. Possibly they came from Siberia or the coast northern China. There has not yet evolved a consensus regarding the character of human penetration into the coastal ecosystem, but certain details are now agreed upon regarding possible origins and routes of migration.

Then there is the vast spread of thousand of years for which we have no information beyond educated speculation.

Human groups settled into their chosen environments and the cultures of the Northwest Coast Area developed undisturbed over a period ranging from roughly twelve thousand to fifty-five hundred years ago:

Everyone knows that the ancestors of coastal Indians and all other New World aborigines crossed the Bering Strait and eventually reached all parts of North and South America.⁵

It is thought that they came down an ice-free corridor through the midsection of the continent, exploited the available resources, then spread out towards the coastlines, yet other theories as to the origin of the Coos are just as plausible.

Kroeber (1939) considered the ethnographic coastal culture as "...originally a river or river mouth culture, later a beach culture, and only finally and in part a sea going."⁶ The Coos culture remained centered on the riverine and estuarine environments, and rarely took to sea--and when they did they never went very far out compared to some of their northern neighbors. Their skills in canoe building were never as highly refined, nor were their ceremonial lives as elaborate. They did not carve totem poles, practice the grand potlatch, bury their dead in canoes, or flatten the heads of the young--all traits of groups to the north which the Coos do not share.

The communities to the north were sea-going peoples, and as a result they had an even greater surplus of resources

than their southerly neighbors. The people of the Coos Bay area, however, depended upon the bay and the rivers for most of their lives. Technological and ceremonial simplicity, compared to northern groups, marked the Coos as a people who had reached dynamic equilibrium with their environment, and learned to maintain it long before whites came.

Recent evidence suggests that the coastal peoples arrived with a maritime adaptation, that "the migration routes were coastal as well as interior," and that possibly the Atabascan speaking peoples from Asia were a late intrusion into a previously established cultural environment. Archeological evidence suggests further, (though without sufficient documentation, so that whatever is said can only be a hypothesis) that there were at least four early basal cultures, or cultural traditions by ten thousand years ago, and that each culture was characterized by a slightly different set of tools, and a slightly different way of life.⁷

The People Tool Tradition, the Microblade Tradition, the Fluted Pointed Tradition, and the Lind Coulee or Stemmed Point Tradition describe the four types of stone blades used to categorize implements of the four basal cultures. The last of these, dated eighty-five hundred to thirteen thousand years ago, centered in the Columbia River Basin drainage area and distributed throughout the area, "correlates with the distribution of the northern segment of

the Macro-Penutian language phylum which includes" the language spoken by the Coos people.⁸

By the close of the Early Period, about 5,500 years ago, the early cultural traditions were becoming more consistent throughout the area due to the post-glacial similarity of environmental responses as the habitat became more similar throughout, in part due to population growth and in part the result of interaction through trade and the diffusion of ideas and technologies. Natural events such as glacial retreat, opening of new land and migration routes, changes in sea levels, stabilization of the climate, and the consistent spread of plants and animals into available niches, not to mention the eruption of Mount Mazama about 6,700 years ago in southern Oregon followed by a continuing episodic volcanism throughout the inland ranges of the Cascades from northern California up into Canada--these events all had profound influence upon the evolving cultural systems along the coast. When sea levels changed considerably during this period the archeological record suggests there was a corresponding change in the technology of coastal cultures, but there is not enough evidence to draw any hard, fast conclusions.

From fifty-five hundred to fifteen hundred years ago, what is called "Middle Period" gave rise to cultures which are more easily recognizable as the ancestors of those which were later subject to ethnographic study. The cultures were

based on wealth and craft, and diffusion of technological innovations and new ideas was hastened by rapidly developing lines of trade which were extensive and widespread in terms of connecting distant groups.

Yet few generalizations or hypotheses have much of a solid base beyond the archeological records. "Most of our present knowledge comes from the second half of this period (thirty-five hundred to fifteen-hundred years ago), and the generalizations...are best supported by data from this period."⁹ Data will eventually verify that the coastal area has been occupied continuously for the last seven thousand years, with stable cultural patterns existing for upwards of five thousand years.¹⁰ Thus, we can know no more about the cultures before the anthropological records begin than about the actual pathways of entry into the coastal environment. According to Fladmark (1978):

"...as research continues to...turn up evidence for 15,000+ occupation...in southern parts of the New World...we should begin to look more critically at traditional models of initial migration into the New World and seriously evaluate possible alternate routes to that represented by the ice-free corridor..."¹¹

So even though we know approximately when people came, and from which general direction, the sources and processes of development of early culture on the coast will remain forever shrouded in mystery and myth.

We do know they had ceremonies and mythologies, that they practiced rock art and wore tooth pendants. Shamanism and the beliefs and practices associated with the spirit power of Guardian Spirit entities were widespread. The smoked cultivated tobacco and used plants for healing rituals, in ceremonials associated with fertility, and in burials.

Wealth and status were interrelated aspects of the Northwest Coastal Area cultures. Wealthy men led, and leaders had to be wealthy-which led to ostentatious displays of rank and destruction of wealth in the grand potlatches. Some tribes, the Coos among them, appear to have practiced a less destructive form of potlatch where wealth was displayed and given away, in which case the ceremony acted as a means of redistribution of wealth rather than status affirmation. Lineage granted hereditary family privileges and rights to those associated with certain family symbols, crests, or signs. So the leadership system was both a means of concentrating surpluses and of redistributing them among the general population.

We can see evidence of these cultural traits, not because we have ever dug up the remains of a potlatch, or found irrefutable evidence in the memory of any given people--rather we can see it in the remains of houses, burial practices, and in such goods as carved objects from among the artifacts associated with those of higher status

and wealth. There was some warfare, and slavery was common practice. Trade was widespread, but focused regionally, as indicated by clusters of artifacts such as harpoon heads in specific geographic areas.

There are really "few data on the Indian...types. No studies were made in early days"¹² according to Drucker, although there are some figures on physical stature which are irregular. They range from medium to tall in height, and physical characteristics are quite varied--testimony to the vitality of the basal cultures as they differentiated into the historical cultures we know of today.

As an ironic footnote we might observe an early account of the racial characteristics of the natives drawn from a European viewpoint:

The eyes are less oblique, the nose flatter, the lips fuller, the chin more pointed, the face wider...than those east of the mountains. There is more hair...and the differences between the sexes is much more obvious. The mental character is also in contrast. The Pacific tribes are more quiet, submissive and docile; they have less courage, and less of that untamable independence which is so constant a feature in the history of [other tribes].¹³

Further statements, probably more a testament to the ethnocentrism of early chroniclers of coastal culture than accurate descriptions of actual characteristics, abound in the early literature. It is important to remember that we have no knowledge of the indigenous peoples as they

themselves saw the world; rather what we have are the reductionist, categorical stereotypes expressed by Anglo-Europeans who lacked the capacity to investigate the coastal cultures from any point of view other than their own.

It is noteworthy that, although the description of the people and their cultures has been constantly changing since contact with whites, the descriptions by the wealth-seeking, resource-hungry Anglo-European colonizers have always been consistent, focusing on exploitable elements of the environment which could be harvested without concern for the peoples who would ultimately be impoverished.¹⁴

The Northwest Coastal Culture Area must be "regarded as a single culture area."¹⁵ There is great consistency surrounding the cultural remains of early cultures in the form of canoes, houses, clothing, basketry and weaving, carving in wood and stone, crafts, technologies which suggests that in the two thousand years previous to contact, after more sedentary cultures were in place, the cultures of the northwest coast were able to develop undisturbed by the events taking place far to the east in America. During this "Late Period," cultural elaboration and growth continued throughout the region. Other than some volcanic activity, and some glacial movements to the north, there was nothing to prevent the spreading of shared social and technological traditions.

Then, in the mid-seventeen hundreds the Euro-Asians arrived: the Russians in 1741, the Spaniards in 1774, and the English in 1778. The first recorded contact with the Coos was in 1973. With these intrusions the prehistoric period came to an end and history began.

The fur trade emerged as a dominant influence which quickly drew the indigenous communities into a growing world economy giving them rapid access to luxury goods and superior technology. But social disintegration, erosion of community identities in the face of decimating diseases, and cultural decline due to the dislocation of belief systems (brought on by missionary zealots intent upon destroying the beliefs which fostered the development of art and ceremony) were widespread. And most important of all, colonization resulted in the loss of control over the environment and the eventual extinction of many of the smaller communities.

Until European contact the areal cultures were supported by a subsistence base of continuous distribution throughout a uniform temperate rain-forest environment. They were hunter-gatherers of the most advanced sort, and in an environment of abundance cultures developed that were highly civilized and comparable in some respects with civilizations based upon agriculture and animal domestication. Technology developed as an environmental response, as trade language like Chinook developed in response to the need for commerce between diverse groups of unrelated stock.

This culture area "contains the oldest and most variable evidence for flaked stone technological traditions, and the same area contains the largest number of native American languages and language families."¹⁶ Evidence also suggest the populations have stayed in their present locations for long periods of time, and may even have existed in the area before quarrying and flaking traditions were introduced or developed. Technological and linguistic diversity and diffusion spread rapidly as the beginning of the historical, modern period neared.

Having summarized the general prehistory of the culture area attention must be turned to the development of the cultures around the Coos Bay area in prehistoric times. Who were they, what language did they speak, where were they from, and how did they live from day to day? Since the larger context of the ecological and cultural systems has been framed it should now be possible to single out those characteristics which more clearly express both the common traits and differences characteristics of the Coos community.

The first order of consideration is, arguably, linguistic. One of the most notable aspects of the Coos culture is its isolation linguistically from nearly all surrounding groups. And, as language is the repository of normative patterns of culture, and the medium whereby information on these patterns is transmitted generationally

and elaborated upon over time, so also does language describe and shape the relationship and interaction between people, the community, and the environment. Thus, in order to fully understand the transformation of the Coos community it is necessary, now that the environmental context has been established, to consider the development of the Coos culture in terms of its linguistic roots. This consideration will complete the overview of the general prehistory and prepare the way for a history of the Coos culture in particular in the next chapter.

It is most likely that the people who lived around the Coos Bay area previous to the arrival of Anglo-Europeans came down from the north. In fact, the name Coos might well be a derivative of the word "Kusan" which was used by early explorers to denote the groups inhabiting the ecosystem of the bay area along the coast of southern Oregon.

It was noted earlier that there was a group of early inhabitants in the Columbia River area which spoke a language of the Macro-Penutian language phylum. The people of the Coos Bay area spoke a variety of Penutian called Kusan, and differing dialects were spoken in the villages centered on different parts of the bay and its surrounding environment. These dialects were called Miluk, and Hanus, after the designations by which the people described themselves. As also noted earlier, Kroeber's theory of the development of maritime skills was quite possibly incorrect,

while Drucker's contention that the ancestors of the Coos Bay area inhabitants came into the area with such skills already intact appears to be more plausible. This suggests and supports Drucker's further inferences that he believes these people to have descended from the Eskimo-Aleut culture complex in the far northern region of the Northwest Coast Culture Area. There is little evidence, according to Drucker, to support the idea of overland migration which is dependent upon postulated influence by or contacts with Asians, or other outdated theories originating in Anglo-European anthropology. If asked, the natives respond that they have never lived anywhere else-as we will see later in terms of their creation story, which suggests they came from the Creator of all things, and were made of the blue clay off of the Cape now called Arago.¹⁷

They are of what is called Yakonan stock, derivative of a tribe to the north which also shares the Penutian family of languages spoken along parts of the southern Oregon coast and in some areas of northern California. The classification of languages (which the people they are applied to often disagree with) native to North America was created by J.W. Powell, and has been used since 1891.¹⁸ (His system has not proven invalid over time, but rather continually reinforced.) The Yakonan peoples are associated with the Aisea as well, and both groups are linguistically

related to the Siuslaw and Umpqua who lived near the Coos territory to the north also.

Chinook was the trade language of the groups in Oregon and southern Washington, and it has been suggested that it could be affiliated with languages of Penutian stock. Yet:

Very little information is available on these tiny divisions. Such as there is has been collected from informants who hodgepodge...which all the Indians of Western Oregon...were assembled and thrown into...in the 1850's.¹⁹

The most widespread language of the region was Athapascan, and its speakers virtually surrounded the coastal cultures. It is thus not inconceivable that the Penutians migrated down from the north long before the Athapascans intruded into the area:

Perhaps equally ancient were other groups speaking the dozens of various languages now classified in the language family called Penutian...such as the many triplets...each with a distinct dialect...²⁰

They came into the area some three thousand years ago, these migratory Penutians, descendants of proficient northern hunter-gatherers who were evidently as at home on the sea as on land. The many dialects of their language, which was the receptacle of their continually spreading culture, were spoken throughout southern Washington, northern Oregon, and along the southern Oregon coast on down into north coastal

and north central California. Relatives of the Macro-Penutian phylum are spoken even in Mexico and Central America.²¹

The Coos Bay area, where the Penutian speakers settled, consists of beaches, dunes, marshes, sea cliffs, terraces, and headlands. Beaches occupy more than two-thirds of the coastline, some being very long but most quite short, bordered by steep cliffs, and terminated by steep headlands, so they are of little use for travel, agriculture, or animal husbandry. Traveling was done along elk trails which were perched precariously high on sheer cliffs and open to the buffeting of the nearly continual winds, or through brush so thick the trail was often barely recognizable. There are numerous rivers and streams emptying into the ocean along the shore, and travel along watercourses was common--testament to the ancient culture through the medium of canoe building, for the vessels were sea worthy up to a point and most useful for traversing the many watercourses in the area.

It was hard to get to the area, and once settled into numerous small culture groups with distinct dialects or languages there was little intercommunication. Peoples to the north and south of the bay were often unfriendly, sometimes dangerously aggressive, and occasionally went to war. But tribes such as the Coos were friendly and helpful to the whites once contact was established. They were a

nonaggressive people with little in the way of deprivation or unfulfilled needs.

The same features which attracted the first human residents also drew the Euroasians, and Anglo-Europeans later on when cultural intrusion displaced natural catacyclism as an agent of cultural transformation. But the portable harvesting technology brought along with the first people limited the degree to which they could multiply and exploit the environment, so they lived in an easily maintained steady state of dynamic equilibrium which conserved both culture and environment. Knowledge of how to live in the environment formally stored in the languages the cultures used to define themselves, communicate with one another, and maintain their territories and identities.

