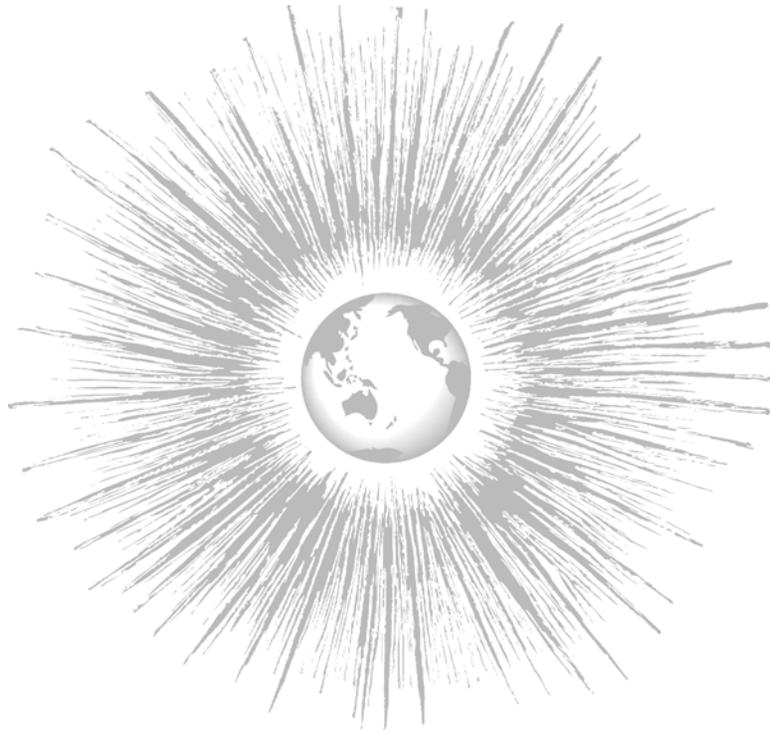


THE 'OTTER-MAN' EMPIRES: THE PACIFIC FUR TRADE, INCORPORATION AND THE ZONE OF IGNORANCE*

Jon D. Carlson



ABSTRACT

This article examines the concept of the 'external arena', the relationship it holds to the expansion of the modern world-system, and the process of systemic incorporation. In order to address the notion of systemic expansion, I examine how boundaries of the system are defined by networks of exchange and interaction and I echo criticisms that information and luxury goods networks exert important systemic impacts. Significant change occurs well prior to the point at which traditional world-systems literature considers an arena 'incorporated'.

The case of the sea-otter fur trade and the relationship with the natives of the Northwest coast of America is used as an example of these processes of change in action. This case is

selected because there is no question that the area is 'pristine'; initially it is outside the realm of European contact. This region characterizes a 'zone of ignorance' beyond the traditional world-system that must undergo a significant 'grooming process' before incorporation is more fully expanded, and this process is partially operationalized by the use of historically contemporary maps. Finally, the case offers a good example of the impact that external regions can exert on internal systemic behavior, as European powers were pushed to the brink of war in their efforts to exploit the resources and peoples of the Nootka Sound region. I conclude by offering a more developed conceptualization of the process of incorporation and related concepts.

I. INTRODUCTION

In an effort to refine the concept of "incorporation" into the world-system, I undertake a specific case study of a region plainly external to the system and trace the processes that correspond to this region's interaction with systemic actors throughout its period of incorporation. The goal here is to rethink the assimilation of new regions and peoples with the larger purpose of gaining more understanding of the processes driving overall systemic expansion, historically and currently, in order to provide a model for modern development. It is the existence of the zone of ignorance at the edge of the system that often leads to conflict between system members over new regions of expansion. This case study is meant to develop the 'middle ground' between Wallerstein's analysis of incorporation (European, state-centric, 'inside-out') and Hall's research on incorporation (external, indigenous peoples, 'outside-in'). Furthermore, this may be taken as a critique of international relations theory in general, which tends to be overly Euro-state-centric in its focus and has a tendency to overlook important social, political, and economic adaptations that occur well before state politics develop (or are inserted) in a region of contact or expansion.

The situation in North America is quite relevant for the purpose of carefully examining the incorporation process. A prime reason for this is obvious: there is

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no question that the area was 'external' to the modern world-system prior to its 'discovery' by Europeans. So, its assimilation into the world-system can be examined in a detail that may not be achievable in other, more historically adjacent, geographic arenas. Various changes and developments in the political, social, and economic facets of everyday indigenous life that occurred during the process of incorporation can be analyzed. To understand incorporation, the process must be broken apart in order to recognize early changes that occur when a region moves from a status of existing in a virtual "zone of ignorance" to a status of being "within the system."¹

To reduce the incorporation process, I use Chase Dunn and Hall's (1991, 1997) and Hall's (1986, 1989, 1999a, 1999b) notion of nested networks of interaction. By treating these networks as various 'states of being' through which a given region passes, one can operationalize the process more carefully. Furthermore, since historically contemporary maps are essentially 'freeze-frame snapshots' of accumulated knowledge regarding a given region at a particular instance for an actor, these may be used to parse out the status of a region in regard to its position within the networks of interaction. Reference is made to historical maps (in conjunction with traditional textual sources) as a way to give a clearer 'picture' of a given region during the period of incorporation.² However, this reflects primarily the European perspective as native knowledge is manifested in a different manner and only partially gets transmitted to the formal process of mapmaking.

The Nootka Sound region is of particular import for this study, because it begins as a rather 'pristine' environment that is subsumed into the expanding capitalist system. Prior to the encroachment of European explorers and traders, the region and its peoples had developed a rather unique lifestyle that is readily differentiated from that of other native cultures in North America. The Indians of the Northwest Coast were fairly isolated from easy, overland travel by mountain ranges running along the coast, and depended on the ocean for many of their resources. Accordingly, emphasis was placed on sea travel via large, ocean-going

¹ See Carlson (1999, 2001) for a development of the concept of 'zone of ignorance' and its relationship to other 'states of being' in the incorporation process as described by Chase-Dunn and Hall (1991, 1997) and Hall (1986, 1989, 1999a, 1999b). Furthermore, Hall (2000a) provides an impressive overview of the literature that has developed from the world-systems perspective as promulgated by Wallerstein (1974, 1980, 1989).

² A discussion regarding the rationale and use of maps in this manner appears in Carlson (2001: 253-54).

canoes and contact with inland tribes was limited. The inhabitants had a highly developed woodworking culture (superior to any other in the Americas), and an established trade-goods network that extended along the coast. Furthermore, the political organization of the region is referred to as a 'complex chiefdom' (Diamond 1997) and had a formalized property-rights organization. How then, did this rather pristine region become, over the course of little more than one hundred years, absorbed into the larger, global system of capitalist Europe? To begin this analysis requires that we become familiar with the various systemic actors at work in the region during the time in question.

