The Kwakiutl Indians: "Amiable" and "Atrocious"

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RÉSUMÉ

Cet article tente de reconcilier le type de personnalité des indiens Kwakiutl tel que vu par Ruth Benedict d'une part, et Helen Codere d'autre part. Benedict affirme que les Kwakiutl sont, entre autres: individualistes, barbares et "paranoïdes", tandis que Codere les décrit comme des gens aimables et sociables.

L'auteur de l'article se base sur la théorie de la culture et de la personnalité pour rapprocher les deux points de vue et montrer que les types de personnalité décrits par Benedict et Codere satisfont, de façon importante, des besoins sociaux et individuels.

The rather enigmatic title of this paper reflects two opposite characterizations in the abundant ethnographic data on the Kwakiutl Indians. There has been relatively little attempt to bring together under one conceptual umbrella these sharply contrasting, and seemingly contradictory, aspects of Kwakiutl culture and personality. Discussions in the literature have frequently emphasized the violent and bizarre features, to the exclusion of the co-operative and communal character of Kwakiutl life. Some of the more recent interpretations have documented the simultaneous existence of these different aspects without a concomitant attempt to understand how they are dynamically related to each other and to the wider context of Kwakiutl life. The range of differences in interpretation in the literature results from the particular theoretical purposes of the authors, and also from an unclear delineation of the concepts of personality and culture.

The purpose of this paper is to evaluate some of the interpretive statements of Kwakiutl culture and personality in the

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light of ethnographic descriptions of the society. On the basis of this examination of the ethnographic data, an attempt will be made to derive formulations of Kwakiutl personality and culture; to relate these conceptual levels of analysis to each other; and to indicate how the "amiable" and the "atrocious" aspects of these people are dynamic outgrowths of this relationship, rather than independent and contradictory entities. Finally, this study may suggest the value, for anthropologists, of re-examining their rich ethnographic heritage in the light of new insights in the social sciences and psychology.

In her description of the Kwakiutl, Benedict (1946:175,177) regarded self-glorification, intense will to superiority, violence, and unbridled individualistic rivalry as "the mainspring of their culture," and as a focus for the motivation underlying their economic institutions, religion, and social organization. This extreme position depends on evidence taken mainly from Kwakiutl ritual and ceremonial practices, and minimizes conflicting data about the more pervasive, everyday aspects of their social life. Despite common ownership of essential economic resources by the lineage group (i.e. numaym) she observed that the individually-held ceremonial prerogatives of rank are valued "over and above material well-being" (Benedict 1946:169). Such an attitude would seem to constitute a serious negative survival factor for this, or any, society. In her desire to present the "world-outlook" of the Kwakiutl in bold relief Benedict treated existing ethnographic evidence in a markedly selective fashion. She may have been encouraged in this inclination by Boas' voluminous and detailed writings on Kwakiutl ceremonial life, which failed to discuss the functional integration of these ceremonials with the more secular aspects of the society and culture. Like Benedict, Goldman (1961), emphasized the Kwakiutl characteristics of intense rivalry for status, and paranoid and megalomanic personality. The co-operative and communalistic aspects of Kwakiutl life in his ethnographic data were largely ignored in his interpretive statements. For example, he noted the existence of collective ownership of land and fishing territories (by the numaym), communal sharing of food, and co-operative labor enterprises, but despite such evidence, he concluded that all Kwakiutl social relations were motivated by an "obsessive" drive

for individual prestige, and that intense rivalry "is at the heart" of such relations. He maintained that material property was valued *only to the degree* that it could procure or validate prerogatives of status. He divorced economic and technological pursuits from ritual and ideology and relegated them to positions of minor importance. Goldman's (1961:533-534) recent recognition that Kwakiutl secular life is more co-operative and "amiable" than their underlying personality motivations and religious ideology in no way impelled him to re-evaluate his earlier position. Although Mead (1961) concurred with Goldman's interpretation, she recognized that no society is either exclusively competitive or exclusively co-operative; while there was "furious competition among the Kwakiutl at one stratum of the society... [i.e.] among the ranking chiefs..., within the household of each chief co-operation is mandatory..."[1] In relating this observation to her opinion that the Kwakiutl as a people were intensely competitive, she speculated that the ordinary Kwakiutl individual satisfied his needs for rivalry not by "competition per se" for power over others, but by vicarious sharing in the competitive victories of ranking lineage members.

Most of the characterizations of the "atrocious" Kwakiutl in the literature rest heavily on potlatch behavior. This tendency led Barnett (1938) to remark that existing (erroneous) interpretations of the potlatch often make it appear to be a cultural "excrescence." Further, although this institution was concerned with Status ranking and was frequently a vehicle for rivalry and aggression, it also had co-operative and socially cohesive functions.

While Codere (1950:8;1956) accepted, with Benedict and others, the Kwakiutl as "atrocious," she, like Boas (1936:267; 1938), also documented a more amiable, co-operative, and even humorous side of Kwakiutl life. Not only did Codere feel that their family life and economic arrangements were co-operatively oriented, but she denied the unqualified "cut-throat" view of the

[1] For reasons that will be presented later, even the statement of an ongoing extreme competitive situation among the chiefs is open to considerable doubt. However, given this situation, it would still encompass only a very small sector of the society and would be confined to a relatively small segment of social behavior.

potlatch and winter ceremonials. She wrote (1956:349) of Benedict's attempt to present a unified picture of this complex society:

> Rather than confuse reality with ideals and hopes about whole personalities and whole cultures, it might be far more fruitful to concede that true integration of either a functional or configurational sort is utopian and ideal... all cultures contain genuine contradictions. It is necessary to concede, at least, that the Kwakiutl and their culture possess positive and amiable characteristics as well as negative ones...