The interaction of environment, language, and culture subtly influenced the shape and patterns of society that emerged in the Coos Bay area. Thousands of years passed between the entry of people into the environment and the stabilization of cultural and social forms. It seems highly likely that the first people carried a view of the world with them that allowed them not only to adapt themselves to the environment but also to adapt the environment benignly to their own needs--such as applying their tool-making capabilities to new materials and learning to harvest local plant and animal life through observation

of natural cycles and patterns which would insure efficient hunting and gathering so far as possible.

In the following chapter the history of the Coos from the immediate pre-contact period to the present time will be summarized, especially as regards the social and cultural forms, environmental practices and uses, and the transformation of every element of their lives by the influx of history-bearing whites after 1800.

The environment, language, and culture of the Coos Bay area people were by that time stabilized and pretty well settled as a result of thousands of years of relatively undisturbed development. We have answered the questions of where they came from, who they were, and what their language was. Now we can consider the details of the daily lives of this distinctive cultural group: Matters relating to racial origins, physical types, social structure, economics, culture, and other elements which contribute to the system of culture under consideration in this study.

CHAPTER 3
THE PROCESS OF TRANSFORMATION

What happened to the Coos culture? How can the process of transformation be described? And just how reliable are the descriptions? These are the questions which must now be answered in order to understand how the Hanis and Miluk people which make up this culture were forced from a state of dynamic equilibrium into the state of chaos, and how it came to be that they were able to remain as a viable community in an environment which seemed to become increasingly hostile to their continued existence.

Evidentiary materials on the Coos are dispersed into numerous collections across the country, such as in the Library of Congress, the Newberry Library, the Smithsonian, the Bancroft Library, and in the Northwest Collection of the University of Washington, as well as scattered references in university, college, community college, state, county, and city libraries, and historical societies-not to mention materials in private collections which are closed to public access and difficult to study without special permission and a well-established reputation as a serious scholar. As to these materials, such as they are, can they be considered valid as descriptions of a people whose traditions were oral rather than literary?

This question has generated much controversy, as the recordings of the oral tradition, in spite of the best intentions of the individuals who carried out the work, have been almost exclusively done by the Anglo-Europeans, with their attendant cultural bias and ethnocentric slant. Early missionary accounts of the peoples of the Northwest Coast Culture Area were rife with examples of the ways in which the colonizers looked down upon the indigenous inhabitants and considered them inferior, savage, barbaric, and in need of both holy and secular ministrations to uplift them to a state of so-called civilization consistent with Anglo-European views of just what civilization is, or is not. It appears that the members of the steady-state communities of this cultural area were seen as lesser being because they did their best to fend off the dominator cultures which were invading their territory and disrupting their lives; this did not provide any basis for assumptions of inherent inferiority on the part of the missionaries. They needed to justify their invasion and imposition of their culture, to rationalize their right to take the land by conceiving of the indigenous peoples as immigrants like themselves, subject to the imperialistic hegemony of Anglo-Europeans greedy for resources they could convert into currency and wealth, and seeking also to spread their influence and cultures across the world.

The Anglo-Europeans fabricated a mythos based on their own literary traditions of scholarship and investigation, a world view in which they were the saviors and all others were lesser beings, in which they were the bright and shining ones while persons of color were consigned to the darker regions of their Judeo-Christian underworld. The indigenous peoples were seen as servants of Satan, and in spite of the official governmental line, that the established inhabitants were to be considered as human beings, and that their lands should not be taken from them without due compensation, the self-confessed godly populations of colonizers went right ahead and took the lands anyway, sometimes with great losses of life on both sides.

True, the indigenous people were probably nomadic. Also true, that they adapted themselves to the demands of the environment as needed. But to extrapolate from linguistic remnants, unintentionally preserved artifacts, and other archeological and anthropological materials that the people were necessarily of recent Asian origins and not indigenous to the lands as they themselves claim is unsupportable based upon any criteria. And whether or not such is the case, the fact that the oral traditions and myths of these peoples state clearly their belief that they are not from somewhere else must be taken into consideration when attempting to interpret them for the benefit of others.

The lives and cultures expressed in the languages of indigenous peoples show the degree to which their survival depended upon a complex, interactive relationship with their surrounding environments. The interactive structures which evolved are in direct contrast with the sorts of particular political structures resulting from "intensification" and resulting in environmental depletion that required an organized state to take shape in order to insure the survival of the western European cultures and civilizations which bear little or no resemblance to indigenous North American communities. The European mentality is such that it reifies nature and creates a set of internal perceptions, beliefs, values, attitudes, and behaviors. It then projects these fabricated views on the environment and shapes it to their whims, regardless of results. Indigenous communities tended to lack the powerful extractive technology of the Anglo-European invaders, and their ability to exploit the environment at a rate where depletion would outrun natural processes of replenishment limited their ability to shape the external environment to mirror their ideas about what it ought to be. The indigenous peoples had to adapt themselves to the environment as their survival depended upon just how well they were able to do so.

The native peoples preserved their mythos and ethos in a timeless oral tradition which has been referred to as "geologic memory" by certain native groups.¹ And from

their point of view there is little, if anything, in their memories which indicate that they were ever extant in the Asian ecosystems and culture complexes they are ostensibly related to and descended from according to western scholars. Most native groups insist they are indigenous, and the growing ranks of American Indian scholars are reinterpreting the oral traditions in a hermeneutic light, and often from the point of view of the natives themselves. Really, there is no way to say who is right or wrong in this argument. Even on such a seemingly simple matter as where the native populations came from and how they got there, there is no definite consensus.

For purposes of this study all recorded evidence, originating as it does with the Anglo-Europeans, must be considered by its very nature to be culture-specific and therefore speculative in its findings. All interpretations of culture by outsiders are questionable, especially in the eyes of the group being studied. Thus it must be noted that this study in no way pretends to render a universally acceptable account, because there were no people there to record events as they occurred. At best all historical arguments are educated guesswork. The central issue herein is cultural, focussed on the dynamic process of systemic transformation that occurs as a community changes element by element over time.

One of the primary goals of this study is to attempt to see things from both sides. Principally, as a scholarly document, this study is based upon the literature on the groups under consideration generated by western scholars, yet, at the same time such information must be complemented as much as possible by the oral tradition expressed by informants at the onset of contact. One of the basic problems in reconstructing Coos culture is the lack of complete information from community informants. It must be remembered that the environment the Coos people knew has been permanently and completely altered in nearly every detail, their language died with the last native speakers in the early part of the twentieth century, and the cultural practices are but pale shadows of the originals. Thus this reconstruction of Coos culture has been constructed of materials, from several disciplines, but complemented by what oral knowledge still remains with those who identify themselves as members of the Coos community.

Because of these controversial facts the true and actual history of the Coos people is lost to time. Certain scholarly interpretations of the history of this group can only be disputed by drawing upon an extremely limited amount of available material. None of the findings herein can be considered conclusive insofar as historical validity goes, but it is the Coos as a case in point, an example of the

ongoing process of cultural transformation, that is important.

So, with that said, and even while knowing that an exact picture of pre-contact Coos culture is impossible, this study will attempt to reconstruct-using the multi-disciplinary approach afforded the American Studies scholar-as complete a picture as is possible of the lifestyle of the community as can be created from the sketchy and widely dispersed information available.

Given that "a nonlinear system's state at any given time is determined in large part by its previous state [and] this confers a degree of a priori unpredictability,"² we can make note that even in systemic terms it is both difficult to predict outcomes, and to generalize about previous states based on current situations. Yet, using a systemic methodology it is possible to construct a generally accurate description of the previous state of Coos culture, not necessarily valid in its details, but true in a broad sense, and useful for the purpose of defining the elements and conditions leading to and influencing the process of cultural transformation. This description is syncretic and draws upon findings presented under a variety of disciplinary categories.

In our present world we can see that there are definite subsets of things which, in combination, contribute to and catalyze large-scale cultural transformations.

When you look back at history, you'll see that new technologies build new civilizations. Technology determines the quality and quantity of the human economy. The medieval age gave way to the modern age because of the art of navigation, the invention of gunpowder and Gutenberg's art of printing. Now the modern age has come to a close because of nuclear power and electronics.³

These comments are by a twentieth century Japanese author, and reflect the common knowledge that increasing the mobility and communications abilities of any given group will alter previously established patterns of interaction between the individual and themselves, others, and the local environment. Changes in transportation, communications, and the technologies of war which reflect increasing abilities to extract and concentrate environmental elements into ever more powerful forms have always been evidence of increases in human efficiency (often at the expense of the environmental and human systems from which they emerge) which bring about radical transformations in the topology of cultures. In the case of the Coos peoples we can see movements from skin-and-wood boats to transoceanic sailing ships, from linguistic isolation to entering into the communications system based on global interconnectivity and economic interaction, from stone and bone implements to the use of metal tools, and from a technology based in nature and expressed in myth and ritual to one based in culture and expressed as industrialism—all of these changes altered the

Coos and forced them to redefine their sense of identity and adapt to a new environment. What is remarkable is that they were able to survive at all. So what was it that made them strong enough to endure and remain viable despite the enormous pressures they faced toward extinction? To avoid getting any further ahead of the story we must now return to prehistoric times and consider the makeup of the Coos community just before--then during and after--contact with the Anglo-Europeans, in order to answer the questions which arise when one asks just what it was that happened to the Coos?

First we should describe what is known about the Coos culture and its practices and uses within the environment described earlier. We know they came into the area--or according to their own myths, they were created there--at some indefinite time in the distant, prehistoric past. We have discussed some of the elements of a traveling, hunting and gathering culture, perhaps from the coast of northeastern China, which established roots somewhere to the north and east of the Coos Bay area. But whatever they were when they arrived this changee as they adapted to their environment and became the settled cultural group first encountered by Anglo-Europeans. Prior to contact they developed cultural, social, religious, and economic orders unique to the area and the type of people they were

becoming. It is to the orders of their civilization we now turn.

Continuing with the systemic approach it is fruitful to view the Coos as a specific and unique culture group from the point of view of their environment interaction with the environment initially, for it is this relationship which is linguistically stored, culturally embedded, and transformed as the culture changes over time, and it is in the storage medium of language especially, by which the culture is transmitted to succeeding generations, that this relationship is evident. Here the scholar must be cautious, given that the principal recorders of the oral tradition were Anglo-Europeans--we will consider them below. The way in which the reporters and translators recorded, then interpreted the information they gathered was not yet what we now call hermeneutic, from the inside--such as the way in which a native would have written and interpreted them in their own language and then translated them into English. The modern scholar must read the myths and language texts left behind by Melville Jacobs, Leo Fractenberg, and John Harrington, (the only people who recorded what remnants of Coos culture remained in the early twentieth century), with care, for ways in which they could be misinterpreted. The cultural context that existed before contact with the Anglo-Europeans was lost to time and change.

There has been a great deal written on the Northwest Culture Area in general, as was noted in the previous chapter. But not a single work that could qualify as a history of the Coos community itself. As a unit the Coos are usually grouped with several other cultural units, usually categorized by language, such as their Yakonan ancestors, who remain as the Alsea, Kuitish, Siuslaw, and Yaquina who spoke related tongues.⁴ These groups lived to the north, up the coast, but were of related stock. To the south were the cultures of the Klamath Basin Area. The Coos are considered to be the northernmost people of this complex of small groups of loosely related bands in isolated communities, the members of which usually spoke a unique dialect unintelligible to any but linguistic relatives nearby, and who seldom traveled more than ten miles from their birthplaces. Siouian cultures far to the east, and Athapascan culture areas just over the mountains tended to further insure the isolated lifestyle of the coastal peoples. A few members of the tribe might speak the trade language, Chinook, and go on longer, perilous journeys to trade with neighbors to the north such as the Umpqua, or to the east where the Kalapuyas lived.⁵

The Kusan, or Coos culture was part of a family made up of three other groups who shared a range covering parts of present day Coos County, where research was carried out.

Neighbors such as the Umpqua, and distant relatives among the Coquille River cultures, were aggressive but reasonably peaceful peoples, while the Coos, after contact with Anglo-Europeans, were noted to be kind, gentle, peaceful, helpful, and cooperative in all their encounters and interactions with settlers from the invasive cultural system which nearly wiped them out.

Western Coos county, from Ten Mile Lake on the north, to the south bank of the Coquille River where the southern branch of the Kusan family of peoples lived, and from up to two miles offshore, and inland to the crest of the Coast Range Mountains, were the homes of the Nelukitz, who lived on the North side of Coos Bay, the Naseemi, who lived on the south shore of the Coquille River, the Miluk, on the north shore of the Coquille, and the Honus on the south side of the bay and up the estuary. The Miluk inhabited an area specifically described as extending from Coos Head to the place on the bay now known as Tar Heel Point, the Honus, an area from just south of the town of Empire to the downtown area of North Bend. The four branches of Miluk-Honus peoples, the subject of this study, thus shared the shores of the estuarine and riverine environments, and lived peaceably together in a neighborly fashion in an unbelievably lush ecosystem which precluded any need for conflicts which might have arisen over resources had they been in short supply.

Other modern towns were once Coos village sites, such as Lakeside, Ten Mile Creek, Whiskey Run, Randolph, and up the Coos River, which winds a beautiful course about twenty-five miles through the mountains from its head-waters at Golden and Silver Falls, dropping their misty veils from 340 feet above into a stony basin just beyond a grove of ancient Myrtle trees—a relative of the bay laurel often used in medicinal applications—which are now part of a county park. The fir, pine, cedar, hemlock, alder, and other trees grew in peaceful quietude, for life occurred on the margins of the ancient forests, in meadows, along streams, in the folds of the estuary, on the banks of the rivers. Evidence still exists marking the many encampments scattered throughout the Kusan Culture Area, which includes the four groups mentioned above.⁶ They would travel to selected places together, as a village, and move everything to traditionally used spots four times each year.⁷ They were no longer the nomads their ancestors might have been when they came into the coastal zone at some indeterminate time in the past, perhaps as recent as two thousand years ago⁸ or as long as forty-thousand years ago, if estimates referred to in the previous chapter regarding how long the area has been inhabitable are credible. The Coos myths sustain the point of view that they are indigenous to the area.⁹

The environment and their relationship to it shaped the Coos culture in many ways. Game abounded in the bay, along

the shore were birds and sea mammals and near-shore fish, plus the seven seasonal runs of fish along the shore and into the bays, extending up into the salmon spawning grounds, high in the mountains, in clear, cool, gravel-bottomed, shady streams and pools where the current runs and is free of silt. Such conditions, often destroyed in our own time by modern logging practices, are required if the fisheries are to remain strong, and the technology the Coos used to extract their needs from the bounteous land and water never exceeded the ability of the land to replenish itself. Natural changes of geologic slowness ruled their lives for the most part, punctuated on occasion by rude outbursts such as volcanic explosions or earthquakes. Some anthropologists suggest that some truly ancient sites, which would push back the possible onset of entry of the people into the area around Coos Bay, are lost forever under the sea, which has risen and fallen within the memories of most tribes of the Northwest Culture Area in general.