II. THE STAGE

Specifically, I will be examining the relations between the European powers and the Native Americans along the northwestern coast of North America, and the concurrent development of the fur trade. While initial European contact with this region began in the first half of the 1700s and reached a climax in the 1790s with the peak of the fur trade, the drive to incorporate the region is best encapsulated in the dispute over a relatively limited geographic area—Nootka Sound.³ Incorporation necessarily will be considered in context and with reference to other colonial activity in the region at large (e.g., Spain in the American Southwest, Imperial Russia in Alaska) as this colonial activity had policy implications for the adjacent 'zone.' Of particular interest is the conflict that arose in this area between systemic powers, known as the Nootka Sound Controversy, which also served to bring Europe to the brink of war. Since one would presume that impact on an external arena is largely monodirectional (i.e., from the core, or internal arenas, outward), this provides an intriguing example of when this is clearly not the case. Instead, contention for external regions and resources leads to considerable internal systemic disturbance.

The reasons for the concentration on the western coast are twofold. First, most initial European activity, and hence impact, centered on coastal areas. So it is only natural to pay specific attention here, as activities inland from the coast developed only after the turn of the century. For example, the Lewis and Clark expedition (1803–1806) did not reach the coast until after the turn of the century, and Russian expeditions into the interior of Alaska were even later in time (See Michael 1967; Khlebnikov 1973; Dmytryshyn 1989). While Spain did have

³ Nootka Sound lies on the western coast of what is now Vancouver Island in British Columbia, Canada.

a substantial amount of penetration *into* the continent, this was limited to the Southwest, extending up to present-day Santa Fe, NM. Otherwise, Spanish penetration never developed far inland from the California coast (Hall 1989; Bolton 1914; Bolton and Marshall 1922; Gerhard 1993).

Second, by concentrating on the coastal interactions, the area of geographic concern is limited as are the number of relevant actors that need to be examined. French trade activity in North America, while insightful for providing examples of economic, social, and political impacts of such behavior, did not extend to the western coast (Ray 1974; Krech 1984; Thistle 1986). Instead, French activity in the fur trade was limited mainly to the Mississippi drainage and to penetrating the lakes and rivers of Canada, and did not push westward until later in the 1800's (Skinner 1991; Rich 1960, 1966). The French were increasingly preoccupied with internal—especially economic—problems after the Treaty of Paris in 1763, which adversely impacted the French colonial struggle with Britain. But the French did manage to mount the major, yet ill-fated, La Pérouse expedition of 1786–1788⁴ to the North Pacific, before being once again distracted by domestic issues—notably, the French Revolution of 1789. Similarly, American activity in the region only becomes relevant late in the 18th Century, since most American attention was diverted toward matters closer at hand for the emerging nation. So, the main European actors are Spain, Russia, to a lesser extent Great Britain, and only later the United States. As we shall see, European rivalry provides an underlying foundation upon which expansion in the New World was built, and which drove much of the policy guiding this particular expansion.

III. THE PLAYERS

A. Spain

Spanish concern with the northwest coast of America began over two centuries prior to the documented voyages of the 18th century. After reaching the Pacific coast in 1522, Hernando Cortés proceeded to organize explorations northward. Later explorers recounted tales of riches and additional indigenous nations to the northwest. Also, a desire to ascertain the possible existence of a strait providing strategic entrance to the Pacific proved to be a recurring source

⁴ La Pérouse and his men perished on this expedition. One companion, Baron Jean Baptiste Barthelemy de Lesseps was put ashore in Kamchatka with many expedition journals and maps. He traveled *overland* to Paris and subsequently published a four-volume account of the voyage (See Cook 1973: 112-113, 115; Batman 1985: 35-38).

Plate 1 – America 1586



Author Unknown. "America 1586" (1586).

Image courtesy of Reed College Library, Special Collections Department.

<http://simeon.library.reed.edu/collections/antmaps/>

of Spanish cartographic desires. References to the hoped-for strait predate 1562, when geographer Giacomo Gastaldi first called it the "Strait of Anián." It is believed that he named this imaginary strait either for Marco Polo's "Ania" (a province of northern China) or after Anus Cortoreal, a Portuguese mariner who explored the Labrador coast around 1500 (Cook 1973:2). The rather common practice of fixing unknown regions with names associated with India, China, or Japan onto then-contemporary maps supports the likelihood that the name is taken from Marco Polo's reference to a northern province of China (Hull 1962: 23). The name would continue to appear on maps for the next several hundred years.⁵

For example, on "America 1586" (Plate 1) 'Anian' is used to reference the region in the far northwest of America, as well as the strait separating this region from an unnamed landmass to the west. One should not take this to necessarily mean that the Spanish were aware of the true proximity of the Asian continent, but

⁵ For example, see also Ortelius (1587) and Philippe Buache's map of 1752.

rather that 'straits' by definition are narrow bodies of water between two landmasses. Thus, it makes perfect sense to at least place something beyond 'Anian.' If one looks closely, the California coast is somewhat accurately portrayed up to Cape Mendocino (the inlet just to the south of 'Anian'), but the entire realm beyond Mendocino is squarely in the realm of myth. Inaccurate mountain ranges and a much hoped-for water route across the top of the map (with 'Terra Septemtrionalis Incognita'—roughly "Northern Unknown Lands"—above) offset the vast empty spaces toward the interior of the continent. Interestingly, lower California is quite accurately represented. This is expected, given the peninsula's proximity to the colonial activity in Mexico and Central America.

Similarly, we can see 'Anian' plainly in other contemporary representations (e.g., Abraham Ortelius' map of 1587). Ortelius also has California fairly represented, and limits the fanciful use of mountain ranges in the vast, empty interior of the continent. However, we see neither the 'Straits of Anian' nor the northern water passage. Additionally, New Guinea appears as an independent continent linked to Antarctica, providing another instance of a region existing in the zone of ignorance, similar to the reaches of the northwest in America. By pushing into the unknown, the Spanish are literally parting the veil of myth and ignorance.

Interestingly, the early Spanish explorations of the coast were never mentioned or publicized beyond Spain, largely because a policy of silence was deliberately instituted in order to keep geographic details as secret as possible, to protect against piracy and plunder. By 1527, Spanish galleons were crossing from Mexico to the Philippines and Moluccas. Because the Portuguese controlled return access through the Indian Ocean, considerable emphasis was placed on establishing a return route to Acapulco, which was accomplished by 1565. The trip from Acapulco to Manila averaged four months, while the return trip across the North Pacific took six, largely because the ships were so burdened with goods and faced more unfavorable winds. "From Acapulco galleons carried manufactured goods, cloth, tools, arms, and munitions, as well as Mexican silver. They brought back silks, fine china, porcelain, gold coins, cinnamon and other spices, candles, and beeswax in bulk, and other oriental products in demand in Spanish America" (Cook 1973:6). By the late 1500s, several accounts of Manila galleons inadvertently visiting California harbors after being blown northward on their return journey had been established, though contact further up the coast had not.