Although there is validity in Codere's admonition about forcing Kwakiutl culture into a too-simple configurational mold, she seems to have misunderstood the nature of a functional analysis. A functionalist approach does not deny that cultures (or personalities) often contain opposite traits; it attempts to show how these are related to each other and how they are integrated in the complex whole. That there are apparently contradictory behavior patterns in different situations does not imply that they are not functionally related. For example, in analyzing aspects of levity in the potlatch and winter ceremonials, Codere (1956) documented two situations that the Kwakiutl find extremely comical: one where the potlatch host is identified with a rich white man or a policeman, and another where supernatural power is caught and thrown to people, whom it then enters. These, she observed, demonstrated a humorous and lighter side of Kwakiutl life. While this may be true, she did not consider whether, and how, laughing at the rich white man or policeman might relate to vicarious expressions of hostility toward powerful authority figures (as in the comedies of Charlie Chaplin), or whether playfully tossing supernatural power about, might not represent a desire for mastery in a potentially anxiety-provoking situation. Supernatural power, usually regarded with considerable awe and fear during the winter ceremonials, was treated with surprising levity in this instance. Observations of children's play, and institutionalized rituals in different societies have shown that manipulating feared objects or situations in a "safe" context helps to alleviate and master the anxiety they provoke.

Both Kardiner and Ford have speculated on the psychodynamics underlying the contrasting aspects of Kwakiutl society. Kardiner (1939:116-121) maintained that the basic economic

organization of these people was co-operative, but that the competitive system and the desire to excel, operative mainly during ceremonial life, were largely responsible for tensions and anxieties which engendered such ("atrocious") characteristics as hostility, extreme suspicion, and rivalry. In accounting for the bizarre aspects of Kwakiutl ceremonialism (e.g., the biting of human flesh, ritual starvation, and various masochistic manifestations), he explained that "the novitiate is obviously tortured for hostile wishes toward rivals, and must suffer many privations for it". He believed (Kardiner 1939:118) that Kwakiutl ritual and myths "represent avenues of drainage for repressed affects." Although Kardiner did not develop this point, he suggested (1939:120) that "frustration in Kwakiutl culture involves craving for dependency."

In his analysis of the life history of a Kwakiutl chief, Ford (1941:26) concluded that a significant feature of Kwakiutl society was that "physical strife of any kind was strictly discouraged and heavily punished." He characterized the Kwakiutl as "peaceful" and "never even remotely bloodthirsty in their day-to-day relationships," and suggested that the violent aspects of the ceremonials "pleased the natives just because their daily life demanded such strict control over aggression and violence" (Ford 1941:27). This constant suppression of overt antagonism resulted in intense hostility toward their fellows, "though they dared not openly attack them," and was exemplified by their extensive practice of sorcery and pervasive fear of being bewitched. Unlike many earlier investigators, Ford characterized the Kwakiutl as *essentially co-operative and peaceful.* He viewed their "atrocious" aspects as institutionalized reactions to the restraints imposed by the requirements of a communalistic social structure.

In this discussion Ford seems to have tacitly assumed a fixed (and universal) quantum of aggressive energy that cannot be expressed directly in Kwakiutl society. As a result it "spills over" into oblique channels and ceremonials. Our knowledge of Hopi social and ceremonial life makes this assumption questionable. It is more likely that the dramatic instances of hostile expression among the Kwawiutl, can be explained not only in terms of the degree of restraint usually required, but also in terms of the socialization process that *themselves* generate hostility.

Although Codere (1961) was aware of Ford's interpretations, she regarded the aggressive aspects of Kwakiutl ceremonials as mere "theatrical" substitutions for what was, in the past, (actual) physically violent behavior. However, she herself observed that the Kwakiutl were essentially characterized by "an abhorrence of physical violence" in the pre-1849 period. Her theory seems insufficient to explain why they would find it necessary to incorporate into their subsequent ceremonial life such extremely florid and bizarre "theatrical representations".

Some Aspects of Kwakiutl Society

The Kwakiutl were organized into a number of tribes, further divided into bilateral family lines called numayms. Each of these lineages (there may have been several in any given village) claimed common descent from a mythical ancestor. A household consisted of about four families of the same numaym, usually closely related members of an extended family. Ford (1941:12) described household life as follows:

> Life in the communal dwelling lacked privacy. Quarrels between husband and wife were rarely concealed from the other families. There was a constant inter-communication with other members of the household. Often they would all breakfast together or share their evening meal. In the evening perhaps they would all sit around the central fire and chat, sing, or play games with the children.

This pattern of communal living also pervaded their basic notions of property and economic organization. The numaym was the essential economic unit; its members owned in common, and used co-operatively, hunting, fishing, and berry-picking territory. Each member owned as much of the "common stock" as the chiefs (Swan 1857:166). Houses and canoes were usually built co-operatively by members of one or more lineage groups and paid for out of the numaym's collective resources. Furthermore, Goldman (1961:183) observed, "in every construction requiring the labor of a number of men, the work is collectively organized. To the extent that the workers are all drawn from the same numaym and are working at the command of the chief, the ends are co-operative, too". The numaym was "no more and no less than an extended family (slaves of course excluded)," welded together

by blood ties and common economic resources" (Drucker 1939:58).