Plant and animal sources, trees and stone, river and sky, all together provided everything needed. The four yearly trips were essentially extended food-gathering trips, but they also gave everyone a change of routine and scene, and served to reinforce the sense of shared identity, of relationship.

One trip up the river took them up the north fork of the Coos where they caught eels, trout, and other fish. They

made fishing weirs, cages constructed of branches and roots which funneled the fish into capture chambers. The fish were dried slowly in the smoke from continuous fires, and carried home in baskets typical of coastal peoples throughout the Northwest Culture Area.

One trip was made to take part in the Ten Mile Creek salmon run which happened each Fall. Salmon were taken with spears made of elk horns sharpened to a fine point. The men did this work for the most part. The women cleaned and prepared the fish, as well as gathering the hawood root, a starchy tuber. In midsummer everyone went to the largest yearly gathering, at Cape Arago, where shell fish were collected and prepared for winter use. They steamed their day to day needs in huge pits in the sandy beaches lined with red hot stones and covered with wet seaweed.

In spring Camas roots were gathered near Whiskey Run beach, dried to be made into flour later which was then made into a dough and cooked on hot stones to make a sort of bread. The dried roots were ground between stones, some of which can still be found today, as can a number of other artifacts.

These trips served to reinforce the community bond, the shared sense of identity, and their reverence for, and attitudes towards the lands were such that they wasted little, throwing away nothing of even marginal use. References abound in the myth and language texts which

exhibit this close, cyclic relationship to the land the people shared, based on observations of nature that were handed down from one generation to the next through the stories, legends, and myths that not only entertained them, but guided them in their defining themselves and establishing behavioral norms.

Drucker notes how "the sanctioned patterns of social behavior which functioned as prime determinants in the personality formation of the bearers of the culture...defined the culturally approved personality type or types."¹⁰ Normative guides were carried in the language, and in the culture it conveyed. After all, language is a principal artifact of culture, if it survives. The language of the Coos, the abundance of their ecological system, the paradisaical environment; by western standards, with their odd visions of beginnings and edens unheard of among these peaceful people, whose language carried little in the way of "cognitive tags" marking violence, war, famine, drought, or pestilence as normal...the land gave all and made them peaceful, though "the reasons for this pacific pattern of social behavior is not altogether clear,"¹¹ it gave them a stable culture.

Their society was organized differently than those to both north and south. Many groups in the Northwest Culture Area were even wealthier than the Coos and had such great abundance they could base their whole culture on wealth and

status, family connections, possession of slaves, and sustained warfare coupled with aggressive trade practices.¹² Such groups were hierarchical and developed nothing in the way of what westerners could recognize as "democratic" forms of self-government. The Coos world-view was simply too foreign for those who came in historical times to comprehend, and their way of life based on abundance and ceremony, ownership and prestige generated by relationships and influence within the intricately structured communities was too alien. Some groups had larger populations, but their concentration led to the exploitation and repression of many sub-groups such as slaves, wives, and the poor, which led to cultural developments sometimes characterized as aggressive, warlike, and treacherous.

The Coos are actually not quite so related to their northern progenitors as they are to their southern descendants in the Lower Klamath Culture Area, and the peoples of this area did not use wealth-destroying potlatches, totemic poles and totemic systems of relationships, did not build large multi-family dwellings, practice canoe burials, and did not practice head-flattening; all done to the north. They rarely held slaves, and were often taken as slaves by neighbors of unrelated stock among the Shastas, Modocs, Klamaths, and Takelmas. The Rogue River peoples were another of their

southern neighbors, but they had fairly amicable relationships with them.

It is estimated there were about nineteen thousand people before contact in the Lower Klamath Culture Area, with something between fifteen hundred and two thousand Coos in the Coos Culture Area being described herein.¹³ The Coos developed unique culture traits, and their sense of self and cultural identity was deeply interwoven with the life of the environment. They were a part of nature. They did not reach the threshold of intensification Harris spoke of, and thus had no need for political structure which might have appeared familiar to the colonizers. Their technology was sufficient to support a relatively stable population...perhaps underestimated by early chroniclers after disease had probably already played a part in lowering population densities to the north. Earliest estimates go back only to 1780.¹⁴ Lewis and Clark, who viewed, but did not contact the Coos, estimated about fifteen hundred Honus alone. It's conceivable there were as many as several thousand in the Coos Bay Area during population peaks.¹⁵

The Coos were well-to-do, but they were not overly wealthy. They lived in a land where it was said, in reference to the incredible run of salmon up the bay towards spawning grounds, that "you could walk across on their back"¹⁶ and all their needs were met. They lived in a unique culture, in specific ways, yet they were obviously

related to a number of surrounding groups, as well as being neighbors to numerous unrelated language and culture groups.

They were communitarian, collectivist, and lived and worked together in small groups often headed by individuals who might be grandfather or great-grandfather of everyone therein. When a group got too large, a segment simply broke off and set up a camp for itself in one of the many available secluded, plentiful places, while retaining the custom of communal yearly trips to reinforce their relationships and connection to everyone in the Coos Culture Area.

Stephen Dow Beckham is the preeminent scholar and historian of the tribes of western Oregon, and his book The Indians of Western Oregon is one of the most complete regarding the specifics of the Coos culture.¹⁷ Another notable contributor to the literature related to the Coos is L.S. Cressman, in his The Sandal and the Cave.¹⁸ These two authors, a professor of history at Lewis and Clark College, and a professor of anthropology at the University of Oregon respectively, offer the most diverse sampling of glimpses at Coos Culture.

Unpublished papers by local scholars written over many years, currently housed in the Coos County Historical Society Archives, also offer some refreshing views of what is known about this isolated community before contact with Anglo-European civilization. The Coos adapted to the

environment within which they settled, or were created, depending on whose version appears most credible. They were a self-sustaining culture, their language was a vital medium of cultural transmission and identity formation. Their relationships were all circumscribed by their connection to the environment. As long as all the elements remained constant the culture could continue to exist for untold centuries.

Once the characteristic culture of the Coos was forced into a new environment, language, and cultural atmosphere their identity began to disintegrate and the core of their culture was threatened with destruction, assimilation, or hopeless fragmentation. Their adaptive flexibility was tested, and somehow they survived. But what they were, they no longer are.

To be a Coos was an experience defined by housing, clothing, foods, technology, social status, and myths. It would be profitable to look at some of these things at this time, to see what they were before being transformed.

In the course of research for this study, less than twenty books were discovered that could be said to offer up anything approaching a historical overview of the Coos tribe. Most materials are sketchy, fragmentary, and incomplete, and can be found in anthropological, archeological, journalistic, and historical disciplines, thinly spread, without much in the way of depth.

Dr. Beckham indicated in interviews that there has been nothing written on the acculturation process among the Coos, and no previous exploratory work on the process of their ongoing cultural transformation beginning in the Pleistocene Era. Thus the present study attempts to fill this gap in the literature. Dr. Beckham further noted that the Coquille community has yet to be written upon by credible scholars, and that suggests rich possibilities for work to be done in the future by those who wish to take up the challenges to scholarship posed by this group, the southernmost branch of the Kusan peoples, who received federal recognition in July of 1989 in a ceremony at Bandon, the town which currently occupies this very important site of long-term indigenous settlement. Yet, at this time, a complete history of the Coos people must be gleaned from a minimum of materials in existence and readily accessible to interested parties.

Those born into the pre-contact Coos culture were born into a world, as previously described, of great abundance and stunning beauty. Their foods, taken from land, air, and sea, from river and woodland, from animal and vegetal forms, were varied and plentiful. Their lives were inextricably interwoven with their environment, and they lived within its bounty in peace. Ruminant mammals, small game, fish, sea mammals, shellfish, nuts, berries, roots, seeds, greens, blossoms, medicinal herbs, and both migratory and resident birds provided them with a diet modern peoples can only

envy. This rich plentitude was collected using traps, nets, pits, spears, harpoons, bows and arrows, and prepared for use as food and other purposes such as in clothing, ceremonies, etc., by drying, salting, smoking, curing, and consumed either on the spot or later on, as the surplus was stored in beautiful, intricate baskets--everything made of locally obtained materials--food, clothing, shelter, myth, custom, social structure; although some limited trade for such items as volcanic glass, other varieties of animal skins, and foods of a relatively exotic nature did occur, as evidenced in the use of Chinook by members of the Kusan culture contacted by members of the Lewis and Clark expedition. But for the most part the Coos were an isolated group of Paleo-Indians, living a settled, peaceful life.

Property was held in common by all, and all were equally free to hunt and gather sustenance as they pleased. The children and men alike loved games, and gambling among them was common from an early age. The women were remarkably well treated, and the sense of identification with the family and living group was very strong. Ostracism provided the best deterrent against anti-social behavior, and the myths and stories learned in common in their partially underground cedar plank houses during the early winter gales were rich in meaning and sufficient to the needs of the members of the culture as explanations for how the world came to be and what their place as its people might be.

Their ceremonials, customs relating to status, naming, belief system, creative expression in forms such as dance, woodcarving, and the other survival crafts they practiced so well, as well as burial practices (they buried their dead under the floors of their houses), birthing, vision quests, and dress all expressed the unique and varied aspects of a culture existing in a state of dynamic equilibrium, an interactive steady state system punctuated by occasional environmental changes in the form of natural catastrophes.

Early life was spent on a cradleboard, which served to protect and restrain the infant, childhood was spent at the feet of caring, well-fed relatives who were gentle and strong. These were a people of medium height and square build, shining black hair topped by basket hats, coppery colored skin and well-defined features. Children learned the variety of general skills, practices, and uses of the environment they would need throughout their lives in a language unique to their community, and were conditioned to the roles and social positions which had developed over centuries in response to the nature of the people and their forms of environmental interaction. Everyone had enough and the old could be secure that they would be cared for when they could no longer provide for themselves. They absorbed the rich oral tradition of their people and continued to develop it as time and experience required. The head of any given group was usually the one to whom most people

turned in matters of daily affairs and the keeping of the peace. They had their petty quarrels, undesirable personalities, and their share of squabbles and conflicts among themselves, and on occasion with other related and neighboring communities and cultures. Those who could keep the balance, remain in tune with the perpetually recurring cycles of nature and time, of earth, sky, water, and people, usually led by acclamation.

Details of their lives abound, for the uniformity of the environment of the Northwest Coast Culture Area gave them all the same basic materials. Yet, even with that common element the diversity of specific traits which marked differences expressed in the life styles of the indigenous peoples of the area are remarkable. What was celebrated each year was tuned to the seasonal changes in food sources and other local environmental elements, but how each cultural group expressed their view of the world in the form of customs and taboos regarding food, gender differences such as treatment of women during menses, domestic economy, and ceremonial observances exhibited great variation.¹⁹

Among the Coos individuals dressed in what they chose, women often wore tatoos on the chin and forearms, wardrobes changed seasonally, from cedar bark to buckskin, and all were apparently free to express their nature without narrowly prescribed limits on behavior as long as they acted

in ways that contributed to the general good and which did not disrupt smooth day-to-day operations.

They believed their creator had provided them with a wonderful world it was their duty to care for and respect. They performed their duty, they received everything they needed.²⁰ Members of the community could seek the help of Guardian Spirits, animal and supernatural species that would grant them wealth, influence, and a healthy life with a good mate.

Dreams were a source of guidance, another reality where one could gather knowledge and power which could be applied in daily life. Highly developed shamanistic practices contributed to community health and helped keep the people and the world in order.

Tools for making bows, canoes, food processing implements, and clothing were diverse and ingenious. They used stone, bone, shell, horn, and other materials to good advantage. Certain rare seashells acted as currency. These were called dentalia, and are beautiful, long, slender, white, and delicate, often being exchanged in marriage ceremonies.

Beckham states: "Ceremonialism was not elaborately developed by the Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw. These peoples, however, had a series of observances that were followed to maintain social harmony...through various stages of life."²¹ Traditional rites related to birth, naming,

puberty, salmon, recognition of the perogatives of the wealthy, hunting, shamanistic practice, seasons, adulthood, and food gathering all served to reinforce the cultural integrity and contribute to self-definition and identity formation. These were all serious community affairs, and observed carefully by all members. Death and burial appear to have varied over time; with lone gravesites oriented towards the west; graveyards, and under-the-floor burial sites have all been noted.

The world was imbued with spiritual forces and entities, and those powers were obvious, if not always evident to all those who shared the Coos vision of the world, and the community as a whole observed and propitiated them as necessary for their continued well-being. Their rich cosmology was recorded in part by ethnolinguists like Jacobs and Fractenberg, and even in their limited, fragmentary form, these documents still provide an intimate and revealing glimpse inside the pre-contact soul of this community.

We now have a picture of the Coos community as it existed before contact--at least as far as the historical records are capable of revealing it--and can see the outlines of their culture. This was an integrated community, a family based culture, and their sense of identity, the coherency and usefulness of their perceptions, beliefs, values, attitudes, and behaviors was firmly

established over unnumbered generations. But this was a pre-historic community until initial contact with the Anglo-Europeans in the early 1790's.

The invading culture brought the beginnings of history and the end of the long-standing cultural identity and tradition of the Coos. In two hundred years of historical experience the accumulated cultural inheritance of thousands of years and generations was nearly wiped out, and only proved able to undergo and succeed in the process of transformation successfully through adaptive persistence supported by a strong systemic core.