While Spain managed to keep its activities in the Pacific secret for decades, by 1578 Francis Drake, in the *Golden Hind*, had discovered a route around South America that avoided interception in the Straits of Magellan. Thus loosed in the Pacific, Drake was making captures off the coast of Costa Rica by 1579, and had seized charts, sailing directions, and acquired first-hand knowledge from cap-

tured Spanish sailors. With the *Hind* of questionable seaworthiness because it was damaged by shipworms and was overladen with booty, Drake headed northward before putting in at a sheltered cove. Here he spent thirty-six days making repairs, taking on water and firewood, and performing an act of possession for Elizabeth I. Debate surrounds the question of exactly where Drake put ashore, but most evidence suggests that 'Drake's Bay' (28 miles north of San Francisco Bay) is appropriately named. After this brief respite, Drake used his newly-acquired navigational information and successfully crossed the Pacific Ocean, reaching Plymouth after two years and ten months at sea (Cook 1973:8). His success prompted imitation by Thomas Cavendish in 1587, who "took particular care to seize pilots and maps on captured vessels, as a means of pulling back the curtain of secrecy with which Spain had cloaked her realms" (Cook 1973:9). Very plainly, acquiring geographical and navigational information was a key goal of British mariners.

The losses incurred by the Spanish led to an increased concern that similar losses would result from further foreign encroachment to the northwest of New Spain. The uncharted northwest coast provided potential havens for marauders, and the appearance of the British in the Pacific Ocean fueled Spanish suspicion that the British had discovered the 'Strait of Anián.' A desire to find this legendary passage prompted Spanish explorations along the coast. However, these explorations were soon curtailed, as policy shifted to support the belief that more damage than good could come with the possible discovery of such a passage. If such a passage *did* exist, its revelation would merely provide an open access through which enemies could more readily enter the northern Pacific. So, throughout the seventeenth century—because of official policy discouraging exploration—Spanish interest in expanding northward was dependent on private capital for exploratory expeditions, which were mainly concerned with pearling ventures. In Cook's estimation:

Madrid perceived no serious threat in that quarter from foreign rivals, so long as a northwest passage remained unfound. Spanish concern with Mexico's northwestern frontier did not die, but official policy put a damper upon explorations by sea and failed to provide knowledge of the coastline beyond Cape Mendocino. Beyond, to Anián, the coast would avoid becoming a source of trouble and expense by remaining *terra incognita* (1973:19).

By the start of the eighteenth century, Spain purposefully maintained a zone of ignorance with regard to its northern frontier. This was because the area was perceived as not holding sufficient economic basis for exploration and development, coupled with the strategic belief that ignorance actually bestowed a certain amount of security in regards to the unexplored coastline. The fear was that if the Spanish *were* to find a northern passage word would soon spread of its loca-

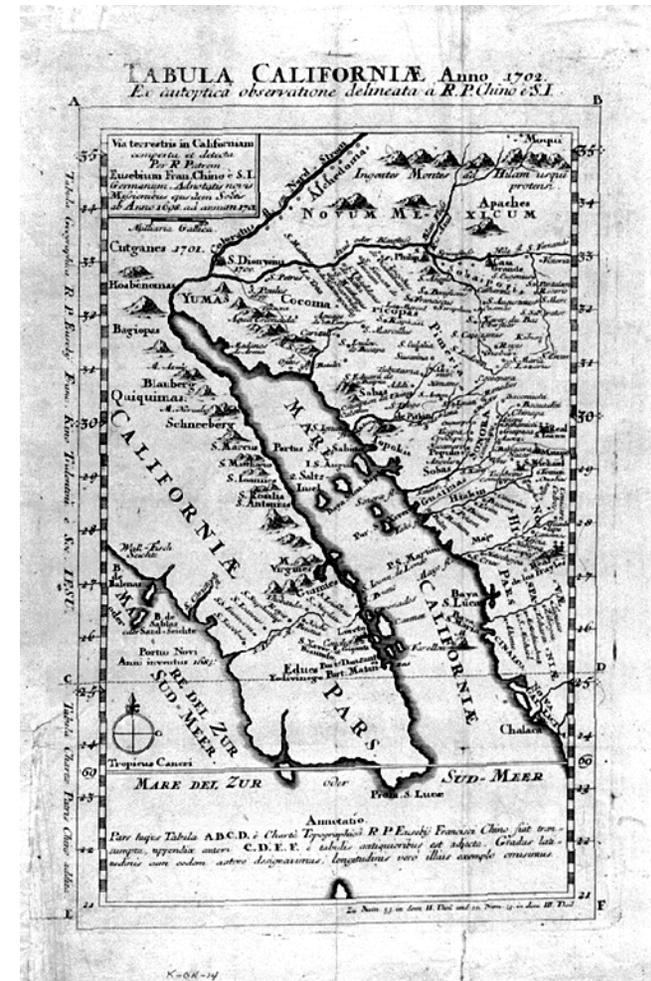
tion, making it that much more difficult to keep the English out of the Pacific and necessitating that Spanish resources be diverted to its guard. By not seeking out such a passage, the onus and expense of such an undertaking was placed on the English, with Spain in a position to dispute any British intrusion into the Pacific should it occur. Elsewhere during the seventeenth century, Spanish missionaries extended settlements in Mexico and developed a string of outposts up into what is now New Mexico. Gerhard (1993) provides an adequate description of the extent of formal Spanish incorporation by 1700.⁶ There is little formalized Spanish control along the outer California coast. Instead, Spanish authority is confined to Mexico proper and the inland ‘islands’ of Santa Fe, El Paso, and Janos-Casas Grandes.

Gerhard’s representation is confirmed by sources from the period. Father Chino’s map of 1702 (Plate 2) represents the body of “Californiae” at the time. We can see that only the southern portion of Baja California is shown, and Spanish place-names are concentrated around the Sea of California (“Mare Californiae”) and inland. Nothing further up the outer coast seems to be relevant (or perhaps known), though we can see that Spanish interests stretch into the interior, up beyond ‘Casa Grande’ (with a mission symbol) in what is now Arizona. This is in contrast to the Spanish position by 1800. Within 100 years, Spain extended its reach up the length of California to Monterey, and solidified the range of Spanish dominion in Mexico and the American Southwest. Santa Fe and El Paso remain ‘islands,’ but are now joined by San Antonio and Nacogdoches. Regardless, the most relevant aspect for this study is the Spanish expansion up the California coast during the 1700s. Even though considerable resources were expended in an attempt to solidify control over the American Southwest, Madrid initially did nothing to explore the northwest coast. This would soon change with the emergence of the potentially lucrative sea otter fur trade, as well as the emergence of challengers for this trade.