The existence of a hierarchy of status positions led both Benedict (1946) and Goldman (1961) to consider intense status rivalry the central principle of Kwakiutl social organization. Drucker (1939:55) though recognizing that status rivalry existed, found "no social classes among the freemen, but rather an unbroken series of graduated status," cemented by bonds of blood kinship. Those of lowest rank engaged less fully than members of highest rank in ostentatious ceremonial activities; this, Drucker felt was the only disparity in their social participation. These conclusions were supported by Boas (1920) and Codere (1957). Kwakiutl methods of distribution guaranteed all members food and housing and precluded invidious distinctions in consumption (Codere 1961). A chief did not own or control the means of production, and, despite his show of aggressiveness in ceremonial life (Franchère 1854:250) "he has no power, military or magical, which would enable him to seize wealth and impose his will". Ford's (1941:12,ff) previously cited description of the intimate and co-operative aspects of Kwakiutl family and social life should also be recalled.

In light of this evidence, it is difficult to accept Benedict's and Goldman's view of a society essentially geared to competitive striving and status rivalry as anything but extreme and overgeneralized. Goldman (1961) stressed the absence of officials, chiefs, and a well-defined system of political authority as evidence of an individualism characteristic of Kwakiutl society. However, his argument underscored a collective rather than an individualistic and hierarchical system of political authority in the vital areas of social and economic life. The numaym, not the individual (political leader), made decisions about building ventures, potlatches, and even marriages. While the extent of status strivings and concern with rank in this society should not be minimized, they did not determine access to essential goods or to political power. This conclusion is supported by evidence that the well-known Kwakiutl system of ranking villages, numayms, and individuals within numayms, was a recent (mid-nineteenth century) acquisition (Boas 1897:333; Codere 1961), and that status

rivalry and competitive behavior, frequently manifested in the potlatch and related activities, were imbedded in a fundamentally co-operative social endeavor.

Benedict (1946:188,194) characterized the Kwakiutl as essentially violent and bloodthirsty; she noted that murder was the most honored way to obtain status prerogatives, and that even the marriage ceremony was an aggressive affair. Although the restriction of such bizarre manifestations to ritual life does not negate their importance for understanding Kwakiutl personality, it does indicate that such behavior was controlled and was expressed only in well-defined, socially sanctioned (and thus psychologically "safe") situations. Much of the "violence" exhibited during war was of a mock nature, and battles often consisted largely of defiance "by menaces, railleries, and sarcasms, like the heroes of Homer and Virgil" (Franchère 1854:252). Warfare in Kwakiutl society was compared to "an orderly and sophisticated potlatch duel" (Ford 1941:27), while ceremonial violence was described as contrived, controlled, and theatrical (Codere 1961). Physical strife of any kind was severely discouraged, and murder exceedingly rare (Ford 1941:26).

Kwakiutl Early Socialization and Personality

An examination of early socialization and ceremonial life is necessary to increase our understanding of Kwakiutl personality dynamics and to probe the dramatic dichotomy between the co-operative "social," and the competitive, violent "ceremonial" Kwakiutl. Soon after birth, the infant was placed in a cradle and tightly swaddled (Boas 1913-1914:664ff), allowing only minimal movement of his arms and legs (Swan 1857:168; Ford 1941:31ff). His head was very tightly bound to flatten the forehead to meet aesthetic standards. He was removed from the cradle to be washed and exercised but remained in his bindings when nursed by his mother or while sleeping next to her. Speculations in the psychiatric literature suggest that such extended and severe restraint may heighten sado-masochistic elements of character, but this relationship has not been clearly established (Dennis 1939; Greenacre 1956). It is interesting that the Kwakiutl justified the restraint of motility to prevent the children from

developing a "wild and roving" disposition (Pettit 1946:12). Thus, even in early socialization, a value was placed on the restraint of impulse.

Considerable attention was shown the child during infancy and early years (Underhill 1944: 128,131). Any of a number of women in the family bathed him, changed his wrappings, or rocked him to sleep. The mother was expected to devote her full attention to the infant, even abstaining from coitus during the early nursing period. Until about age of three the child was usually suckled whenever he cried (Ford 1941:31ff). Although there is no evidence of oral deprivation during this period, weaning was abrupt, and the child was punished for continued efforts to suck (Ford 1941:32-33; Whiting and Child 1962:41).

Certain Kwakiutl beliefs and practices impressed the child with the special and awesome qualities of food and eating. For example, it was believed that the youngster who overate had a toad in his stomach, would become voracious, turn greenish in color, develop protuding eyes, and go from house to house begging for food (Boas 1932). The disobedient child was told that he would be kidnapped and eaten by a cannibalistic monster-woman with long pendulous breasts (Boas 1935:144-145). Fathers often forced their young sons to swallow pieces of grizzly bear heart in order to acquire its wildness and strength "so that you also may have no respect for anything" (Boas 1930:194-195). This practice links food intake with power and mastery and, in turn, associates this power and mastery with a "breaking out" of restraint and social conformity. Whiting and Child (1962: 156) report that illnesses are given oral explanations among the Kwakiutl; such explanations are generally found to be related to high oral socialization anxiety.

Kwakiutl practices in sex and toilet training were relatively permissive (Franchère 1854:225; Ford 1941:34). However, the disciplines and experiences associated with the socialization of dependence and aggressive needs cannot be categorized simply. Whiting and Child (1962:160) ranked the Kwakiutl and Dobuans highest among 30 societies on the degree to which their socialization practices tend to frustrate the child's dependence needs. Kwakiutl parents disciplined a four or five-year old child

severely to insure conformance to adult behavior (Ford 1941: 33-34). Among Northwest Indian groups in general, children learned to go without food and endure pain in order to insure help from the spirits; they were shamed or subjected to severe corporal punishment by their parents for recalcitrance or signs of weakness (Underhill 1944:132; Pettit 1946:6; Jenness 1955: 152). The stated purpose of this pressure was to "strengthen" the children (Boas 1935:26). In relating his life history, Nowell stated:

> The funny part of it is that our parents and the old people never stop us from doing any of these things [such self-inflicted ordeals as burning holes in the skin with hot charcoal] because they want us to be brave like they were in the olden days when they was fighting and hunting all the time (Ford 1941:66-67).