The Coos cultural system had its outer layers stripped away very quickly after contact, and it is to this accelerated period of change and turbulence, or disintegration and impending chaos, that we now turn. With the coming of the historical forces of Anglo-European culture, the English language, and an overly exploited environment the Coos were brought to their knees and nearly wiped out. What happened to them? How is it that they still exist when nearly everything they identified with was altered or destroyed? What had taken centuries to occur by natural processes before contact, began to occur in a matter of decades afterwards. The environmental, linguistic, and cultural bases of Coos culture were stripped away by the incoming waves of colonizers, traders, and settlers. Let us

consider the processes of transformation from contact into modern times.

It is more clearly evident that, over the last two hundred years, cultural factors became more important for inducing change than the much slower natural processes whereby the traditional Coos culture was subtly shaped previous to the nineteenth century. The arrivals of early explorers were the beginnings of a devastating acceleration in the process of transformation that almost destroyed the world as it had been. Yet neither total destruction nor assimilation of the Coos resulted.

According to Cressman, cultural "practices...arose out of long experience with the process of adaptation to natural environments and neighbors, both friendly and hostile."²² The group was the primary reality, their survival was more important than that of individual members, and maintenance of the group culture was the principal motivation and predicate for action. And the systemic integrity of the core of their culture, though threatened by contact and subsequent disruptions, was not destroyed completely, as the Coos community exhibited an incredible flexibility and ability to adapt to enormously difficult conditions as the processes of transformation occurring on a global scale eventually touched the lives of all the Kusan family members.

Those Anglo-Europeans who came to the Oregon Coast were attracted by the possibilities of fishing, trapping, mining, farming, and logging.²³ They came looking for territory and resources they could claim for their own use, part of the endless wanderings back and forth of human beings in search of a stable, secure environment that gives them what they need. Perhaps, as the myth texts suggest, the people who first occupied the coast were indeed indigenous. Maybe they came many thousands of years ago, or just a few. But they came first into an environment empty of human beings. Subsequent waves appeared over ages and ages, like glaciers.

Earlier travelers came slowly, overland on foot, or perhaps by sea, or on foot along the coastal margins which were above sea level at various times. Travel was slow, and communications with others unlikely in the vastness of a continent so empty and great that most inhabitants simply called themselves "human beings" or "the first people" or just "the people." When they arrived there were no others--regardless of when that might of been, or by what route or means.

The peoples of the east and west, from Russia and Spain during the Age of Expioration, discovered a land ripe for harvest and occupation by their technologically superior popuiations, who thought themselves better with all their great ships and crude tools of metal--and the native population tended to feel somewhat the same at first.

Coos Bay has long been considered the "best harbor on the Oregon Coast"²⁴ and has long been a focus of settlement as well. Many of the Anglo-European settlers who came into the bay area set up their farms and homes on or near sites already often used by the peoples who had occupied the area first.

But the first, tentative explorations by the Anglo-Europeans began in 1565 as the famed Spanish "Manila Galleon" made its first sweeps along the Oregon coast. Yet, in spite of extensive Spanish exploration of the Northwest coastline they did not land along the southern Oregon coast.²⁵ In fact, it was nearly two hundred years before anyone landed on the shores of the Coos territory.

Even though Francis Drake had sailed into the Pacific for the English crown as early as 1577, he apparently never landed for fear of being waylaid by the Spanish, whom he was so fond of taunting. He may however have landed once at Cape Arago, one of the places visited by the Coos on yearly food-gathering trips. Whether he came in contact with the people is open to question, though the Oregon Historical Society posted a marker on the headlands asserting his priority to claims of being the first Englishman to set foot in Oregon.

It wasn't until March 7, 1778, that Captain James Cook landed at Cape Foulweather, then went south and named Cape Gregory, which is also known as Cape Arago. Still it wasn't

until Hanna's voyage of 1785 that economic ties were established with coastal peoples and a new age of maritime fur trade initiated. And this was before anyone had ever heard of the Coos people. The Russians had only made it as far south as southern Alaska, though the Spanish considered them a threat to their holdings in California. But the English were ultimately able to stake out a major claim between them in the Northwest that was still in force until just barely over one hundred years ago.

The French sent one Count Laperouse in 1785, and he made it to the coast of Oregon in 1787, though he made no contact with natives. That expedition later sank in the Hebrides and left little trace excepting a few crude maps. French interests never intruded into the land of the Coos.

Maritime fur trade became the leading impetus for the establishment of outstations for European traders interested in profiting from the rich trade in animal skins. Hundreds of voyages were made by a combination of eight nations, and hostilities often resulted from misunderstandings. America was the primary explorer of the region, and the first contacts between the Coos and the Anglo-European cultures came after the first members of a group of explorers with the Lewis and Clark Expedition heard of the Coos from their neighbors to the north, the Tillamook. But England continued to operate in the area for a long time, carrying on the fur trade established by Captain Robert Gray starting

in 1788. Lewis and Clark's people didn't arrive until 1806. Other government sponsored expeditions followed, as well as a number of private forays that went unrecorded. Still, the Coos were to be spared for awhile longer, until the area was penetrated and publicized in the period between 1820-1850. "What had been wholly an Indian domain" was opened to exploration and settlement as traders, ships, and metal tools entered the Northwest Coast Culture Area in general, and the Coos Bay Culture Area in particular.

"Vancouver reported in 1792 'the Port Orford Indians on the Rogue River...'" were still exhibiting cultural traits untouched by outside contact. Yet, "fifty to sixty years later reports indicate changes in appearance, habits, as well as disposition of those tribes had taken place."²⁷ Once the Anglo-Europeans entered an area change was so rapid as to be brutal. Disease often decimated whole populations. Metal tools were used to assault the environment as immediate economic exploitation was initiated. "Gunpowder diplomacy," became a primary means of dealing with the natives if they posed any resistance to the invaders, whom they could neither fight off nor overcome.

and the white people who began to populate and settle the land looked down upon the local populations, as can be easily seen with a minimal perusal of missionary and settlers accounts.²⁸ Jedediah Smith made it into Coos territory, to the beach at Seven Devils July 6, 1828. He

and his party bushwhacked their way through miles of brush only to find about a hundred Coos having a sale on fish and mussels. They went on to "discover" Coos Bay the next day. The Coos people were remarkably gentle, peaceful, and cooperative.²⁹

By the time Smith arrived the old culture was already permanently altered, and on the path to degradation as the white population gradually displaced them more and more. The land, the cultures, the languages, the stories, all were rapidly changed nearly beyond recognition.

By the time of the Gold Rush many of the communities of natives on the coast were up in arms over the white encroachment and they began to prey upon stray settlers, who thought they had every right to colonize the area (whereas the local peoples saw their paradise being destroyed and their control over their destiny and identity being taken away). The Coos were never reported to have engaged in any hostile act towards the settlers, but they were lumped in with all others, good and bad, when it came time to take account of what must be done to insure the peaceful settlement of the area by the Anglo-Europeans. It was a battle for survival, and the invaders were rapidly winning.

Resources were being quickly transformed or depleted, the English language had to be adopted in order to communicate with the incoming waves of Americans, and the ancient practices of Coos culture were radically transformed

by contact and the ensuing disruptions of the Coos way of life. The solution to all of this was, in the eyes of American political officials, to remove the natives from desirable areas and attempt to force them to change their way of life, their perceptions of themselves and the world, and their relationships to others. By the 1850's the Coos way of life was coming to an end, approaching chaos.

The dynamic, yet balanced, relationships between the elements of the ecology of which the Coos were an integral part, were disrupted. The culture which emerged when the Coos first settled into the bay area was part of a system of cycles of continuing regeneration and decay. These cycles were described and transmitted to generation after generation in the language which was enriched by the elements of their ecological system. The descriptions of the interconnectivity and dynamic interaction of all the parts in a coherent whole described in their mythos, and expressed as all the details of everyday life was, almost brutally and wholly transformed within a mere fifty year period. From the first recorded meetings between the cultures of the southern Oregon coast and the Anglo-Europeans in about 1788, to the indirect comments on the Coos in the journals of Lewis and Clark, until the beginnings of the Gold Rush influx of settlers in the early 1850's, there was very little written about the Coos people. It is safe to assume they were undergoing the same

process as the other tribes of the Northwest Coast Culture Area, seeing their long-established communities and ways of life transformed into something beyond their abilities to explain or resist.³⁰

What is most miraculous is that, given the rapid pace of disintegration of the Coos culture, language, and environment, the Kusan people still managed to maintain enough of their old identity to remain viable as a cultural unit, albeit in a vastly altered form. Let us consider some of the highlights of the process of transformation as the stability of the environment was imbalanced by the vastly superior technology of the settlers, as the language was displaced by an alien form, and as the cultural practices which formed the basis for the community, the life of the soul, and the identity of the members degenerated into uncertainty and chaos.

After Lewis and Clark, the next mention of the Coos by the whites was in January 1852. The U.S. transport Captain Lincoln, which was carrying troops to Port Orford to assist in the quelling of conflicts there, ran aground about two miles north of the entrance to Coos Bay.³¹ No one knows the details of what was going on as the opposing cultures competed for the bay area territory during the first half of the nineteenth century, but some historical records were kept, though not by the Coos, only by the whites, whose

version of history has been biased at the expense of those whom they have considered inferior.

Meanwhile the period of the "killing fevers" in the 1830's decimated much of the indigenous populations. The process Calvin Martin describes in The Keepers of the Game-of biological colonization of the bodies of the first people with European disease organisms to which they had developed no resistance-had the same devastating effect in Oregon as in Eastern Canada three hundred years before. Misunderstandings and continued violence marked the interactions of the traders and explorers, and the later settlers, with those they sought to displace, whether by intent or accident. Beckham, in a fine understatement, notes that "hostilities sometimes resulted."³²

Beckham can be considered, in fact, to be the primary authority on the Coos people. In his career he has written about them, assisted them, fought for them in Washington, and become an integral part of the movement of the Coos towards revitalization. His numerous publications related to the "tribe" are highly regarded in the state of Oregon. (But note that the term "tribe" can only be accurately applied to the modern Coos, as it was a foreign concept, imposed by well-meaning invaders to explain a civilization so foreign it could not be explained in any but derisive terms).

Inter-racial marriages, decaying customs, disrupted economic relationships, new material technology and methods of use, epidemics of disease, and numerous other destabilizing factors attended the invasion by the Anglo-European culture of the Kusans. The Lockian concepts of land use, and the western European idea of "right of discovery" which suggested any land not visibly occupied by others belonged to whoever found it, combined to give impetus to the land-grabbing practices of the settlers coming from the east, from a growing America.

The U.S. Government gave lip service to their belief in the humanity and priority of the indigenous peoples as far back as the Northwest Ordinance of 1787:

The utmost good faith shall always be observed towards the Indians; their land and property shall never be taken from them without their consent; and in the property, rights, and liberty, they shall never be invaded or disturbed, unless in just and lawful wars authorized by Congress; but laws founded in justice and humanity shall from time to time be made for preventing wrongs being done to them, and for preserving peace and friendship with them."³³

This law was supposed to represent the "utmost good faith" on the part of the Americans. But it was continually revised and compromised to fit the needs of the incoming settlers for a land clear of "bothersome Indians" and

troublesome laws dictated from back east to the ungoverned frontiers.

So, as stated earlier, the Anglo-European invasion was but the most recent of the waves of people who have immigrated to the area, altered the environment, displaced previous residents, and taken over as the dominant influence in the environmental system. They came for the rich resources in fish, furs, lumber, minerals, water, and farming potential. And the missionaries who preceded the trading empires felt they had found a new potential congregation "in the dark and cruel places along the shores of the Pacific."³⁴ By 1843, the Oregon Territory firmly in U.S. government hands, nearly 900 emigrants entered the Willamette Valley. In 1845 nearly 3,000 more emigrants moved into Oregon. On June 15, 1846, the British and the Americans settled their claims and set a boundary along the 49th parallel. Then came the Gold Rush, and settlers flooded into the area, ready to set up farms and shops, determined to exterminate or remove whatever savages got in their way. And Congress was in a mood to help them. They passed laws, such as the Organic Act of 1848, which created the Oregon Territory and established a form of government subject to U.S. laws--and it upheld Indian claims to the land and made it clear they were not supposed to be "invaded or disturbed in just and lawful wars." But, by 1850, with the passage of the Oregon Donation Land Act, and without a

single treaty being signed, Congress began to parcel out Indian lands in Oregon to the incoming settlers.

In the bay area, as a result of the spreading of stories by the troops who'd been shipwrecked at the mouth of the bay that the land was good, and ripe for settlement, the first contingent of settlers moved in, organized by a Mr. P.B. Marple who arrived in the spring of 1847 with forty men and went about establishing the beginnings of a town. Consistent with the peaceful nature of the Coos people, the settlers met no resistance from them. The local community would just move. There was plenty for everyone--up to a point.

When the coos began to be pushed into the marginal areas, against their traditional boundaries with their neighbors, and out of the territory they needed to sustain themselves as a self-sufficient group, they still refused to fight. But tribes to the north and south were infuriated at the invasion and began to fight, and to agitate other tribes to enlist in their cause, to drive the whites out of the coastal system. The Coos were thus branded traitors and hunted and killed along with the whites. And the whites saw all Indians as enemy and would attack even the gentle Coos people. The whites gradually cleared out the Coos villages, drove the people away with guns, and burned down their plank houses, looting their homes in the process.

President Filmore appointed Joel Palmer to make treaties with all the coastal peoples. And Palmer did this--with every tribe except the Coos!

The original treaty, signed at Empire, Oregon, on April 30, 1855, which was found and saved by a tribal member showed that there was no record of who the chiefs were that supposedly signed, and that none of the names listed were Kusan. But this did not matter. Caught between the settlers, the miners, and the soldiers the Coos were displaced and finally removed. The horses destroyed the trails, the miners ruined the gravel bars in the streams where salmon spawned, and logging silted the rivers and changed the riverine ecology by altering water levels, riverbeds, raising temperatures, lessening rainfall, and numerous other environmental degradations. Newly introduced hogs ate the acorns, cows ate the camas, hunters killed off the game, and farmers fenced the ranges and meadows. The Coos had agreed to none of this, yet they were haphazardly pushed aside, and when they would not conveniently disappear the government simply moved them elsewhere--until the new place became desirable to settlers and the ancient inhabitants were again subject to removal and disruption of their way of life. Secretary Palmer could see what was going on, but knew there wasn't much he could do. He did not value the Coos way of life, and the Indian wars of the

period made it impossible to develop and implement a rational policy that would benefit all involved.