The sea otter, *Enhydra lutris*, would prove to be the source of great contention in the northwest. The Spanish were first introduced to international trade in the species in 1733, when Father Sigismundo Taraval described the otters on the western coast of Baja California. At this time, the range of the sea otter extended from Baja California across the northern Pacific to Kamchatka and the Kuril Islands north of Japan. The animals were so docile that Spanish seamen could club them with sticks, and several pelts were cured and sent to Mexico City. Soon they were being included as trade goods sent to China *via* Manila, though they

⁶ For more information on the Spanish in the Southwest: (Bannon 1964; Cutter and Engstand 1996; Hall 1989, 1998).

Plate 2 – Tabula Californiae



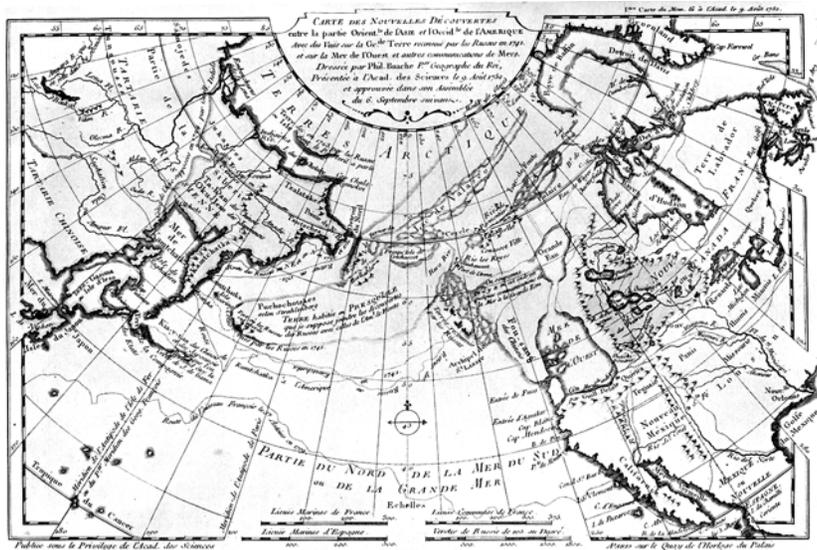
Father E.F. Chino (1702). “Tabula Californiae” (map). Place of printing unknown. Image courtesy of Yale University Library, Yale University Map Collection. <http://www.library.yale.edu/MapColl/>

Note: the mission at Casa Grande and others to the south, a clear expression of Spanish incorporation and the transition of a region into the political-military network of interaction.

were not a primary concern of the Spanish because the supply was limited once the otters learned to distrust humans (Cook 1973:43).

When Russian fur traders came to eastern Siberia in pursuit of sable, they soon built up a thriving trade in sea otter pelts with China. An active trade in sea

Plate 3 – Carte des Nouvelles Découvertes (1752)



Buache, Philippe (1752). "Carte des Nouvelles Découvertes" (Map of New Discoveries), in Cook (1973: plate 9). Originally presented to the Academy of Sciences, Paris.
Image copyright Yale University Press, from *Flood Tide of Empire* by Warren L. Cook.

otter fur already existed in the region *prior* to Spanish and Russian expansion, as China had developed an exchange network with natives of the Kuril Islands and Kamchatka. Thus, we have the case of the European system expanding into an already extant 'prestige goods network' (PGN) as described by Chase-Dunn and Hall (1997). Russia reached Kamchatka early in the 18th century, and by 1733 orders were given to map the American coast. The reason for this is seen in Philippe Buache's map of 1752 (Plate 3). While Kamchatka and the north Asian coast are well represented, the region of North America is not. We still see the mythic region of 'Fou-sang' that had been associated with an area of China, a great 'Sea of the West' ('Mer de l'Ouest') where the American Northwest actually lies, and a 'Great Water' ('Grande Eau') stretching inland, with an outlet speculatively reaching toward Hudson Bay.

By the 1780s, orders were given not only to dispatch a naval squadron to protect Russian possessions, but also to stabilize and expand the Alaskan settlements and enterprises (Dmytryshyn 1988). This Russian trade in the Aleutians, and its by-product of greater geographic knowledge of the North Pacific, eventually drew the attention of the Spanish. Diplomatic relations—which had been suspended for two decades—were reestablished, and a map of the North Pacific

Plate 4 – Nouvelle Carte des Decouvertes... (1758)



Russian Imperial Academy of Sciences (1758). "Nouvelle Carte des Decouvertes..." (New Map of Discoveries...). Originally published by the Russian Imperial Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg. Electronic version courtesy of The Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley.
<http://library.berkeley.edu/EART/maps/>

showing the extent of Russian discoveries in Alaska was acquired. (Plate 4)

Interestingly, this map was widely republished and detailed images of later versions are also available.⁷ One can plainly see that the maps are identical in content, but differ only in title (and language of publication). This provides an indication of the broad impact that these representations had, as this particular map is reproduced several times over a period of twenty years. Not only does it prompt strategic political response by Spain, but it also feeds a social hunger for information of the Americas.

⁷ See for example, Carington Bowles, (1780). "Bowles's New Pocket Map of the Discoveries Made by the Russians on the North West Coast of America" (map). Originally published by the Russian Imperial Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg (1758). Also republished as, "A map of the discoveries made by the Russians on the north west coast of America" (1761), London: Jeffreys. Electronic image available via Reed College Library, Special Collections Department. <http://simeon.library.reed.edu/collections/antmaps/>

While it is plain that the Russians maintained (at least temporarily) a zone of ignorance inclusive of Alaska and the Northwest, they had already pushed along the Aleutian Islands toward the American mainland. The relevance of the map, however, is that Spain was beginning to feel the threat of foreign encroachment on its territory. Madrid was now presented with definitive evidence that the Russians were poised to expand down the Northwest coast of America, and feared that Spanish claims to the coast would soon be challenged.

Even though Spain had not ventured north of San Francisco, they did claim the entire western coast of America as their exclusive domain according to the 'right of first discovery.' Accordingly, Spanish officials closely followed all published reports regarding Russian explorations into the North Pacific. In an effort to counter potential Russian development down the coast toward California, Spain vigorously expanded northward, establishing missions and presidios along the coast from San Diego (1769) and Monterey (1770), to San Francisco (1776). Between 1774 and 1793, Spain dispatched fourteen naval expeditions to the North Pacific in order to check on Russian advancement, the first of which was that of the *Santiago* in 1774–1775 (Caster 1969; Cook 1973). It is important to note that unlike most of the contemporary English, Russian, and American voyages, these Spanish voyages of exploration "were conducted for reasons of imperial strategy and not for commercial purposes" (Tovell 1995:57) or for largely scientific purposes (Caster 1969, Engstrand 1981). Since this was official governmental behavior, it seems arguable that the Spanish were expanding their political-military network (PMN) concurrently with their information network (IN). More importantly, here the PMN actively subsidizes the growth of the IN, which is in contrast to other strategies of expansion in which profits (or expected profits) from luxury goods are the motivating factor for expansion.