Boas (1932) commented that "boys are required to bathe in cold water even in the winter, when there is ice on the water. They used to sit for a long time in the water. Boys who were to be warriors would stab themselves with sharp bones after coming out of the water. Sometimes, they were whipped with cedar boughs when they emerged. Kardiner (1939:120) speculated that the frustration of dependency needs and consequent unconscious dependency cravings are important aspects of Kwakiutl personality.

In the socialization of males, severe physical punishment and self-inflicted ordeals were employed to achieve independent, assertive, aggressive, and individualistic-competitive behavior (Boas 1935:29). In his analysis of Kwakiutl childhood as reflected in myths, Boas (1935:34) noted that boys were prodded by their parents to engage in contests of strength (wrestling and other forms of mock fights) in order to prove their superiority, and that parents were ashamed if their son was defeated. Nowell (Ford 1941:66-67) recalled that "if we wasn't brave and couldn't play these games and be strong they [adults] didn't think we was much good." However, while shows of independence, strength, and surpassing others were rewarded, competitive and aggressive behavior that exceeded a certain level, or that was expressed in culturally inappropriate situations, was likely to elicit strong disapproval.

> Boys that fought with other members of their play group were ostracized for the time being and were permitted to join in the fun of the group only if they restrained their aggressive impulses. Aggression, in the form of striking, stealing, or lying was severely punished, especially when directed toward the parents. (Ford 1941:34).

Nowell elaborated on this observation:

> ...if two boys are wrestling and one gets mad, then the other boys... the older ones... goes and stands between the two that is fighting and stops them, and tels them they has to wrestle and not hit like that and not get mad. If a boy doesn't stop they send him away and he can't play with the other boys. That's his punishment... to stay by himself... If we get mad at our parents or older brothers, they give us a licking. (*Ibid.*: 76-77).

This type of restraint was necessitated by a social structure with a strong emphasis on co-operative and communalistic behavior. However, the fine discriminations the child had to learn in displaying his aggressiveness and independence acceptably, coupled with the severity of his punishment if he failed, constitute a confusing and potentially frustrating learning situation. The pre-requisites for an "approach-avoidance" conflict (Dollard and Miller 1950:355ff) are eminently fulfilled by the strong concomitant negative and positive conditioning of aggressive behavior in Kwakiutl society. Suppression of the direct expression of aggressive behavior is both fostered by this type of learning situation and further buttressed by the child's psychological reactions to the (previously-noted) frustration of his dependency needs. Psychiatric clinical evidence (Kardiner 1939:423; Maslow and Mittlemann 1941:151) links the frustration of dependency needs, the generation of anger and rage, and the need to repress this anger. When a child's normal desires for nurturance and support are frustrated, and he is forced to assume tasks for which his self-confidence and ego strength are not sufficient, his self-esteem and assurance are damaged. He compensates for feelings of inadequacy by attributing to others the power he lacks, and by developing exaggerated (and insatiable) expectations of support. When these are disappointed or threatened, he reacts with anger toward the objects of his dependency. However, direct expressions of hostility may endanger these object relationships; his anger must remain covert (or be expressed either obliquely or in certain "safe" situations). Such an individual is particularly

sensitive to insults or perceived threats to his already devalued and precarious concept of self.

Among most Northwest Indian groups, the child learned to subordinate his own desires to the demands of life in the large communalistic dwelling. He was taught not to cry for food, to eat what was given him, to be quiet, and not to interrupt adults (Underhill 1944:132). Feasts given in his honor, emphasized the giving away, rather than the receiving, of gifts. He learned that self-denial and generosity were important means of acquiring "fame and fortune" and of enhancing self-esteem (Underhill 1944:134-135).

Kwakiutl myths and practices indirectly reflected the severity of childhood socialization and hostility in the parent-child relationship. For example, parents kicked the body of a dead child to prevent its coming back to trouble their dreams or memories; this was called "pushing away the love of the deceased" (Boas 1932:215). Myths about a monster-woman who captures, roasts, and devours disobedient children (Boas 1905:431; 1935:144-145) were used as a disciplinary device. In many stories boys were starved or mistreated, usually by their fathers (Boas 1935:74, 133,174). The boys reacted by sulking, committing suicide, or acquiring power from a supernatural being in order to revenge themselves on the offending parent (Boas 1905:403). Sons commonly attempted to demonstrate their strength and competence to their mothers (Boas 1905:103-106; 1935:133). In a typical Oedipal tale, Mink seeks and acquires permission from his Sun-God father to drive the Sun through the sky. Although Mink is physically full-grown, he speaks in a child-like manner. Despite his father's warnings, Mink nearly incinerates the earth in his failure to control his power. To prevent a catastrophe, the Sun-God pursues and kills his son (Boas 1930:175-177). The story demonstrates the child's insistent desire for power, his doubts about his ability to master it, and his fear of its consequences. As previously noted, the use of power was associated with aggressive and potentially dangerous behavior. Such ceremonials as making the boy swallow a piece of grizzly-bear heart "so that you may also kill before you are struck" (Boas 1930:194-195) were intended to impress him with the value of obtaining the bear's power to be aggressive without fear of catastrophic failure.

Many myths indirectly linked the ideas of rapid maturation, acquisition of power, and violent aggressive phantasies (Boas 1905:133ff; 1935:99). In such stories, the child is repeatedly bathed in icy water so that he may "grow up quickly," or the father stands on his child's toes and pulls him up by the shoulders. When the child becomes older, he is able to "jump higher than the tops of the tallest trees" and "split... [his] ...enemies in two" (Boas 1935:99). The pervasive emphasis on the acquisition of power and status in Kwakiutl myths (Boas 1935:184) may be related to the feelings of dependency discussed earlier. Horney (1937:166) notes that the dependent person often strives for power as a defense against helplessness.