Palmer found a section of unoccupied coast to the north along the Alsea River and moved the Coos there, never paying them for their lands. Some of the tribe was taken to Port Orford at first, and to Alsea later. Plamer wanted to turn the Coos, and other groups, into farmers. He hoped he could find a solution where the whites and the indigenous peoples could avoid one another. He noted the prevalence of violence by whites when he said "these miscreants, regardless of age or sex, assail and slaughter these poor, weak, and defenceless Indians with impunity, as there are no means...to prevent these outrages or bring the perpetrators to justice."³⁵

After several slaughters Palmer decided it was in the Indian's best interests to remove them to a safe haven. In July of 1854 Congress approved the Indian Appropriation Act, which permitted Palmer to complete treaties with the Indians of Oregon on his own. By September of 1855 the Secretary felt he had obtained agreements from all coastal tribes whereby they would turn over all their lands to the government of the United States. At this point, during 1855-56, "the Coos Indians were taken to a new Indian Agency at Umpqua City at the mouth of the Umpqua River. They were placed at the southern end of the Siletz Reservation."³⁶

In a letter to the Chiefs who appealed the removals, in March of 1876, Secretary of the Interior Chandler instructed the special agent in charge to remove all Coos from the Alsea lands and onto the Siletz Reservation permanently. The Coos were now dispersed up and down the coast from Port Orford to Coos Bay, to Yachats, to Umpqua, and finally to Siletz.

It was not until 1924, when all Indians became citizens--and due to subsequent legislation such as that in 1934 which allowed Indian communities to organize themselves into a corporation--that the Coos people regained enough of a sense of their own identity to enter into a legally viable confederation with other local tribes such as the Siuslaw and Umpqua, and to sue the government over unpaid claims--which were denied because of what the government cited as "lack of documentary evidence" (which, was tenable as a legal position, but not as a position antagonistic to a culture that had held priority over the land for centuries). So the Coos continued their fight as a result of subsequent decisions and won at last in 1959-60, which led to their eventual recognition as a tribal unit eligible for federal health, education, and welfare benefits.

The first white child was born on Coos Bay in April of 1854, to the Curtis Nobel family.³⁷ The wars between the whites and the Indians were fought in 1855-56. The Coos were removed to Siletz where the hardships of the

reservation years were to be endured, and never recovered from completely.

The removal from their home territory was difficult enough in itself. The Coos had to leave everything behind. All they had was what they could carry. And the weather that year was characteristically wet and cold, so much sickness overcame the peoples who converged on Siletz. Courtship, family, and mating customs all fell apart, and the Coos men saw the most desirable women of their group married off to other tribes, or to whites. Without their land, language, and cultural practices the Coos community was progressively devitalized, their population shrank at an alarming rate--and were it not for the very few Coos who had managed to remain behind in the bay area as a result of protection by whites or the brush, they might well have ceased to exist there. Yet, a few, six or eight, managed to stay behind and retain the memories of the old days to varying degrees. Still, there were no young to whom they could pass on what they knew.

Tribal member Don Whereat made this statement when asked about how the Coos identity had survived and whether or not the culture was still alive:

"...after about 1850 we have no cultural identity to speak of... and the last living speakers of the language died out in the 1920's and 30's. We no longer have a cultural identity--we have developed a political identity though..."³⁸

This is sad testimony about, and the last rites of, what was once a stable, well-developed civilization.

Life on the reservation continued to dilute the Coos culture, which had existed prior to the beginning of the history the whites brought with them, and prior to the contact which resulted in the devastation of their way of life by which they had remained for uncountable centuries self-sufficient, healthy, and uniquely identified with the land surrounding Coos Bay.

What happened at Siletz is the beginning of modern Coos history. There they lost what little remained that made them unique among their relatives and neighbors. There all things Kusan were mingled and diluted with others, and that they managed through the ensuing degradations and battles to preserve their identity is a remarkable achievement—for which this study found some specific, yet still surprising, likely reasons or probable causes. These factors will be covered in the concluding chapter.

What remains to be considered in this chapter are the highlights of Coos history since they left their homeland for the reservation and gradually managed to regain formally recognized status over the last three decades.

There were wars in every direction in 1855-56, but the Coos community stayed true to its established character and didn't enter the conflict. In fact, they had to be

protected by volunteer militia from the whites who lumped them in with all their warring neighbors.³⁹

President Pierce issued an executive order in November of 1855 which instructed his agents to form a Coastal--the Siletz--Reservation, which eventually became home for more than two-thousand members of at least twenty coastal bands of people. All of those that converged on the reservation lands were hungry, many were sick--and estimates suggest that more than 1/4 of the people died in the first year. The land had been divided into areas with sub-agencies at various points where population was to be centered, mostly at the mouths of the rivers such as the Siuslaw, Umpqua, and Alsea. The Coos people lived at Port Orford (some of them, for a short time), then camped out at Empire just previous to being marched up the coast to the Yachats Plains in the windy, sandy, nearly desolate area of the Alsea sub-Agency, with some of the band being left off at the Umpqua Agency in the process. Later, in 1875, everything the Coos had spent a generation building up was again taken from them when Congress closed the Alsea Reservation and required the Coos to move up the river to become farmers among the already established Siletz community. Between 1856 and 1875 at least half of the tribe died.⁴⁰

There was scarcely a tribe left to carry on the old ways. They were forced to leave behind their land and culture, and intermarriage quickly ended social and

linguistic isolation. Customs, values, beliefs, practices--all were transformed completely in a matter of twenty years!

Hundreds of generations of environmental interaction, a language reflective of and enriched by the immediate surroundings, used to embody and guide the unique systemic relationships between the natural and human environments, and a culture that was a living expression of the combination of elements which, which seen as a whole, provided the basis of the coherent and stable individual and group identity of the Coos community--all this was nearly wiped out in two decades of historical time. What incredible devastation! To conceive of the magnitude of their transformation, this small group of but a few hundred people, and the degree of change in their identity, one would have to imagine forcibly moving the whole population of the U.S. at the end of the twentieth century to the west coast, forcing them to live in concentration camps for a generation, as well as making them speak a foreign language, eat strange foods, deal with new diseases, and embrace ways of life completely alien to their combined past experience, and be treated all the while as inferiors with little in the way of rights or recourse to redress of grievances. On a micro-scale this is what happened to the Coos. The identity they constructed was stripped away in a short historical

moment. And the U.S. government fully intended that the indigenous people's ways of life be wiped out.

All commentators on the reservation years make note of the tattered, sick, dispirited condition of the coastal peoples as they entered the reservation lands. "The Aisea sub-agency was established for the non-treaty Aisea, Coos, Siuslaw, and Umpqua Indians."⁴¹ And, "after several generations of inter-tribal marriage at Siletz, the distinct characteristics of the different people disappeared."⁴² After the first winter, when so many died of the move, disease, hunger, and exposure, some of the Kusan's attempted to return to their homeland in small parties of two and three women with children, but were apprehended by the Army. And after four years the whole tribe picked up what they could and walked back to Coos Bay. They were forced to return to Siletz.

Their homes and territory were overrun with settlers, so they had to make do hunting and fishing, or taking what beggarly work they could find. Their way of life was gone,-though they could not help but carry some of their old culture within, at the core of their identity. In considering the natural rigors of a nomadic life, which they Kusan had known at some point in their collective past, it was truly devastating when the reservation times were forced on them and and the Coos lost the most of their natural vigor and stamina.

The toll that reservation life took on the peoples of the Northwest Coast Culture Area in the United States are well known in their brutality, severity, and devastating effects, and the government offerings--in "concentration" camps, where the indigenous peoples were being convinced to part with their land in return for guaranteed territory and federal support in terms of food, clothing, housing, and education--were promised, but seldom delivered. Of the more than two thousand people concentrated on Siletz, only just over two hundred were eligible for treaty-based subsidy.

The horrible conditions led many of the Coos to retreat up the streams and canyons of the coast, where they disappeared without notice. Many who escaped before the reservation populations were freed as citizens in 1924 were hunted down and sent back or killed. One Coos woman lived in a hollow tree for many years, until the government ceased to hunt her people.

The land they were given was never much good for farming. They were not paid adequately for the lands they had given up. They had many treaties in good faith with the U.S. government, and still they were treated like chattel when forced to relocate. Their social structure was abandoned, their culture looted and burned. Courtship, marriage, familial relationships, gender roles, normative myths, legends, and stories, and the perceptions, values, beliefs, attitudes, and behavior based thereon were

permanently altered for the worse. All the clarity and coherence of their way of seeing and acting in relationship to the environment, one another, and even their own selves was degraded, torn to shreds, and stripped away. Then, on top of all of this the U.S. government, certainly with the best of intentions and worst of practices, decided the coastal, estuarine and riverine areal cultures which lived by hunting, fishing, and gathering before history began, needed to become self-sufficient farmers. "The Indians were forced into farming as a race...expected to get used to loneliness...land...even good farm land was no pleasure to a hunting people."⁴³ Coupled with this determination on America's part to civilize the savages was a notion that standardized education would be required to defeat their previous ways. Yet Indian Agent Metcalf in 1859 said "My experience would show that it would be folly in the extreme to attempt to educate them...for their habits and superstitions are thoroughly fixed..."⁴⁴

Some coastal people managed to adapt well to reservation life and the American way. Yet, for many of these as well, life was continually uncertain, they were often unhappy, and "wretchedly poor and destitute of all the necessities of life except what is supplied them by the Government--"⁴⁵ They'd given up a communal life in long cedar plank houses, perpetual abundance, and the eternal cycles of nature, for the poverty of white picket fences, intensification of

resource exploitation and the development of political states unconcerned with them.

"They no longer lived in their old lands...had lost nearly everything...were entirely dependent upon the government for survival."⁴⁶ They languished in squalor and sickness, unable to reform their disintegrating individual and cultural identities. They were being "civilized" for their own good. America has seen this process repeated over and over in its history, and around the world. The unsung conquered are removed, imprisoned, and re-educated to be good citizens of the new dominator. "Siletz had become a death camp."⁴⁷

"Basic to the program of civilization was education," Beckham notes. He then goes on to describe the system of indoctrination used to placate, suppress, and control the children of the reservation peoples:

All of the old ways were to be destroyed. Nowhere in the educational program was attention given to the literature, arts, or languages of these Indians.⁴⁸

When education did not work sufficiently well on the reservation then boarding schools far away were established and the children removed for months, or even years at a time, forced to wear regulated costumes, speak English, go to church, learn a trade, and finally, ideally, be acculturated and assimilated by the invading cultural

system--what a horror, to be absorbed into a shapeless mass of uncertain form!

"...instruction in the Indian boarding schools was narrow and focused upon destroying the old culture," Beckham further notes. In this way the lands would eventually be freed completely for white settlement at a minimal cost to all concerned--except the indigenous people themselves. The government which had promised to act in "utmost good faith" had promised to pay them for what they were forced to give up, had also promised to always treat them fairly and take nothing from them without their consent. It had failed on all counts then asked the Coos to vacate what they'd built in exile. White settlers took everything regardless of promises. In 1865 the President divided the Siletz Reservation into two parts. The middle ground was opened to settlement. In 1875 Congress closed the southern section, the Alsea Reservation, to Indians, and opened it to settlement as well. The reservation continued to melt away until it was but a shadow of its former dimensions. The inhabitants of what was left were not allowed to develop the resources or build businesses--in the end they were supposed to just go away and be assimilated into America's imagined melting pot. In 1887 the Dawes Severalty Act further eroded the communal holdings and much was lost to this botched attempt to make farmers out of hunters and warriors. By

1892 thousands of acres of Indian land fell into the hands of white settlers.

According to Beckham, "Many of the Coos Indians who had returned to their old homes in 1875...filed for allotments along South Slough."⁴⁹ So did a lot of other tribal members from all up and down the coast. After 1875 the reservation life effectively ended for the Coos. They were spread along a two hundred-mile long stretch of coast line and could claim little of the old ways as their own anymore.

Their history since that time has been a small echo of the events which led to the destruction of the indigenous peoples across the Americas. "Two very different ways of life came into conflict. Each way had different values and attitudes, especially toward the land."⁵⁰ The first people were hated and looked down upon, deprived of their rights, denied justice, indoctrinated into strange belief systems such as the Quaker religion and the Ghost Dance religion when on Siletz, and then let loose into an often hostile, nearly always unfriendly world of which they were no longer considered a part.

The Coos people continued to adapt though, surprisingly resilient and strong in their core, taking jobs in logging, agriculture, trades, teaching, or government. They were part of the great number of natives who gave their lives in American wars. They went to court after receiving

citizenship, but were cheated by due process. But they kept going back, and finally started to win.

The remnants of their culture were recorded by Fractenberg starting in 1912, and by Jacobs between 1928 and 1935. Harrington also did his work in the first half of the twentieth century, along with the ethnographers, even though he was an ethnogeographer, and intended to discredit Jacobs. By this time the alarming death rate which afflicted the Coos had made those who knew the old language rare. By the 1950's most of the old languages had died, though some recordings were done in order that living speakers could keep samples of the language alive.

The old headmen had been displaced by Indian agents of the U.S. government and new councils had to be formed in order for the tribes to deal with them and to retain some sense of identity as a cultural group. The Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw, operating as a single unit since their treaty with Palmer in 1855, began to voice their concerns over preservation and reparation as early as 1916.⁵¹ In 1929 Congress acted to allow Indians to raise claims in court, and the Coos, with their neighbors wasted no time in doing so. Paying their own legal expenses they fought from 1917 to 1938 to regain title to their lands. The government won, but the three tribes had pioneered using the system for their own benefit. In 1938 the U.S. Claims Court ruled that "these Indians of the Oregon coast did not really

exist!"⁵² This in spite of the fact that the government had built a tribal hall on the 6.1 acre Coos Bay reserve.

This reservation land had been donated by Louis Simpson, developer of the North Bend area of Coos Bay, as he wanted to develop the area now known as Empire. He tried to get the government to put its Indian Agency there, but failed, so the land was given to the city of Empire which let title lapse. The tribe claimed the land, as it had been theirs, and won it. "Tribal identities were something uniquely Indian in the United States," and it continued to thrive.⁵³ For most of this century the Coos have been in and out of court pursuing their claims to land and identity, responding to the changes in law and social and legal atmospheres. They adapted to the new ways and institutions in order to survive. The natural environment had become a legal, political environment, and the Coos identity made the transformation in spite of its losses.