The *Santiago*, piloted by Juan Pérez, reached as far north as the southern tip of the Alaskan panhandle, but never achieved the goal of reaching 60 degrees north latitude. More importantly, on his journey back to California Pérez became the first European to visit Nootka Sound, which was believed to be the port of greatest strategic importance north of San Francisco Bay. In Nootka Sound, Indians came out to the *Santiago* and soon were bartering sea otter robes for abalone shells brought from California as well as other goods. For our purposes, "abalone shells and Mexican copper had a tremendous impact upon northwest coast art forms" (Cook 1973:67). So, almost immediately there is a concrete example of socio-cultural change in the external arena due to basic trade with members of the system.

A key event occurred almost by chance that would later serve to support Spain's claim to Nootka when later challenged by Britain: "several warriors came on board, and one managed to pilfer several spoons belonging to Martinez.

When Cook visited Nootka four years later he purchased those spoons, recognized their manufacture, and mentioned in his journal that he regarded them as proof that the Spanish had been at or near the place" (Cook 1973:64–5).⁸ As the British would later argue however, there was no evidence that the Spanish ever landed at Nootka to officially take possession.

Other Spanish voyages were made in the latter part of the eighteenth century, especially as the wealth of the fur trade became more obvious. Prior to this becoming relevant, additional Spanish voyages were made in 1775 and 1779. However, the important aspect of the situation is that Nootka Sound will prove to be the focus of considerable systemic-power attention. While Spain would continue to claim the expanse of the northwest coast, the riches coming out of the fur trade would place the region at the center of worldwide attention by 1784. Unfortunately for Spanish strategic aspirations, by 1780 Madrid once again curtailed expeditions to the north because the previous expeditions had proven to be a financial drain on the northern Department of San Blas.⁹ Furthermore, Spanish policy of not publicizing the accomplishments of 1774, 1775 and 1779 later undermined their claim to the area by prior discovery.

B. Russia

In contrast to the Spanish, Russians were rather late in arriving in the area of North America, though their expansion into the North Pacific may be dated to the late 1600s. Russian expansion into North America was a natural extension of its drive across Siberia and the importance of furs in the Russian economy of expansion (Ohberg 1955). As Dmytryshyn (1988:xxxv) observes, Russian expansion into North America can be defined as falling into three distinct—though temporally overlapping—categories:

The first was the initial phase by the government, 1700 to 1743. The second was a carefully government-controlled and monitored phase of private interests, 1743 to 1799. The final phase, 1753 to 1795, in part concurrent with the second phase, consisted of a series of secret government-sponsored expeditions to promote and defend Russian interests in the North Pacific.

⁸ Estéban José Martínez was a second pilot on the Perez expedition, but would rise to command the later expedition that was at the center of the Nootka Sound controversy.

⁹ San Blas was a small town on an inlet about 140 miles west of Guadalajara and about 80 miles north of Puerto Vallarta. It was selected as a naval base of operations in 1767, and "was considered Spain's most important naval station on Mexico's Pacific coast" (Magnaghi 1999: 43). The Department of San Blas included the Californias and the coast up to Nootka.

Interestingly, these 'phases' roughly correspond to Hall's (2000b) nested networks of interaction (See also Chase-Dunn and Hall 1991, 1997).¹⁰ Phase 1 involves moving into the 'Information Network' (IN), phase 2 corresponds to the 'Prestige Goods Network' (PGN), and phase 3 is arguably the beginning of the 'Political-Military Network' (PMN).

The initial phase mainly consisted of a series of information gathering expeditions, a main goal of which was to determine if Asia was connected by land to America. By 1733, the Russian government organized an expedition with the expressed purpose of reaching and claiming the western shore of North America. This expedition (the Second Kamchatka Expedition) 'discovered' and described the shores of Alaska and some of the Aleutian Islands, and opened a vast and unclaimed area to Russian expansion. This exposed an area rich in furs and other resources to the exclusive claim of Russians for a generation and initiated a new phase in Russian expansion. Expansion into the Aleutians in gave Russia its first overseas colony. In turn, this necessitated that additional resources be devoted to the relatively new navy of the traditionally land-based power, in order to support Russian proprietary interest in the North Pacific. Suddenly, Russia had legitimate imperial interests and would need to display appropriate naval capability if it hoped to compete successfully in the last New World arena of international rivalry (Dmytryshyn 1988; Makarova 1975; Golder 1971; Gibson 1969).

The second sphere of Russian expansion, that of private undertakings, began as soon as the Second Kamchatka Expedition completed its mission. The movement was triggered by the arrival of furs brought back by members of the expedition, and Russians increasingly began to move toward Kamchatka. Russian private entrepreneurs organized themselves into small venture companies, which then purchased permits from the government to acquire furs (as well as to take along an official government agent). Estimates put the number of such companies at over forty, operating between 1743 and 1799.¹¹ Since many ships were lost at sea it is difficult to estimate the total value of all the furs taken. However, the parties that did return carried furs valued close to 8,000,000 rubles (Dmytryshyn 1988:xli; Makarova 1974:209–216)¹². Similarly, Cook (1973:

¹⁰ Electronic image of these 'nested networks' available in Carlson (2001: 245).

¹¹ The last two companies merged to form the Russian American Company in 1799. As a government-supported monopoly company, it lasted until Russian holdings in North America were sold to the United States in 1867. See (Okun 1951; Tikhmenev 1978) for histories of the Russian-American Company.

¹² Dmytryshyn (1989) places the value of a silver ruble at roughly 50 cents, which indicates that Russia officially extracted approximately \$4 million in US dollars (circa

43) notes that within a decade, "cargoes from the Aleutians grossed millions of dollars, and the trade became important to the Siberian economy," which provided impetus for Russian expansion into America. Permit holders also pledged to collect *yasak* (tribute in furs)¹³ from the natives as a sign of their submission to Russian rule. This tribute was initially to be turned over to royal authorities upon the ship's return, but a tribute collector soon accompanied every vessel during its voyage. Additionally, the private ventures agreed to give a tenth of their furs to the Treasury, and supply the government with any relevant information about the expedition.