The problem of determining the "fit" between Kwakiutl patterns engendered by early socialization and the type of interpersonal behavior required by the primary (survival) socio-economic institutions must be considered. That this society survived at all indicates that its members were able to meet essential social role requirements. However, this gross generalization tells us little about the type or degree of psychological stress associated with the expected behavior in given social situations. Conflict may stem from the need to play "contradictory" social roles or from discontinuities that do not adequately prepare the individual to fulfill adult requirements. Everyday social life among the Kwakiutl required a high degree of co-operative behavior, which, in turn, demanded the restraint of individualistic-competitive impulses and a control of direct expressions of hostility and aggression. How well did the early experiences of the Kwakiutl prepare them to function in this social context? The child was rewarded for being self-reliant, assertive, competitive, and aggressive; he strove to outdo his peers in order to enhance his self-esteem (and avoid being shamed by his "significant others"). His level of hostility was heightened as a consequence of early dependency-need frustration, and the severity of the corporal punishment and the ritual ordeals to which he was subjected. At the same time, he was taught to control aggressive interpersonal behavior. There were also strong demands made on him to defer to his elders, and to delay immediate gratification by giving things away in the expectation of later enhancing his status. Such controls over aggressive and egoistic

behavior were necessary for the smooth functioning of the social system (i.e., the facilitation of individual social-role performance). The child, however, was simultaneously exposed to two contradictory conditioning experiences. These speculations suggest that there was a structured strain in Kwakiutl personality, resulting from the opposition of a high level of hostility and ego-centric drives, and a concurrent strong need to control their direct expression. An examination of the potlatch and winter ceremonials should show how these institutions either heighten or reduce the mal-adjustive potential of these competing urges.

Historical Aspects of the Potlatch

Data concerning the potlatch and winter ceremonials formed the major basis for Benedict's (1946) and Goldman's (1961) characterization of the "megalomanic," "paranoid," "rivalrous," and "violent" Kwakiutl. Here I propose only to place such evidence in historical perspective and to show that the bizarre aspects of these social institutions were not simply reflections of a "basic" Kwakiutl personality structure.

Codere (1950:94; 1961) described the potlatch as a rather modest and sober institution before 1849 which underwent a florid elaboration between 1850 and 1921. It is this latter phase that was so well reported by Boas and popularized by Benedict. After 1921 the potlatch declined rapidly as a result of economic depression and the influence of Western culture.

Before the mid-nineteenth century, the potlatch involved primarily the distribution of surplus ordinary household goods (Bunzel 1938; Codere 1950:94) and bore little relationship to the donor's prestige or to any system of social ranking (Codere 1961). In fact, Codere (1961) maintained that, during this early period, there was no evidence for the existence of the ranking system usually associated with Kwakiutl society. Hereditary rights to crests probably did exist, a practice taken over from societies to the north (Drucker 1939). As new sources of wealth became available to the Kwakiutl, the amount of goods distributed and the social importance of the potlatch increased. This was particularly true in the Fort Rupert area, where a number of

different Kwakiutl groups benefited from business relations with whites and from mediating transactions between the trading company and visiting Kwakiutl (Codere 1961). Concurrent with these new sources of wealth was a serious decline in Kwakiutl population which created a rapid increase in the ratio of available status positions to total population (Boas 1924; Codere 1961). This situation disturbed the earlier relatively stable system of social ranking based on hereditary ownership of crests. Ambitious "nouveau riche" commoners began to potlatch their (or their children's) way to higher status positions and to replace the established aristocracy. There are recorded instances of slaves and commoners acquiring high rank by wealth secured through prostitution of their wives and daughters. The subsequent confusion and disturbance in status ranking caused much jealousy, hostility, and rivalry (Boas 1924; 1925:93-99; Codere 1950:68, 97; 1961; Goldman 1961). This phenomenon is illustrated in the recitation of a speaker for a Kwakiutl chief at a potlatch ceremony (Boas 1913-14:1283-84):

> That is only the cause why I laugh, the cause why I always laugh at the one who is hard up, the one who looks around here and there, the silencer, the one who points about for his ancestors who were chiefs. The little ones who have no ancestors who were chiefs, the little ones who have no names coming from their grandfathers, the little ones who do many kinds of work, the little ones who work hard, who made mistakes coming from insignificant places in the world (and who try now to go to high places) ...they are the cause why I laugh, for they speak in vain to my chief, tribes.
>
> But he who does not work and plan at all, the great one, the great one whose voice is true; he continues from one generation to the other in this world, he continues as one who is made to be the higher in rank with his great real father, the one who names himself Having-Food, chief.
>
> That is only the cause why I laugh, the cause why I always laugh at those who always rush up to my face, the little ones who rush against (?) [pieces of copper] thrown against my chief here, tribe.

Two other historical factors exaggerated the developing rivalry and hostility of the potlatch institution. The status system was further disturbed by the admixture of different Kwakiutl groups at Fort Rupert. Also, the exaggeration and proliferation of the potlatch may have been part of a "nativistic" reaction

against the progressive encroachment of Western civilization and the determined efforts of agents and missionaries to suppress various aspects of Kwakiutl life (Codere 1950:81). The extravagant hostility and competitiveness of the Kwakiutl potlatch may have been analogous to the temporary high fever in an organism trying simultaneously to maintain a stable inner equilibrium and to fight off noxious foreign influences.