Most Coos live in modest cabins along bays and rivers all along the coast, were forced to practice their old ways of hunting and gathering under government control. They worked menial jobs at times, used the welfare system put in place by Roosevelt as needed, and continued what few cultural practices they could salvage as best they could. Then, in August of 1954 President Eisenhower signed Public Law 588. This law terminated the Coos and stated they no longer existed!⁵⁴

Life on the run, then on the reservation, had brought an end to the cultural entity known as the Kusan community. Their culture was nearly, and neatly, exterminated. In attempts to "help" the Indians the invasion of American culture "destroyed not only the old ways, but also the spirit and essence of the Indian lifestyle, leaving an emptiness that white culture was unable to fulfill."⁵⁵ They lost their unity with the natural environment, the continuity of their way of life, their coherent society, their magic, the deeper meanings of their myths. They did not assimilate. They were shoved to the margins of American culture and forced to survive. So how come they still exist? How have they managed to survive the loss of their environment, language, and culture, the dynamic relationships and processes of interaction that formed the foundations of their identity, which fueled their communal soul and kept it alive?

To the interpretations of this historical data, the findings of this study, and the conclusions drawn about the Coos, America, and the general systems approach to the process of cultural transformation we will turn in the following, and final chapter in this narrative.

CHAPTER 4
INTO THE FUTURE

Congress verified the President's order with Public Law 588, which declared there were no longer any Indians in western Oregon. Continued battles in the courts and in Congress since that time resulted in the Coos tribe obtaining federal recognition in 1984, "entitling them to federal services, but not federal acknowledgement, since it had been previously terminated in 1954,"¹ by executive order, and by Congress in 1956.

The population of the tribe, according to official rolls, "was just short of 500,"² when President Ronald Reagan signed the bill into law, October 10, 1984. Nearly two thirds of the community was wiped out in less than two hundred years. But some remained. They had joined a confederation of neighboring groups, the Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw, and formed the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower, Umpqua, and Siuslaw Indians, Inc. Their members were, for the most part, descendants of members who returned from the Aisea Reservation. Together they have initiated a political revitalization process out of what has been preserved.

The Confederation has had many ups and downs, and as Beckham notes there have often been conflicts within, but in

spite of that the Coos have managed to continually improve their status. The tribe is incorporated under Oregon laws. They have instituted health, education, and welfare programs with federal monies and built a new tribal hall. They established an alcohol and drug abuse program and detoxification center in Coos Bay in 1974. Current plans, according to interviews with elders and administrators, include creating a Coos culture village to preserve culture, and to draw in visitors.

So what is to be made of this? How come the Coos are still there? They have no land to speak of, beyond the few acres of their reservation. "In 1976 only one Coos spoke the native language."³ Their cultural practices eroded almost to non-existence. How do they come to establish a museum, an Archeological Association, and Indian education programs in the schools?

Using the general systems approach to cultural transformation theory, as explicated by Eisler, it appears that the core identity of the culture was strong enough to withstand the invasion of colonizing peoples and subsequent cultural devastation. The Coos community, regardless of changes in the environment have always remained on the coast and practiced food gathering, ceremonies such as marriage,⁴ and as such they have stayed tuned to their natural surroundings as far as possible. They have remained a "partnership" culture, but have adapted to the "dominator"

culture. Remember, these people are a highly flexible group used to changing conditions, as evidenced by their historic travels.

Their environment changed from a natural to a political state as the process of "intensification" Harris noted led to the development of a political environment. They adapted to this new context by expanding their cultural identity into the political realms and becoming a legal culture with an accepted national identity.

Another factor in their maintaining a Coos identity was that of white racism. According to Bateson cultures in conflict must destroy one another, assimilate one into the other, or reach a state of accommodation. It is obvious that, in the case of Coos, accommodation was the result of their clash with Anglo-American civilization. The Indian peoples of North America in general, and Coos in particular all faced the irony of being asked to assimilate and then not being allowed to due to their different skin color, looks, and behavior:

Each day he [the Indian] must find his way between two sets of standards, those of his tribe...and those of white culture. He lives with a history of broken treaties, neglect, and exploitation, and must still cope with prejudice as well as unemployment.⁵

The only healthy response to such stress on identity is to adapt or disintegrate, to adjust or enter into the realms of systems wide incoherence and extinction.

The Coos were thus forced to remain Indians, whether they liked it or not, and they suffered exclusion from American society as a result. They were not white, and were therefore unacceptable as a part of white society. To retain a coherent sense of personal and group identity they reached out to the land, and continued to nurture and cultivate their relationship with it despite their not being allowed to claim ownership. They reached back into history and studied what records had been made about them. Their myths, environmental practices and uses, ceremonies, and the few ethnographic reports on them provided a source of precious information they still value highly and preserve in their tribal center. Though the language died, much essential information was recorded and translated into English. Thus the core of the cultural memory did not lose its integrity, and the tribe managed to survive. They approached the edge of systemic chaos, stood on the edge of extinction and pulled themselves back with a sheer tenacity that is remarkable, by becoming a legally defined nation.

They joined with other tribes, even adopting customs from distant tribes, such as the sweat lodge ceremony of the plains tribes which was used in their detoxification program.⁶ They fought to survive and succeeded, though at a great loss. In order to regain federal recognition they had to incorporate the construct of "nation-state" into the core of their personal and cultural identity.

They did not go extinct, they did not undergo fusion with the white culture, but they did return to a sustainable steady state of renewed dynamic equilibrium as they became a fully functioning open system able to integrate through accomodation and take part in the American civilization, making their own unique and valuable contribution to our understanding and appreciation of indigenous cultures.

By studying the essential elements (and thier interactive relationships) that led to the development of, and the sustenance of the Coos people, and through the consideration of the systemic variables and how they have changed over time, it is possible to get a firm grasp of how the process of transformation has influenced this small group of incredible people, and the patterns of their culture. The general systems approach provides a valid, valuable, and fruitful method of inquiry into the process of cultural transformation.

The invasion of Coos culture, the primary culture in the Coos Bay Culture Area, as defined in this study, by the peripheral cultural system of the Anglo-Americans led to disruption and disorientation, alteration of basic perceptions, values, attitudes, and beliefs, but not to destruction, and not to the entropy from which they could never have recovered. Instead, the culture is undergoing a revitalizaiton movement.

"A revitalization movement is defined as deliberate, organized, conscious effort by members of a society to construct a more satisfying culture."⁷ And this the Coos are doing. They have brought back the interactive dynamism of their parts, regenerated their traditional world view, adapted to western materialistic civilization, and recreated a new version of their cultural system.

Revitalization is...a special kind of culture change phenomenon: the persons involved in the process of revitalization must perceive their culture...as a system; they must feel that this cultural system is unsatisfactory; and they must innovate ...a new cultural system...[that] depends on deliberate intent by members of society.⁸

This is an organismic analogy, where human society is regarded as a type of organism, with culture conceived of as patterns of learned behavior displayed by the social organism or system. Another, related, analogy is that of homeostasis wherein a system preserves its integrity by means of coordinated action by some or all of its parts. The parts lessen stress on the discrete elements of systemic identity which leads to a new form of systemic organization.⁹ Consciousness is transformed as the process of revitalization drives the identity to the next level of systemic order and complexity. And this is what the Coos have done. They have revitalized their culture and sense of identity by choice and concerted action.

It is of value to note that the systemic method of interpretation of cultural of transformation is applicable cross-culturally and could as easily be applied to a small group of Pacific Islanders, or to a gender group a la Eisler in her interpretation of women's experience in western culture. The method is especially useful in interpreting highly insulated micro-cultural systems, which, as the American juggernaut of telecommunications and transportation revolutions spreads throughout the world, find they must open up and integrate within the larger system or face extinction.

Researchers and scholars in American Studies have available a useful tool which incorporates the most recent developments in "ecological" thinking. Such thinking complements available methodologies used to study integration and actualization of cultural identity internally, in society, and in emerging global context. This method allows the study of complex processes and the delicate web of interrelationships inherent in the nature of cultures throughout the world.

All peoples need to be able to say "although we speak of different things, our hearts will be beating as one."¹⁰ There exists a great needs, especially in America, and all over the world to enter a new paradigm that is global and sensitive to the environment, people, and their interactive relationships.

Recent findings in cognitive psychology suggest that human beings are not objective in their interpretation of events, but instead rely on culturally derived schema to aid them. We are all subjects of culture, and our means of interpretation must follow a somewhat hermeneutic approach, seeing any given culture from the perspective of its members, to enter into their world and see it as it looks to them. Such an approach can be subjective while allowing the observer to remain unbiased as a subject

Such an approach to the study of culture has implications which extend far beyond the academic world. The American Indian sees Americans as corrupt, degenerate, coreless, hollow, and dangerous. There appears to be a great emptiness in the hearts of Americans due to instabilities in the environment, the society, and the emerging global civilization. Their only hope is, in the minds of indigenous people, to return to a love of the land, and understanding of human dependency and interaction within the natural world. If Americans can adopt a global-systemic perspective, a renewed and vital environmentalism, and out of this build a reconstructed world view, there is hope they will not follow their outdated mechanistic view into chaos, in both environmental and social terms.

America must develop an applied environmental ethic, an "ecology of mind" as Bateson called it. The nation must respond to stress by demanding of itself that it fulfill its

own highest ideals; a free, humanized, stable culture which allows for full expression of individual identity without inviting anarchy. Events in Eastern Europe in the late 1980's make it evident that, in a world of instantaneous communications repressive regimes will not be tolerated by cultures attempting to integrate into the global network, the planetary partnership between nations and cultures necessary to prevent humanity from self-destruction at worst, or at best a severe decay of civilization as it is known at this time, as we near the end of the twentieth century.

America has many lessons to learn from what were once considered "primitive" cultures, now, and into the future, as "...our society has taken a wrong turn, lost its way, and needs to recover a sense of purpose and direction."¹¹ Our basic mythos and ethos must be reconstructed, our perceptions altered, and the values, attitudes, and beliefs based thereon brought in line with the coming reality of global civilization. "...the function mythology serves in primitive culture is desperately needed by contemporary society."¹²

Bronislaw Malinowsky wrote in a 1926 essay:

Myth as it exists in savage community...
is not merely a story told but a reality
lived...a living reality...continuing...
to influence the world and human
destinies.¹³

America lacks a fully coherent mythos, and the reality of the nation is so diverse as to lack integrity, so out of touch with nature as to lack reality, and so removed from human considerations that it lacks life, in the sense that Malinowsky stated. America must adopt a more "ecological" view and accept the emerging global mythos--as the Coos adopted to nationhood in order to survive.

Even though they lost much, the Coos retained their coherent mythos and sense of reality at the core of their being. The cultural system which they were members of has been revitalized, incorporating as need be alien elements, in order to regain a sense of equilibrium and to relieve the stresses imposed by American on their culture. It is from their response to the process of transformation that America can also learn to integrate, incorporate, and revitalize its sense of unity and clarity of purpose. They have shown America that in order to survive a people must adapt or go extinct eventually--much sooner than we might imagine if global warming and ozone depletion are any kind of indicators. The Coos have earned their place in American culture, and as partners in humanity we can move with them into a coordinated phase of development and experience a greater sense of human cohesiveness, full of promise, hope, and equality.

America began as a confederation of English colonies, and the uprooted Anglo-Europeans saw themselves as part of

European culture. They removed themselves to a new environment and eventually redefined themselves anew as a nation. This process of transformation, from culture to nation, in the final analysis also occurred among the Coos. They, found themselves in a new environment among strangers, and learned, at the price of near-extinction, that they had to redefine themselves to survive. Just how did they do this?

Their new environment gradually became overloaded with more people than it could sustain in isolation. This led, as Harris described it, to the process of "intensification" and the development of a political structure capable of insuring adequate support for all members of the rapidly growing society that had settled into the Coos Bay area. No longer were the people of this area able to live a self-sufficient life-style. No longer was the earth a living mother in the eyes of the newly dominant culture. The only way to survive in this radically altered environment was to adapt to the legal and political forms superimposed upon it.

Eisler also describes the details of such accommodation in systemic terms. She describes how a culture that is strong enough in its core will not be turned inside out by the penetration of outside forces if it can maintain its integrity by redefining itself.

The central, most important element of Coos identity, the factor which contributed the most to the coherency of

their culture, was their connection to the land. It was for this they fought, and it was through this struggle that the Coos redefined themselves as a "nation" and regained their identity in the process.

The ethical and mythical systems through which the Coos interpreted their interaction with the environment, and by which they defined themselves, were exclusive and unique to their community and culture. The concept of "nation" was foreign to them, as was the notion of "tribe" superimposed by the Anglo-Americans upon them. As both Jamake Highwater and Calvin Martin (among numerous contemporary American Indian scholars) observe, the world view of the indigenous populations of North America was incompatible with these intrusive alien concepts and systems of personal and cultural identity.¹⁵

The Coos lived by hunting and gathering, and they existed in a world, as described in the myth texts recorded and translated by Jacobs, Fractenberg, and Harrington, where everything was alive, related, and vital to their survival. The attributes and elements of the environment were engaged in a profound interactive relationship with the people. This relationship was imbedded in the Kusan language, the dialects of the Honus and Miluk, and passed from generation from a time out of memory, the hauntingly beautiful time of creation, when the world began and the people emerged into the realms of the Raven, the sea, the forests, mountains and

waterways of the Coos Bay area. What was left of their culture was nearly destroyed.

But federal recognition by the U.S. government of the Coos culture was terminated after the land was unfairly, illegally taken from them in return for a promise of money that was never fulfilled. The U.S. government opened their lands to settlement on the basis of an unratified treaty, and this resulted in the near destruction of the environmental, linguistic, and cultural context of their community. The way of life embodied in their community came near extinction without heirs apparent. They had to create a new identity as a result.

Through the efforts of one man, George Wasson, whose mother was a "full-blooded Coos," the Coos began their long journey to regain federal recognition. He went to Pennsylvania to go to the Indian school there, as many Indians did in those days at the beginning of the twentieth century. He made his way to Washington to study the legal documents supporting the removal of the Coos and the loss of their lands.