The third phase of Russian expansion ran largely concurrent to the second, but is characterized by government-dispatched expeditions. These were developed by four departments of government with particular interest in the area: the College of the Admiralty, the College of Foreign Affairs, the College of Commerce, and the Academy of Sciences. These expeditions often were developed to further particular government objectives in the region, but also had to fill in the gaps of information provided by the private entrepreneurs, as their data were often useless because many of the private traders were illiterate. Hull (1966: 35) makes the point that "Siberian officialdom, which tended to be grasping and mainly interested in levying its tax on cargoes and collecting the *yasak* tribute imposed in the newly conquered regions, provided an additional reason why fur traders often suppressed their findings."

The first government-sponsored expedition lasted from 1753 to 1764, and led to the recommendation that Russia gain control of the Amur River in Irkutsk in order to build a shipyard and provide an agricultural and industrial base to support Russian interests in the North Pacific. Government officials studied the first expedition's proposals, but ultimately did little to act on them. Officials wished to avoid a war with China, which almost certainly would have resulted from taking this action on China's northern frontier. Also during this time, attention in Moscow was increasingly focused on events in Europe, where Russia had become involved in the Seven Years' War (1756–1763) (Dmytryshyn 1988:xlvi–xlvi; Gibson 1969).

1800) from the region over this period. This says nothing of the value of goods smuggled out or unreported.

¹³ Alternately spelled *iasak*, this is a system of taxation dating from Genghis Khan's code of laws in which tribute equal to one-tenth the annual yield is extracted (Cook 1973: 44; see also Rich 1955).

The purpose of the second government expedition (1764–1767) was primarily to monitor the sea-borne fur trade carried on by the private entrepreneurs. A second purpose was to survey the islands lying between Kamchatka and America (the Aleutians), as well as to determine their resources. This expedition, as well as a third one undertaken in 1764–1769 to check on reports of abuses in the fur trade, did not meet expectations. Partly due to bad leadership and partly due to bad luck, the reports and maps submitted were filled with exaggerations and inconsistencies that took years to clarify (Golder 1971; Makarova 1975; Dmytryshyn 1988:xlvi–xlviii).

This is a central aspect of the zone of ignorance: misinformation often carries as much weight as valid fact, but can take years to identify. Indeed, once something is placed on a map—for whatever reason—it takes on the aspect of reality. Only once the incorporation process is well advanced can these ‘hauntings’ of myth and fantasy be dispersed. In this particular case, the Spanish were better served than the Russians because the Spanish (with considerably more seafaring experience) used official scientific expeditions to extend their ‘information network’ (and arguably their political-military network), instead of relying on the information provided by wanderers, traders, and private explorers. In contrast, the Russians had to return 20 years later to verify earlier reports and findings.

The fourth Russian expedition was organized in 1786–87, and had very broad objectives to guard Russian interests in the North Pacific, and was commanded by Grigory Mulovsky. As its goals, this expedition was to verify and claim all discoveries made by Russia from the southern Kurils to the southern tip of Alaska. To this end, the expedition was outfitted with 1,700 iron and copper plates engraved in Russian and Latin proclaiming, “This territory belongs to the Russian Empire” (Dmytryshyn 1988:xliv).¹⁴

This reflects the common use of the claim of discovery as producing a fundamental claim to territory, as such plates would serve as future proof of ‘prior discovery.’ The Spanish and English followed similar procedures. The Spanish commonly erected a cross with a cairn of stones covering a declaration of possession, or erected a cross over such a declaration. Similarly, Captain Drake posted a bronze plate on a tree north of San Francisco Bay during his initial trip into the Pacific, laying a somewhat tenuous base for later British claims to territory in North America.

¹⁴ Gibson (1999:56) puts the number of cast iron markers (bearing the imperial coat of arms) at 200. But he states, “1,700 special medals of gold (110), silver (430), copper (660), and iron (500) were struck as awards for exceptional service”.

Specifically, the purposes of this Russian expedition were fourfold: to warn Spanish, British, and French intruders to stay out of Russia’s sphere of influence; to establish a permanent Russian naval presence in the North Pacific; to open commercial relations with China and Japan; and finally to undertake additional scientific investigations. The expedition was to total some 639 men on 5 ships, with a considerable international contingent of astronomers, historiographers, natural historians, and navigators (Gibson 1969, 1999; Dmytryshyn 1988).¹⁵ Unfortunately for those involved, on the eve of their departure, this mission was aborted because of imminent war with Sweden (1788–1790) and the Ottoman Empire (1787–1792). The experience later proved helpful in organizing the first Russian circumnavigational voyage (1803–1806). Also, another (and final) government-sponsored expedition did take place during this time and carried out similar objectives (Dmytryshyn 1988; Makarova 1974).

Here it is important to clarify an important difference between Russian expansion into the region and Spanish expansion along the coast. The Russians built small wooden blockhouses or fortresses (*ostrogs*) on key river islands, which were then used to dominate the surrounding region. While this is similar on the surface to the Spanish use of the feudal *encomienda* system, it differs significantly. The Russians required tribute to be given in the form of the *yasak*, and thus are operating in a tributary mode of production for world-system concerns (Wallerstein 1974). The Spanish *encomienda* system also required that the Native Americans give tribute, but in the form of periodic labor in the mines, haciendas, and other public works. Thus, one is able to begin to differentiate levels of incor-

¹⁵ Crews of different nationalities were fairly common during this time, especially if ‘skilled’ crews were needed. This is even more so in the case of Russia, as it did not have an extensive oceanic naval tradition and no significant population of experienced seafarers on which to draw. This is not only a common method of information diffusion, but contributed to a rather interconnected community of seafarers. For example, Gibson (1999: 55–56f) points out that one of the foreign officers recruited for the expedition was a Cornishman, James Trevenen, who had been a midshipman on the *Resolution* during Cook’s third voyage to the Pacific. In an attempt to exploit the wealth of the fur trade for himself (and thus avoid the monopolistic control of the British South Sea Company), Trevenen applied to the Russian minister in London to support a plan for ‘discovery and enterprise’ in the North Pacific in the name of Empress Catherine. Assured that his proposal would be accepted, Trevenen then declined a proffered British naval command. Curiously, the ship he was offered to command was the now notorious *Bounty*. Trevenen subsequently was killed during the Russo-Swedish War in 1790, again having been recruited by Mulovsky.

poration between the natives under Russian control and those under Spanish control. The Russian model operates at a purely tributary mode of accumulation while the Spanish model goes beyond the 'grooming' process of gathering tribute and resembles a system of full-blown production (Hull 1966:1–17; See also Wolf 1982).¹⁶

Because of their penetration into the North Pacific and the lack of any northern development by Spain, the Russians enjoyed a monopoly on the region for the first half of the eighteenth century. However, the secrecy surrounding their activity, combined with traditional Russian reluctance to share information, ultimately led to increased suspicion among other European powers and to outright challenge by Spain in the 1760s. Great Britain also expressed concern and American claims were pressed in the latter half of the century. More important national security concerns subsumed Russian imperial aspirations, and Russia was hard-pressed to recover its prior status in the North Pacific. However, Russia maintained a colony on Sitka Sound,¹⁷ and eventually expanded Russian presence southward to Fort Ross in California in 1810. Until the sale of Alaska to the United States in 1867, the colony "was serviced approximately every year by either a Russian Navy or a Russian-American Company ship from the mother country" (Gibson 1999:60; Dmytryshyn 1989).