Factors other than historical probably contributed to the rivalry and instability of the ranking system. For example, the Kwakiutl traditionally placed less emphasis on heredity as a basis of status (Drucker 1939), and had a more flexible system of inheritance — i.e., inheritance was possible through the lines of mother, father, or father-in-law (Goldman 1961), — than did their northern neighbors. This very flexibility may have heightened the problems of status confusion and instability after 1850.

The Social and Personal Functions of the Potlatch

Although the Kwakiutl potlatch was undoubtedly a means of affirming individual status, this does not stamp it as a purely individualistic-competitive and socially divisive instituton. In fact, its most important function appears to have been the facilitation of social cohesion both within and among the various numayms (Boas 1897:263,572, 575-576, 592; 1925:200, 227; Barnett 1938; Codere 1950:70-71, 75-77, 80). Co-operation among the members of the numaym was necessary to provide resources for the potlatch. It was essentially a group endeavor, providing status and recognition not only for the actual principals, but for many individuals within a numaym (Boas 1913:1914:1340-1344; Barnett 1938). The institution was also a means of reimbursement for work undertaken co-operatively by the various numayms and tribes (Barnett 1938; Ford 1941:22-23). Boas (1925:337-338) notes its socially cohesive function when he relates that after a feast given by a host for individuals of four tribes who aided him in building his house, "the four Kwagul tribes became one."

Although Boas' descriptions of the potlatch contained many instances of overt rivalry, examples of mutual praising among the so-called rivals seemed to predominate (Boas 1897:572; 1925:

200, 227). Rivalry and insults reached a destructive level only in a few flagrant cases (Codere 1961); its important function was social excitement and conviviality. Others noted that the potlatch was a "good-will" institution (Barnett 1938), serving to gratify individuals' needs for prestige (Barnett 1938; Ford 1941:22-23). Ford (1941:27, 49) affirmed its cohesive functions in noting that the potlatch provided a socially accepted means of channeling aggression that was potentially disruptive to the co-operative structure of Kwakiutl secular life. The major *social* function of the potlatch, then, was to insure cohesiveness by providing institutionalized ways to allocate prestige and status position, to settle arguments, and to amass resources for communal labor and group ceremonials.

Behavior during the potlatch both served and reflected the personality needs of the participants. The institution provided opportunities for catharsis of hostility and for the enhancement of self-esteem in a manner that was not too socially disruptive (Ford 1941:22, 27). Hyper-sensitive and "paranoid" tendencies in the potlatch speeches, "wiping away shame" by harming others (Boas 1925: 133-135), and blatant attempts to exhibit one's superiority all support the notion of a high level of hostility in Kwakiutl modal personality, coupled with doubts of self-adequacy and mastery. However, there were also many instances of humility and self-depreciation along with the proud boasting. A chief might say that he was too poor to buy a desired copper (Boas 1897:272) or express fear of his rival (Boas 1897:364). Such behavior was usually accompanied by lavish praise for his opponent's power and noble ancestry (Boas 1897:272, 464, 575-576). The alternate denigrating and praising of the self and others supports the notion of simultaneous strong, unsatisfied dependency needs and covert hostility toward the objects of dependency.

In the literature on the potlatch, the concepts of acquisition of wealth or power and the expression of aggression were considered equivalent. The Kwakiutl themselves were not unaware of this association:

> When I was young, I have seen streams of blood shed in war, but since that time the white man came and stopped up that stream

> of blood with wealth. Now we are fighting with wealth. (Boas 1897: 571). The time of fighting has passed. The fool dancer represents the warriors, but we do not fight now with weapons; we fight with property. (Boas 1897:602).
>
> The rivalry between chiefs when carried so far that the coppers are destroyed and that great feasts are given in order to destroy the prestige of the rival, often develops into open enmity...
>
> ...The host proceeds at once to tie a copper to each of his house posts. If he should not do so, the person who refused the spoon would, on returning, strike the posts with the copper, which is considered equal to striking the chief's face. (Boas 1897:355).

This equilibration may be interpreted as follows. Self-esteem and a sense of mastery (represented at the social level by status, rank, and power) could be obtained by competitive and aggressive behavior in potlatch rivalry. It is noteworthy that the heroes of Kwakiutl myths usually obtained power from the supernatural by aggressive means (Boas 1897:397-398, 408; 1905:123-132; 1935:91-92, 181-184). The dependent-hostile person would not ordinarily choose to gain power or mastery through such behavior; however, the potlatch institution created a socially sanctioned, "safe" situation in which hostility could be directly expressed, and in which dependency relationships were not threatened. If these observations are correct then we should also find indirect expressions of hostility in secular social life. The ethnographic evidence documents a considerable practice of, and concern with, malevolent sorcery (Boas 1932; Codere 1956), which Ford (1941: 27-28) attributed to the common suppression of overt antagonism. Such suppression may also account for a pervasive anxiety about death in dreams (Boas 1925:1-54) and fears of being harmed by the dead (Swan 1857:189, 212; Boas 1932).

The Winter Ceremonials

The initiation of a young man into the Cannibal Society during the winter ceremonials is said to epitomize the violent and destructive urges of the Kwakiutl (Benedict 1946:164ff). However, *both* "contradictory" aspects of Kwakiutl life were actually represented by the dominant aims of the ritual: the initiates' desire to revel in a state of ecstasy in which all internalized inhibitions were transcended (individualistic and unrestrained violence), and

the society's need to tame the initiate in order to make him a responsible, functioning member of the community (communalistic co-operation).

The ceremonial began with the seclusion of the young initiates for a few days, during which they were believed to be uncontrollably possessed by cannibalistic desires. The community went into mourning for the youths and concentrated its (ritual) efforts on capturing and returning them to the community. During this period, the people were angry with the supernaturals because they "have carried away enough of our number..." (Boas 1897: 512, 516). At the same time, they feared their destructive powers; their songs "exaggerate and thrill at the terror and destructiveness..." (Codere 1950:110).