He found that the 1855 treaty upon which the agencies of the U.S. government based their legal claim to the Coos lands had never been ratified!¹⁵ According to the Congressional Record, acts, resolution, and testimony, and finally public laws, the Senate failed in its duties, and Wasson's appeal, in secret testimony, eventually led to the

Coos' regaining the right to sue in federal court for reinstatement as a federally recognized tribe.¹⁶

The Coos were thus joined in a political "confederation" with their neighbors to the north and south, the Umpqua and Siuslaw tribes, in a court battle to regain recognition and redefine their culture in national and legal terms. The "Three Tribes" were terminated in spite of all their opposition, after losing their court cases, but the public awareness generated by their battle led finally to the adoption by Congress, in 1984, of House Resolution 5540, which created the formal structure whereby the identity of the Coos would thereafter be defined. Yet, this definition did not "restore any hunting or fishing rights, nor would it affect any property...rights or obligations" to the tribe's benefit.¹⁷ Also, the tribe was put in the position of being able to relate to the U.S. government as a "sovereign nation" and to have the full right of "self-determination" as defined by Congress.

Congressman Mark Hartfield noted in his testimony that the Confederated tribes had "endured; their spirit and cultural identity have remained strong." He further stated that "termination robbed these people of their tribal identity" as a result of termination and the attempt of the government to push the tribes into the mainstream of American life. The tribes lost educational and health

benefits, were thrust into poverty, lost their tax-exempt status, and had to give up their lands without compensation.¹⁸

"Termination meant loss of...hunting and fishing...activities crucial to tribal diet and central to customs and ceremony...[and] closure of the tribes' food processing facility where fish, game, fruits, and nuts were prepared and preserved for tribal use."¹⁹ The tribe declined in status and numbers, but continued operations as a confederated government and "continued to meet, both for administrative purposes and to observe traditional ceremonies" even to the point of filing a petition with the United Nations "alleging that termination violated the U.N. Declaration on Human Rights."²⁰ The House Resolution which resulted gave them back their right to exist.

Other Congressional documents clearly outline the sovereign status of Indian tribes with federal recognition, and detail the "nation-to-nation" relationship which has been policy since the early 1830's.²¹ The Coos fought for their land and won back their right to exist in it and determine how they would relate to it, even though they'd lost title.

This hunter-gatherer culture was forced, when removed from their lands and way of life to "buy clothing and farm their lands" and they were "moved...north...to keep...from coming in contact with...hostile Indians; that is when they

were first dispossessed of their lands" according to Wasson's testimony.²² The Coos worked in logging, fishing, and on neighbor farms and were able to own their homes, in the lands they had once held in communal "partnership" before the coming of the Anglo-Americans. Yet, as the records clearly indicate, in spite of these changes in their way of life, the Coos did not die because of the loss of their traditional lands and culture, or lose their world view and means of defining their personal and cultural identity. This was a net result of the integrity, strength, coherency, and flexibility in the core of their identity which allowed them to incorporate the "nation-state" concept. They maintained their relationship with the land, learned of their past in a new language, and then redefined their areal culture in legal and political terms as a "sovereign nation" in confederation with their neighbors, with whom they had been allied since 1855. It took a hundred years of turmoil to lead them to termination, and another thirty years in court to regain recognition and full rights in relation to their terminators.

The process of transformation has not been without its problems, and the Coos are still defining themselves in spite of their identity conflicts.

They are no longer hunter-gatherers in the traditional sense, but they still go out to the old places when they can to fish, gather shellfish, conduct burials and weddings, and

carry on with their lives within the new context. And the newness is striking, for it has only been two hundred years since contact with the Anglo-Americans, which is but a tiny span in their life as a group, going back thousands of years.

The legal and political definition of Coos identity are often in conflict with traditions. One good example, common throughout U.S. history, is the way in which the national government of America requires the Coos as a nation to elect a chief. Chiefs were traditionally installed by acclamation, not by vote. To this day the traditional chief and the elected chief are often at odds over what is best for the tribe as a whole. There are factions supportive of both, but they do not threaten the integrity of the redefined community. Perhaps such conflicts even strengthen them and drive them onward towards a continually more integrated identity.

The Coos still live in the land of their ancestors, and for some the myths still live which sustained them over their long period in isolation from the rest of the world. Their self-perception and identity have been altered but not destroyed. The Coos carried on the ancient tradition of fighting to protect their territory as they did in prehistoric times, only in the modern world they did so in Congress and in the U.S. courts, rather than in the forests, and along the shores of their homeland.

The Coos are growing again, and in the 1980's rebuilt their tribal hall on the smallest reservation in the U.S.; 6.1 acres. Tribal administrators, in conjunction with the council of elected representatives, are seeking to gain title to more lands still, or at one time, owned by tribal members. The community still carries on and is even able to incorporate such pan-Indian elements as the sweat lodge, the peyote church, and the Sun Dance ceremony into their expanded world view.

Now the Coos are part of a world in which ever increasing complexity and interconnectivity are the norms, and in which they now have an active and vital part. The process of transformation is taking them into the future.

This process is similar to that which many small culture throughout the world are still undergoing as revolutions in transportation and communications infiltrate every area of the globe. Through the study of their experience invaluable knowledge can be gained about the process of systemic transformation, and about ways of interpreting and analyzing changes in identity and structure in diverse cultures. That is the beauty of the general systems approach.

Given that cultures are, by definition, non-linear systems, it is, of course, not possible to predict outcomes with any degree of accuracy. The rules governing non-linear systems apply as well to culture as to clouds, to flames as to social organization, to mathematics as to myths. Only

now is America beginning to be able to describe the equations which represent and define the transition from steady state into turbulence and chaos. In the process the nation is learning to redefine its identity, and to thus avoid the descent into disintegration which leads to extinction, and to find the way which leads instead to a renewal of the integrated relationships possible between ourselves, our cultures, and our environments.

ENDNOTES

Chapter 1

¹"Cultural transformation theory" was fully explicated in Riane Eisler's The Chalice and the Blade (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987)

²Kuhn full explicated his theory in his The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (Chicago: The Univesity of Chicago Press, 1970), wherein he describes the means whereby new theories are incorporated into the body of acceptable scientific method and conception.

³Clifford Geertz, in chapters II and III of his The Interpretation of Cultures (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1973), describes his theories about how "The Growth of Culture and the Evolution of Mind" led to both modern civilization and cranial capacity.

⁴Alfred Adler considered identity an intimate expression of the relationships between the individual, their culture, and the environment, and described a complete psychological theory based on these variables in Understanding Human Nature (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1965).

⁵Witgenstein's comment is cited by communications theorists Gerhard J. Hanneman in his article on "The Study

of Human Communication" in Communication and Behavior (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1975), p. 27 by G.J. Hanneman and Wm. J. McEwen. This statement, and the related propositions of the Whorf-Sapri hypothesis, imply that we must have a label, or what linguist Eric H. Lenneberg, in his Biological Foundations of Language (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1967) calls a "cognitive tag" if we are to organize the patterns of our experience into coherent forms. Further, he claims that words are not objects, nor do they describe objects, but are rather "tags" for neurological correlates of experience.

⁶Adler, p. 35.

⁷ibid., p. 37.

⁸Geertz, p. 49.

⁹ibid., p. 67.

¹⁰Communications theorist Marshall R. Singer, in his book, Intercultural Communications, (N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1987) elaborates, in agreement with Adler and Geertz, on the community-based nature of identity and its deep connection to group perceptions, attitudes, values, etc.

¹¹Jamake Highwater, The Primal Mind, (New York: New American Library, 1981).

¹²Garrett Hardin, Nature and Man's Fate (New York: New American Library, 1959), p. 276-77.

¹³Alvin Toffler, The Third Wave (New York: Bantam Books, 1981), p. 300-310. Toffler, like Capra, gives a

useful description of the development of the systems approach.

¹⁴Stephen J. Gould, "Full of Hot Air" in Natural History Magazine (October, 1989), p. 38.

¹⁵Ludwig von Bertalanffy originated general systems theory in his classic General Systems Theory (New York: George Braziller, 1968), a collection of papers written between 1940-1969, which describes not only the theory, but the applications possible in various disciplines. This citation, an excellent summary of his basic conception, is on p. 32-3.

¹⁶*ibid.*, p. 102.

¹⁷*ibid.*, p. 248.

¹⁸Fritjof Capra, The Turning Point (New York: Bantam Books, 1983), p. 271.

¹⁹*ibid.*, Chapter IX (esp. 266).

²⁰The Limits to Growth, Meadows, Meadows, Randers, and Behrens III, (New York: New American Library, 1972).

²¹Gregory Bateson, Steps Towards An Ecology of Mind, (New York: Ballantine Books, 1972), p. 64-65.

Chapter 2

¹Phillip Drucker, noted anthropologist and authority on the peoples of the Northwest Coast Culture Area, in his Indians of The Northwest Coast (Garden City, New York:

The Natural History Press, 1963), p. 6, notes the powerful influence of the environment on the development of culture in the area, though he also wisely cautions against being taken to support any sort of "environmental determinism" which might suggest a lack of other influences in the process of formation of the distinctive cultural systems of the area.

²Marvin Harris, in Cannibals and Kings: The Origins of Cultures (New York: Random House, 1977), p. xiii, puts forth a powerful conception regarding the evolution of political identity and structure in culture, relating it to a process he calls "intensification" where the culture must intensify its exploitation of the surroundings in order to maintain a state of dynamic equilibrium, which further depletes the environment and forces the culture into reorganization along political lines in order to regulate the environment and culture in their interaction through legalistic, rather than naturalistic, or ecologically centered means.

³ibid., pps. 5-7.

⁴Carl Waldman, in his Atlas of the North American Indian (New York: Facts on File Publications, 1985), p. 38, gives an excellent summary description of the Northwest Coast Culture Area.

⁵Roy L. Carlson, archeologist and art historian, in Indian Art Traditions of the Northwest Coast, ed., by Roy L. Carlson, (Burnaby, British Columbia: Archeology Press at

Simon Fraser University, 1976) a collection of papers on the subject of art in the area, goes to great lengths to describe the prehistory of areal cultures and the manner in which their arts were influenced by environmental factors in archeological and anthropological terms.

⁶ibid., p. 15, quote from Kroeber is discounted.

⁷ibid.

⁸ibid., pps. 17-18.

⁹ibid., p. 22.

¹⁰Charles E. Borden gives, in his Origins and Development of Early Northwest Coast Culture to About 3000 B.C. (Ottawa, Canada: National Museums of Canada, 1975), a complete archeological survey of the data on the area. This book is a useful compliment to the Carlson title, which goes further into modern historical times.

¹¹Knut R. Fladmark, in an article titled "The Feasibility of the Northwest As A Migration Route For Early Man" in the collection of papers, edited by Alan Bryan: Early Man From A Circum-Pacific Perspective (Edmonton, Alberta, Canada: Archeological Researchs Internation, Occasional Papers No. 1 of the Department of Anthropology, University of Alberta, 1978), p. 127 sheds much light on the variety of possible origins of the peoples who populated the area, and appears to be in agreement with Drucker, that the people of the Northwest are descendants of long-established Eskimo-Aleut Culture Area inhabitants who had already

developed maritime technology including the ability to build skin-covered, perhaps ocean-going canoes, and harvest both marine and on-shore resources long before the Northwest Area was inhabited...keep in mind, that this is the Anglo-European version of the story, and not the Indian's, whose creation stories indicate their view that they are wholly indigenous.

¹²Phillip Drucker, Indians of The Northwest Coast (New York: Natural History Press, 1963), p. 27, makes note of the fact that there is little physical data on the types of people who populated the area, so there's no way to tell visually about their origins--we must rely on the fragmentary material leavings discovered by archeologists and anthropologists for our questionable conclusions about where the people came from and how they got to the Northwest.

¹³Daniel Brinton was a nineteenth-century natural scientist who attempted to make a systematic classification of the whole American race on the basis of language in his The American Race (New York: N.D.C. Hodges, Publisher, 47 Lafayette Place, 1891) pps. 104-5, and he shows the limits of early Anglo-European thinking; the tendency to try to categorize and overgeneralize about populations of much greater diversity than he had the means to describe in any but ethnocentric terms that would be comical were they not symptomatic of the attitude of one race towards another.

¹⁴Pierre-Jean De Smet, S.J., a French Missionary who traveled extensively in the Northwest, provides another example of the way in which the Anglo-Europeans looked at the peoples and environments of the New World, as they thought it, when in reality it was a perfectly good old world to those who had lived there for thousands of years...You can almost get a physical sensation of greed when the resource-lean European eyes cast their gaze upon the ancient forests and lush estuaries of the Northwest Coast. The indigenous people are seen as useful parts of the woods, to be saved from their savagery and lifted from poverty, ignorance, and a natural state seen as corrupt. This cultural baggage was a great detriment to both Indian and European peoples alike for many generations.

¹⁵N.G. Seaman, Indian Relics of the Pacific Northwest (Portland, Oregon: Binfords & Mort, Publishers, 1967), p. 17, relates environment and relics, and bases his contention on native cultures homogeneity in later periods due to undisturbed diffusion of social and cultural patterns, ideas and technologies.

¹⁶Alan Bryan, Paleo-Indian Prehistory (Pocatello, Idaho: Occasional Papers of the Idaho State University Museum, Number 16, 1965), p. 83. Here Bryan notes the possible significance of the connection between artifact diversity and linguistic diversity in the area of the Northwest, which supports the suggestion in the literature

that artifacts and linguistic remnants are reflections of culture and allow us to analyze and understand it better.

¹⁷Drucker's hypothesis, that cultural homogeneity suggests a common origin, which appears to be supported by ethnolinguistic distribution, for Northwest cultures in spite of their diversity is in direct opposition to native myths and creation stories, and the natives will still insist they are indigenous. He makes his contention in an article, "Sources of Northwest Coast Culture" in New Interpretations of Aboriginal American Culture History (Washington, D.C.: 75th Anniversary Volume of the Anthropological Society of Washington, 1955), p. 59.

¹⁸R.C. Owen, J.J.F. Deetz, and A.D. Fisher, The North American Indians: A Sourcebook (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1967), p. 82.

¹⁹*ibid.*, p. 301. The references in this volume provide an essential piece of data about the antiquity and origins of the many Northwestern language groups, which are some of the few concrete pieces of evidence we have tying modern Northwest Coast Area Cultures to their remote ancestors, whose origins are lost, but whose imprint in the language and culture of their descendants remains still.