C. Britain

Despite Spanish efforts to keep activities on the northwest coast a secret, news of the first two Spanish expeditions soon filtered out to other countries. In particular, these reports were relevant to the British, who were interested in any information that might pertain to the existence of a northwest passage and a shorter route to Chinese ports. This desire had led Parliament to post a reward for the first British ship to find such a passage. Since Captain James Cook had led two successful expeditions in the South Pacific, he was a logical choice to lead

¹⁶ Elsewhere, Barth (1950) discusses Franciscan education and Trigger (1965), Donohue (1969) and Massey (1974) describe Jesuit missionary behavior, all of which may be viewed as furthering incorporation. Similarly, Thomas (1932) and Rock (1981) offer views of official 'policy' in New Spain, and Naylor and Polzer (1986) deal with what may be considered the 'political-military network' of interaction in their coverage of the role of the militia and the institution of the *presidio*.

¹⁷ American and Tlinget opponents of the Russians burned Archangel St. Michael on Sitka Sound in 1802. It was rebuilt in 1804 as New Archangel, but commonly referred to as Sitka, and became the capital of Russian America in 1808 (Okun 1955; Golder 1971; Tikhmenev 1978).

an expedition in search of such a passage. His instructions were to approach the coast at 45 degrees north latitude and proceed northward to 65 degrees, since that was the latitude at which knowledge of central Canada had relegated such a strait.

This is an interesting aspect of the 'zone of ignorance' in North America and its interaction with policy decisions for the British. Although some knowledge of the area had been gained, all hope for a desired passage lay in the fact that an expanse of unexplored territory still existed. In turn, this necessitated its exploration. This is just the opposite of the earlier Spanish policy of purposeful—and possibly blissful—ignorance. The Spanish realized a strait may exist, but preferred not to explore since finding another entrance into the Pacific would require it be defended and would hasten foreign intrusion. As it was, the limited northern expeditions already were a strain on the limited resources of Spain at San Blas.

Although the search for a northwest passage was a major objective, "Cook's chief purpose was to visit and explore the northwest coast of America with a view to determining its future *economic* and strategic relevance to Britain's imperial interests" (Cook 1973:86, emphasis added). Cook set sail from Plymouth in July of 1776 with two warships—the *Discovery* and the *Resolution*—despite the hostilities in the American colonies, and took two years traveling by way of the Indian Ocean, Tasmania, New Zealand and Tahiti.¹⁸ The course traversed across the Pacific was midway between the westward and eastward routes of the Spanish Manila galleons, and provided Cook with the 'discovery' of the Sandwich (Hawaiian) Islands.¹⁹

In March of 1778, Cook sighted the Oregon coast at about 44 degrees north. Traveling north, Cook was forced out to sea by bad weather, and when he once more sighted land he was off the entrance to a promising moorage, which he named King George's Sound. This was actually Nootka Sound, and while there he purchased the silver spoons mentioned above.²⁰ In addition, "with little effort

¹⁸ As a peculiar historical sidenote, the sailing master of the *Resolution* was one William Bligh, who would later gain notoriety as captain of the *Bounty*.

¹⁹ Some Spanish reports of islands in this region exist before Cook's visit, though the Spanish never solidified the information with an official claim. (See Dahlgren 1977).

²⁰ It should also be noted that the Spanish had learned of Cook's objective of visiting the northwest coast, and actually followed through with efforts to stop him. These were based not only on their concern with territorial encroachment, but the belief that English activity in the area would lead to an increased trade in contraband along the coast with Spanish subjects (Cook 1973: 88–89).

some 1,500 sea otter pelts were acquired by the crew, who were not aware of their actual worth in China" (Cook 1973:87). The crew used them mainly as bedding.

Continuing northward, Cook performed his first act of possession at 61° 30' north, perhaps purposely waiting until he was beyond land previously interpreted as being claimed by Spain (which had been placed at about 58 degrees north). From here, Cook's expedition visited the Russian areas along Alaska and the Aleutians, where Russian officials received him and offered him their support. Traveling into the Arctic Ocean, he continued along the American coast until the ice made any further advance impossible, and led to the conclusion that the hoped for northwest passage was not there. From the Aleutians Cook's convoy traveled to Hawaii to winter, where Cook was killed. After further explorations along the Asian coast, the expedition finally reached Macao where the crew discovered that the cheaply gotten furs obtained as much as 100 Spanish dollars a pelt, and nearly mutinied in their desire to return for more pelts (Cook 1973; Hull 1966; Coughy 1933:188).

Upon their return to England in October of 1780, elaborate precautions were taken to prevent the spread of the news of the sea otter wealth. Despite these efforts, two anonymous accounts of the voyage were published in 1781 and the official journal was published by 1784. In addition to alerting the Spanish to British intrusions into the Pacific, this also had the effect of making the Spanish aware of the true, more limited extent of Russian expansion into the Gulf of Alaska (Hull 1966:92). Commercially, the spread of the news from Nootka caused an ever-increasing number of vessels to head for the northwestern coast. After the peace treaty of 1783 with Spain²¹ the British merchant marine was effectively unleashed, and the competition to exploit the fur trade in the north Pacific rose dramatically as other nations also sought to carve out their share.

III. THE DRAMA

A. Systemic-Power Competition for Nootka

With the publication of Cook's voyage to the Northwest and the subsequent sale of sea otter pelts in China, any nation with a claim to trade made an attempt to exploit the riches of the northwest coast. Spain was the best positioned to

²¹ With the Convention of Aranjuez (April 12, 1779), Spain had openly joined the war (American Revolution) against the British, which diverted Spanish resources from the northwest coast to more crucial areas in the Caribbean, the Philippines, and an unsuccessful attempt to retake Gibraltar. As part of the treaty in 1783, Spain retained the Floridas, which had been in British hands until being retaken by Spain in the war.

take advantage of the situation, and had long known of the value of sea otter pelts from those taken in Baja California and subsequently sold in China. However, this trade had stagnated for lack of native hunters of sufficient ability or experience; the natives in the south did not commonly hunt the animal. Six years before the first British fur traders emerged along the coast, officials in the Philippines learned of Cook's crew selling pelts in Canton. This led the *padres* of the missions in California to encourage converts to bring in pelts, which began to flow to the Orient in growing quantities. In fact, there was discussion relating to official participation in the sea otter trade as early as 1782. Ideally, the pelts could be used to purchase quicksilver (mercury) in China, which could then be used to refine gold ore in New Spain (Cook 1973:107).