> How shall we hide from the bear that is moving all around the world? Let us crawl underground! Let us cover our backs with dirt that the great terrible bear from the north end of the world may not find us. (Boas 1897:467).

Finally, the Cannibal (or Hamatsa) appeared, filled with wild power; he bit people, knocked them down, ate the flesh of a human corpse, tore clothing, and smashed property. Although terrified, the people proceeded to capture him, because "if we should not succeed in pacifying him, we should always be troubled by him, we should not be able to eat in our houses on account of him" (Boas 1897:573). It is clear that they were not merely neutral observers of this anti-social orgy. At this point, they experienced a state of heightened excitement, and individuals engaged in ritual self-torture (Boas 1930:113-114, 600ff; Ford 1941:118) and wanton destruction of property. When the Cannibal was captured, "the people hold him tight and torment him... they strike his feet with their staffs... he is maltreated in all conceivable ways... the people push him and tear his clothes" (Boas 1897:457). If he attempted to resist and bite, he was further tormented and beaten. During these ceremonials, the Fool Dancers, like the Cannibal, engaged in behavior that was strongly tabooed in everyday life; they bit others, broke property, and even smeared themselves with menstrual blood. I suggest that in taming the Cannibal, who embodies anti-social urges, the Kwakiutl were symbolically attempting to exorcise and control their own hostile impulses. This was a mastery mechanism de-

signed "to render him (and other individuals in the group) acceptable as a member of the society" (Ford 1941:25). Throughout the ceremony, the *group* co-operated in exorcising and taming the Cannibal; like the ancient Greek chorus, they voiced the fears and anxieties of the community. The *ultimate* function of the ceremonial may not have been merely the cathartic expression of covert hostile affect (Ford 1941:27; Kardiner 1939:118), but rather the *control and mastery* of these impulses. Codere (1956) noted that behavioral licence was sanctioned "in the name of an ideal smoothness in human relations." Ecstatic states may represent experiences of world mastery, in which the pains and anxieties of life are temporarily transcended (Lewin 1959). During the t'ō'X'ûit ceremony, without which a proper winter ceremonial could not be performed, individuals reached an ecstatic state in which they cried, laughed, kissed each others' wives, and denied the possibility of arguments, "for during this time there is no jealousy and no quarrelling" (Boas 1897:583-585). This was expressed in one of the sacred songs (Boas 1930:67):

> Now this is done friends, now you have wiped off your summer faces; now you have wiped away your sickness; and you have wiped off your quarrels; now you have wiped off your troubles. Now you will put on the happy maker (charcoal) on your faces... now the supernatural power of the charcoal has come to our friends, now it will change all our minds.

This interpretation of the winter ceremonials has presented Kwakiutl personality as the embodiment of unresolved tension deriving from the simultaneous needs to behave in a socially acceptable manner and also to "break out" of social constraints through individualistic and violent expressions. Given this interpretation, it is interesting to examine further a type of behavior central to these ceremonials: cannibalism. Its function and symbolic relationship to the twin aspects of Kwakiutl personality will thus become more understandable. It has been noted in the clinical literature that fantasies of devouring or of being devoured often occur in individuals with frustrated dependency needs, representing a desire to become one with the object of dependency, and thus to reduce anxiety. In these same individuals, cannibalistic fantasies are also associated with hostile and sadistic impulses toward the object of dependency, who is also the source of

frustration (Kardiner 1939:224; Glover 1956:85): the "inability to trust another object to satisfy certain emotional cravings leads to the perception of being injured by that object, whereupon active steps in the form of aggression against the object are taken" (Kardiner 1939:224). The dependent and aggressive fantasies, then, represent two sides of the same coin.

I have maintained that in these ceremonials fears were mastered by taming repressed anti-social urges (e.g., cannibalism, destruction of property) and by affirming group cohesion. A more detailed examination of Kwakiutl ceremonials may indicate to what extent such speculations are supported. According to Freud (1956:32) much of ceremonial behavior "represents the sum of all the conditions under which something not yet absolutely forbidden becomes permissible..." and acts as a defense against temptation and "a protection against the misfortune expected." If repressed anti-social impulses *are* acted out overtly during the ceremonials, we would expect to find defensive mechanisms incorporated into the ritual as a protection against potential anxiety. Elaborate acts of penance in expiation of guilt are one means of psychological defense, especially prevalent in the obsessional neuroses (Freud 1956). As previously noted, participants in the Cannibal ceremonial inflicted extreme torture on themselves and on the initiate. In addition, they ate human flesh, although it was considered abhorrent and poisonous (Ford 1941:114); Goldman 1961). Also, the final exorcism of the Cannibal was accomplished by menstrual blood ordinarily regarded as disgusting, dangerous, and a source of contamination for the male (Benedict 1946:167).[2] After the ceremonial the initiate was subjected to further extreme and exacting forms of punitive purification: "he must bathe four times every tenth day, then four times every sixth day, four times every eighth day, and four times every tenth day, thus covering a period of four moons" (Boas 1935:90). For sixteen days "he must not eat any warm food, and for four months he is not allowed to blow hot food in order to cool it. For a whole year he must not touch his wife, nor is he allowed to gamble or work" (Boas 1897:538).

[2] In Freudian terms, its use may be interpreted as symbolic castration in atonement for forbidden impulses.