²⁰William Brandon, The American Indian in Culture (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1974), p. 334 (same quote cited on p. 303 of The American Heritage Book of Indians), makes note of the value of linguistic sources of cultural

information regarding the Penutians, who are thus seen as but one of many groups entering the Northwest Coast Culture Area across a span of many centuries.

²¹Alvin M. Josephy, Jr., Indian Heritage of American (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968). In this book can be found a number of references, esp. pps. 17, 139, and 191, which are indicative of the widespread distribution of speakers of languages related to Penutian, from the Northwest all the way down to Central America through California and Mexico. This will support my feeling that the Penutians were a people who carried within themselves a culture, conveyed generationally through a language, which was highly efficient in its ability to exploit resources, and able to adapt the environment and the people to one another in such a way as to guarantee the survival and spread of their descendants. The only limits on their exploitative urges, which make them appear to be a conservative culture in ways deceptively simple on the surface...the efficiency of their technology never approached the horizon of depletion Harris suggests must be reached before political identity can emerge, because the ecosystem was far more lush than they needed it to be. There was always abundance, and often surplus: until the arrival of the white man.

Chapter 3

¹In A Basic Call to Consciousness, The Hau de no saunee Address to the Western World, presented in Geneva, Switzerland in the Autumn of 1977, (Rooseveltown, New York: Akwesanse Notes, The Mohawk Nation, 1978) a moving and very important message was addressed to Western peoples regarding their spiritual poverty and the corruption of nature resulting there from. "We see the world through Pliestocene eyes," one of the writers asserted. This view of the world, as described in the book, is common to many indigenous groups throughout America and the world.

²Science Digest (January, 1990), p. 55, no author cited.

³Shintaro Ishihara, in an interview in Time Magazine, (November 20, 1989), p. 82, notes how changes in communication, transportation, and weapons technology all bring about changes in the "human topology" of culture, and attendant shifts in identity which result a new technology's spread.

⁴A. Leitch, in A Concise Dictionary of Indian Tribes of North America, (New York: date and publisher not available), p. 128, gives a three paragraph citation regarding the Coos...and like most citations it is short and lacks details of any use other than noting the population and language family.

⁵ibid., p. 129.

⁶Elizabeth Coover, in Life and Legend in The Coos Bay Area (Coos Bay, Oregon: School District 9, 1961), pps. 4-9. an unpublished work held in their archives, offers up a simple, yet comprehensive overview of Coos Culture.

⁷ibid.

⁸This estimate of primary entry time comes from an exhibit at the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry (Summer 1989) on the origins of Oregon's peoples.

⁹For a complete collection of Coos Myth Texts (as well as language texts and much ethnographic notation), see Melville Jacobs, Coos Myth Texts (Seattle, Washington: University of Washington Press, 1940), Leo J. Fractenberg, Coos Texts and Lower Umpqua Texts and Notes on the Kusan Dialects (New York: Columbia University Press, 1914), and the John P. Harrington Collection of the Smithsonian's National Anthropological Archives, especially a letter dated April 5, 1943 summarizing his field work on the Oregon coast.

¹⁰Philip Drucker, in "The Patterns of the Culture," an article contained in Indians of The North Pacific Coast edited by Tom McFeat, (Seattle, Washington: University of Washington Press, 1966), notes the lack of overt violence among some Northwestern groups and considers possible reasons for it, especially in the area of how social

structure contributes to personality formation. (esp. pps. 223-224)

¹¹ibid.

¹²Matthew W. Stirling oversaw the production of the book Indians of North America (Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Society, 1955), pps. 137-154, which gives a general monograph on far Northwestern bands. Note that there are many and varied sources of information other than those listed herein, which can be found in numerous bibliographies, also the best place to find leads to more specific data.

¹³Stephen Dow Beckham, pre-eminent historian of the tribes of western Oregon, in Requiem For A People, (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971), especially pps. 9, 10, 19, 58, 75, & 171, makes numerous references to the Coos as related to the Rouge River Indian Wars. He also makes note of the gentleness of the Coos several times.

¹⁴John Reed Swanton, in Indian Tribes of North America, (Fairfield, Washington: Ye Galleon Press, 1979), pps. 62-68, originally printed up in an ethnographic bulletin by the Bureau of American Ethnology, gives the oldest estimates of tribal population, locale, and language.

¹⁵ibid.

¹⁶Peter Farb, in Man's Rise to Civilization, As Shown by..., (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., Inc., 1968), p. 133, also gives a good general overview of practices related to

wealth and status in the lush NW coast environment's many cultures.

¹⁷Stephen Dow Beckham, in The Indians of Western Oregon: This Land Was Theirs, (Coos Bay, Oregon: Arago Books, 1977), which was produced as a PBS television special, gives the best and most comprehensive information regarding the western Oregon bands in general, and the Coos in particular. He has informed this author he is currently writing a complete political history of the Coos.

¹⁸L.S. Cressman, in The Sandal and The Cave, The Indians of Oregon (Corvallis Oregon, OSU Press, 1981), gives the best overview of indigenous cultures throughout Oregon, sets the dates of earliest habitation back thousands of years, and makes numerous references to the Coos. This book is second in importance only to Beckham's work in revealing details of life around Coos Bay in pre-contact times.

¹⁹The information presented on pages 72-79 of this study was culled in bits and pieces from numerous unpublished sources and interviews with historians, tribal elders, administrators, and members who live in the Coos Bay area today. "Life Among the Kusan Indians" by Gwynedde Tower Maple, "How The Indians Lived on Coos Bay" by Rosemary Leberti, and an interview with R. Brainard, a Coos Chief (Coos Bay, August, 1985), by the author, & "An Historical Sketch of Coos Bay" by W.T. McLean, and "Destination West" by Agnes Ruth Sengstaken, were among primary, original

sources found in the Coos County Historical Society archives which presented information found nowhere else in the public domain on intimate details of pre-contact Coos life.

²⁰W.T. McLean, History of Coos County, (Unpublished), p. 136.

²¹Stephen Dow Beckham, in Native American Religious Practices and Uses in Western Oregon, (Eugene, Oregon: University of Oregon Anthropological Papers No. 31, 1984), pps. 35-38, a book done in collaboration with Kathryn Toepel and Rick Minor, gives one of the more comprehensive accounts of the relationship between the environment and religion among several groups sharing the areal culture. The pages cited are on the Coos specifically, and one of the few actual published pieces on Coos culture.

²²Cressman, p. 60.

²³Samuel N. Dicken, in Pioneer Trails of the Oregon Coast (Portland, Oregon: Oregon Historical Society, 1971), pps., 1-5, tells why and how settlers came to the Oregon coast.

²⁴ibid., p. 55.

²⁵Stephen Dow Beckham, in Cultural Resource Overview of The Siskiyou National Forest (Lake Oswego, Oregon: U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, 1978), pps. 51-64, gives a detailed version of explorations and contacts along the Oregon coast from 1550 to the present.

²⁶ *ibid.*, p. 64.

²⁷ W.T. McLean, in a second work, titled History of Coos-Curry County Indians (Coos Bay, Oregon: Unpublished, 1950), pps. 132-167, which he edited, presents an article on the topic by "Baker, Dunn, and Halter" but says little else about the authors or sources, although it does provide a good bibliography of local sources such as Berreman, Dodge, Bancroft, Maple, Powers, and others up to that point in time. This is a good compilation and overview of the areal cultures up to 1950.

²⁸ See Sengstacken, p. 20, and Warriors of the North Pacific Coast, Missionary Accounts of the Northwest Coast...1829-1900, edited and annotated by Chales Lillard (Victoria B.C.: Sono Nis Press, 1984), as both give revealing glimpses of how Anglo-Europeans looked upon the indigenous peoples. They were arrogant, ethnocentric, racist, and inhumane, and their attitudes led to numerous conflicts in many areas of life including religion, trade, economics, land use, and cultural values. A good quote in evidence is on p. 37, from a "Extracts from the Report of an Exploring Tour on the NW Coast of North America..." which states; "Certainly to no higher origin do they ascribe the formation of this goodly frame, and the being who, made in the image of God, was placed upon its surface to subdue it, which others entertain notions of too ridiculous to be repeated." This was their view of the "Raven" creation

myths common in this culture area. The "tourists" views on indigneous religion were but reflections of their overall view that the natives were savage barbarians which needed to be saved.

²⁹Nathan Douthit, in A Guide to Oregon South Coast History, including an account of the Jedidiah Smith Exploring Expedition of 1828 and its Relations with the Indians, (Coos Bay, Oregon: River West Books, 1986), pps., 71-83, 139, & 140, gives a good account of the early explorer's journey from the original notebooks. He also notes the importance of the interchanges between Annie Miner Peterson and Melville Jacobs when he interviewed her for the Coos Narrative and Ethnological Texts between 1933-40. Annie was the "last living speaker...the oldest Coos survivor since the death of Jim Buchanan in June, 1933." Jacobs works, to Douthit, "represent the cultural heritage of the Coos Indian transmitted through one woman...of a vanished culture." The linguistic, cultural, and world views were "totally different" and "The Coos Indians viewed the world as a web of interrelationships..." Beckham agrees that Jacobs is the best of all sources on Coos culture.

³⁰Beckham, The Indians of Western Oregon, p. 101.

Also refer to Leberti, p. 7.

³¹ibid., Leberti, p. 7.

³²Beckham, p. 102.

³³ibid., p. 112.

³⁴ *ibid.*, p. 114.

³⁵ *ibid.*, p. 132.

³⁶ *ibid.*, p. 145.

³⁷ Coover, p. 21.

³⁸ M.W. Simpson, records this quote in his "Field Notes on the Coos, 1989" which were the basis for this study.

³⁹ Beckham, p. 154.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p. 162.

⁴¹ William Eugene Kent, in The Siletz Indian Reservation 1855-1900, (Portland, Oregon: Portland State University, 1973), p. 2, in an unpublished master's thesis, gives a detailed accounting of many aspects of the reservation and its varied inhabitants.

⁴² *ibid.* p. 5.

⁴³ McLean, p. 158-160.

⁴⁴ Kent, p. 13.

⁴⁵ McLean, p. 162.

⁴⁶ Beckham, p. 148-150.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, p. 153.

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, p. 156.

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p. 164.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, p. 171.

⁵¹ *ibid.*, p. 180. (See also McLean, p. 163)

⁵² *ibid.*, p. 182.

⁵³ *ibid.*, p. 183.

⁵⁴ *ibid.*, p. 189. (Note that Beckham gives the only

comprehensive view of the Coos struggle for justice after the reservation times.)

⁵⁵Jane Marie Harger, in The History of The Siletz Reservation 1856-1877, (Eugene, Oregon: Unpublished thesis in History, 1972), pps. 137-141, gives a most credible and detailed history of the reservation at Siletz, more useful and informative than Kent's. (Note that the sources I have cited are those deemed most relevant, and that there are other, less accesible sources from which to draw the same information.) This thesis limits itself to the initiation and development of farming on the reservation for the most part. For a more general overview of the reservation in Oregon, not limited to coastal tribes, but still including them, see Ruth Underhill, Indians of the Pacific Northwest, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Dept. of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, 1944), pps. 212-224.

Chapter 4

¹Robert H. Ruby and John A. Brown, in their comprehensive A Guide to the Indian Tribes of the Pacific Northwest, (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1986), pps. 46, 63, and 79 give an excellent, updated listing regarding the general history and current status of the Coos tribe.

²ibid.

³ibid., p. 80.

⁴Michael W. Simpson, author of this study, was a journalist in the Coos Bay Area during the early 1980's, when the Coos were seeing their hard work come to fruition, and wrote several articles for local papers on the tribe. This article, "Ancient Rites Revived in Indian Wedding" in The Bay Reporter (August 29, 1979), p. 11, gives a good overview of some well-preserved remnants of Coos culture.

⁵Ralph Looney, an anthropologist, made this comment in an article "Indians of North America" in National Geographic Magazine (Vol. 142, No. 6, December, 1972), p. 754, while he was studying the Navajo. But it's a comment that can be applied generally to most tribal groups.

⁶Simpson again, in an article titled "Sweet Lodge Custom Still Alive Today" in The Bay Reporter (September 19, 1979), p. 28, discussed the adoption of this Plains ceremony by the Coos for use in alcohol detoxification and as a religious practice.

⁷Reknowned anthropologist Anthony F.C. Wallace of the University of Pennsylvania in his exceptional article titled "Revitalization Movements" in American Anthropologist, (Volume 58, April, 1956), pps. 264-281, explained in depth the process of revitalization among American Indians. This is an excellent elucidation of the use of a systemic approach to the study of culture, and he does a great job of covering the ground.

⁸ *ibid.*

⁹ *ibid.*, p. 267.

¹⁰ Stephen Dow Beckham, The Indians of Western Oregon, This Land Was Theirs, see Chapter Three, reference #21.

¹¹ Christopher Lasch, in an article titled "Beyond Left and Right" in Old Oregon magazine (Winter 1989), p. 21, supplies a good commentary on the current cultural predicament in America as it enters the post-industrial order of civilization and undergoes the sort of disruption once imposed on the indigenous cultures disrupted early in American history.

¹² James W. Krauss, in his unpublished dissertation on Gary Snyder's Biopoetics: A Study of the Poet as Ecologist, notes the need for an environmental ethic, or ecology of mind, in America.

¹³ *ibid.*, p. 140.

¹⁴ Congressional Record--House, August 6, 1984, H8463.

¹⁵ Jamake Highwater, The Primal Mind, and Calvin Martin, The Keepers of the Game.

¹⁶ Unpublished testimony of George Wasson before Congress in 1918, released in 1965 as HCL T.1.

¹⁷ Testimony of Representative Young of Alaska on H.R. 5540, Congressional Record--House, August 6, 1984, H 8463.

¹⁸ Congressional Record--Senate, September 28, 1984, S12374. Senator Packwood gives testimony, along with

Senator Weaver, of the Oregon delegation, on the effects of termination on the Coos culture.

¹⁹ibid.

²⁰ibid.

²¹Senate concurrent Resolution (SCR) 76, Passed October 7, 1988, and House Concurrent Resolution (HCR) 33, Passed October 3, 1988.

²²Wasson testimony, pps. 11 and 18. This testimony is one of the best expressions of the ways in which Coos culture was changed by the penetration of the Anglo-Americans from a hunter-gatherer culture to a farming culture. It is compelling and direct evidence of U.S. shortcomings in this situation.

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