There is another aspect of the Cannibal ceremony that invites interpretation as a psychological defense. In the performance of these prolonged rituals, participants were required to meticulously avoid even minute deviations from accepted form. The performer who made an error fell down as if dead, and the Bear impersonators feigned to tear him to pieces (Boas 1897:467; Ford 1941:119). Perhaps in the past death *actually* was the penalty for such deviations (Benedict 1946:163). Clinical discussions of obsessive-compulsive ritual behavior interpret such devices as defenses againts apprehension in situations where the ego cannot depend on its own governing devices. These attempts to ward off impulses "betray their nature as derivatives by their exaggerated character, that is, by the disproportion of the accompanying emotions or by the rigidity with which they are adhered to" (Fenichel 1945:268).[3]

The psychic danger adhering to the Cannibal ceremonial was further dealt with by a strange institutionalized denial mechanism. After the ceremony, the initiate "forgets" everyday human habits and has to "learn" anew how to walk, eat, speak, etc. (Boas 1897:538; Benedict 1946:164). It is interesting that this ceremonial was called "tsitsika", which means, according to Ford's (1941:110) translation, "everything is not real." It has often been noted in psychiatric writings that individuals will deny anxiety-provoking aspects of external reality or threatening internal impulses (Fenichel 1945:144ff). Possibly, the Kwakiutl wished to "forget" their own hostile impulses, so recently acted-out and "tamed." Although the loss of memory was merely a pretense, this fantasy denial had been incorporated into ritual as a social myth. Like other defense mechanisms, this denial relieved the dependent Kwakiutl personality of the guilt and anxiety usually accompanying direct expressions of hostile behavior. Thus, Kwakiutl ritual transformed potentially severe anxiety into a sense of mastery and a renewed ability to conform to social norms.

[3] It is not implied here that the Kwakiutl, as a group, are neurotic, but rather that their ("normal") personality shares some of the mechanisms used by the obsessive-compulsive. In this connection, Codere (1950:18) notes that the Kwakiutl work habits and manufacturing techniques are characterized by "extreme orderliness... and minutely fixed details."

Conclusions

In this paper I have reviewed various interpretations of the nature of the Kwakiutl Indians in the anthropological literature against the background of the ethnological descriptions, and have attempted to demonstrate that the culture and personality of these people contained psychodynamically related though seemingly contradictory features. The Kwakiutl institutions of economic survival were based on principles of co-operation and communal ownership, while the winter ceremonials and the potlatch revealed many elements of individual competitiveness and (often suppressed or rechanneled) violence and aggression. For the individual Kwakiutl I have attempted to demonstrate the structured strain imposed on him by a high level of hostility and desire to outdo others, along with his strong needs for dependency satisfaction and impulse control. I inferred this interpretation from the descriptions of socialization practices in the society, and from the assumption of the tendency of ceremonial and religious institutions to contain personality projections. However, in the absence of data collected specifically for the study of personality, these interpretations must remain speculative.

The study also raises some general questions about the relationship between culture and personality. Clearly, the present analysis is not compatible with an assumption of an isomorphic relationship between these two conceptual levels of analysis. The interpretive statements of Benedict and Goldman, however, seem implicitly to make such a supposition. Consequently, they attribute and generalize the personal motivation of hostility and the desire to outdo others, legitimately inferred from the institutional behavior of the potlatch and winter ceremonials, to Kwakiutl culture and society. Although it is clear that personal motives always underlie institutional practices and cultural values, there is no necessary isomorphic relationship between them. For example, an economic institution organized around co-operative formal role relationships may well involve large elements of personal motivation that can be described as individualistic, competitive, and hostile. Analyses of the Soviet planned economic system and the behavior of the new managerial group in that

society demonstrate this condition. While the range of variation in personality types and personal motivation may be limited by the requirements of a given social organization, there may also be considerable latitude for variation. Much remains to be known about existing regularities in the relationship between types of social organization and cultural values on one hand, and types of personal motivation on the other. In the case of the Kwakiutl, it appears that essential co-operative and communalistically-oriented practices involved in their survival economic institutions and social structure are neither logically nor practically incompatible with high motivational level of hostility and competitiveness. This discussion points to the importance of studying culture and personality with different research tools and independent theoretical schemes. The isomorphic assumption can easily lead to a "contamination" of these variables.

In a consideration of this society, we may ask whether the simultaneous existence of the two different aspects of Kwakiutl culture and personality necessarily implies a high level of personal maladjustment. Would the Kwakiutl have manifested more severe personality problems than the Hopi, for example, whose society appears to have been characterized by a greater consistency at the institutional and personality levels? It is possible that the simultaneous stimulation of, and need to control, aggressive impulses, as in Kwakiutl society, took a heavy toll in emotional maladjustment. (However, it is also possible that the wide range of permissible (i.e. socially sanctioned) behavior in Kwakiutl society permitted a broader scope of social role adjustment for temperamentally different individuals, than did the more monolithic emphasis among the Hopi.)

In addition, there is nothing necessarily maladjustive about the coexistence of very different emphases in both culture and in personality, as long as there are adequate behavioral control mechanisms and institutional arrangements to provide clear situational guide lines for their socially sanctioned expression.

I have indicated that Kwakiutl ceremonial life provided a cathartic outlet and a means for mastering aggressive impulses that could not easily be expressed directly in secular social life. One might conclude, then, that this congruence between culture

and personality was conducive to "healthy" psychological adjustment. However, the historical developments affecting the potlatch may have given rise to such competitive and hostile situations that interpersonal relations were seriously disturbed. The institution of the potlatch and winter ceremonials may be viewed in two ways: either they provided an adjustive-cathartic outlet and control for aggression, or they *themselves* contributed to an increase of interpersonal conflict. Which way did the balance tip? Once again, the available data permit no answer. It is hoped, however, that some of the issues raised here will stimulate research questions for which empirical data will be gathered in future studies of culture and personality.

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