This raises two points for consideration. First, this provides an interesting example of a role 'preciosities' play in the expansion of the system. In this case, we have the example of luxury goods (furs) being used to finance the production of *bullion*, which Wallerstein (1974, 1980, 1989) has considered a 'necessity' in terms of systemic incorporation. One could make the argument that these luxury goods are integral to the initial 'hooking' of an arena to the world-system, financing the initial expansion of the system into new areas, and then subsidizing the increased incorporation of a region. Luxury goods provide a potentially highly compensatory incentive for systemic actors to broaden the scope of their activities, then serve as a mechanism to underwrite the deepening of development by offsetting otherwise prohibitive 'start-up' costs associated with colonial expansion.

This brings up the second point for consideration. Specifically, it appears that the initial leg of the familiar 'triangular trade' pattern of economic flows may be under-appreciated in its relationship to the larger linkages of the world-system and the relevant 'commodity chains' of global production (Gereffi and Korzeniewicz 1994). For example, in the traditional triangular trade with Africa and the West Indies, slave labor was shipped to the West Indian plantations, "West Indian molasses went to the northern colonies, whose rum and trinkets went to Africa" (Wallerstein 1979:237).²² Yet Africa's slave-regions are initially considered external to the world-system. The trade on America's northwest coast developed similarly, though only the leg of trade including bullion from the East is considered part of the system according to a Wallersteinian interpretation of incorporation.

²² As Wallerstein (1980:238) also observes, we must recognize that these flows are analytic constructs and reflect flows of commodities rather than the movements of individual ships.

While furs from beyond San Francisco did not figure into the initial Spanish plans of 1782, their relevant impact on the larger, truly global trade networks was increasingly realized. There was a seemingly inexhaustible supply of sea otters along the central California coast, as long as the native Indians could be encouraged to participate in the hunt. The Franciscans aided in supervising the ongoing collection, though the California Indians were largely unaccustomed to fur garments and had little practical experience in killing the fur-bearing sea otter, as they neither hunted it for food nor clothing.

In contrast, the Indians of the northwest coast were more culturally predisposed to the hunting of the sea otter for two primary reasons. First, while the natives of the northwest coast were mainly fishermen, hunting was “a source of luxury foods, of hides and pelts, and a way of demonstrating personal prowess. Anyone could catch fish, but only a man of special talents, and one favored by the spirit powers, could be consistently successful in the pursuit of the wary sea mammals or the animals of the forests and mountains” (Drucker 1965:17). Indeed, skill at ocean hunting was considered admirable and could even have mystical overtones, as evidenced by the relationship between shamanism and the hunting of the gray whale (Drucker 1965; Goddard 1972).

Second, because of the proliferation of the *potlatch*, considerable prestige was achieved with the acquisition of sundry trade goods provided by the Europeans, as well as more traditional surplus goods of Indian origin—which include sea otter pelts. The *potlatch*-system is common from Oregon up to Alaska, wherein “social and political prestige hinged upon feasts at which the host enhanced his status by outdoing rival chiefs in the abundance and quality of gifts distributed” (Cook 1973:55). This tendency toward acquisition inherent in the *potlatch*-system resulted in an escalating competition for status, with “resultant sociopolitical fluidity” (Cook 1973:67). Thus, the mere introduction of a new source of luxury goods (*i.e.* European traders) had important impacts on the social and political structures of a region being incorporated, almost immediately upon the initiation of trade.²³

The cultural importance of the *potlatch* should not be underestimated, as Goddard (1972:85) observes that the “Indians of the Northwest Coast differ

²³ Drucker (1965) has a good discussion of the *potlatch* as an aspect of social organization, including the use of sheets of beaten copper as a means of transmitting wealth, and Barnett (1968) discusses the cultural background as well as socio-political aspects of the *potlatch*. Bracken (1997) provides a detailed history of the colonial administration and subsequent banning of the *potlatch* in Canada.

from other natives of North America in the amount of emphasis they place upon wealth and property and upon the ceremonial distribution of wealth.” The established tendency to favor acquisition and accumulation exhibited by the *potlatch*-system considerably eased European penetration of the area. In turn, this made the Indians around Nootka Sound much more eager to undergo the rigors of sea otter hunting. The otter pelts were already prized within the society and later proved additionally valuable as a means of acquiring objects of wealth from the white men.

Unfortunately for the Spanish, other European powers were soon seeking a portion of the lucrative sea otter trade. The Russians pushed farther along the Aleutian Islands and established fur-trading colonies on Kodiak Island and on the continent nearby in 1784 and 1786. The French even attempted to ensure that they would not be shut out of the race for position in the Pacific, sponsoring the La Pérouse expedition in 1785 with the goal of taking possession of an appropriate spot north of what was deemed Spanish territory. Additionally, American ships began probing the northwest, as British shipping also increased.²⁴

²⁴ The information responsible for sparking American merchant interest can be traced to the rather fascinating story of John Ledyard, a Connecticut native who dropped out of Dartmouth to go to sea. Happening to be in London in 1776, the 24-year-old joined James Cook’s third expedition just before news of the *Declaration of Independence* reached Britain. After Cook’s return with the *Resolution*, Ledyard spent two years in an English barracks instead of transferring to a warship, but volunteered for a man-of-war heading to America after hearing of Cornwallis’ surrender. There, he managed to desert and went into hiding with an uncle in Hartford, where he wrote an account of Cook’s voyage that was published after the war. In an attempt to find backing for a return trip to Nootka Sound, Ledyard made his way to Paris (after finding no support in the economically depressed post-war United States). In Paris he found brief support from Commodore John Paul Jones, but more importantly impressed the American minister to France with the potential value of the northwest coast to the United States. This minister, Thomas Jefferson, encouraged Ledyard to try to reach the North Pacific with a Russian expedition, and then proceed alone (and on foot) to the Western frontier of the United States. Ledyard was turned back after reaching Yakutsk, and was thrown out of Russia on the Polish border, accused of being a spy. Disappointed, he made his way to London where he joined an expedition to explore the interior of Africa. Ledyard fell ill and died in Cairo in January of 1789 without ever returning to the North Pacific. However, Jefferson continued to urge others to undertake this challenge, and as President, he sent the Lewis and Clark expedition across the continent. Ironically, Ledyard’s book had sparked enough interest among Boston-area merchants that two ships, the *Columbia* and the *Lady Washington*, arrived at Nootka in September of 1788 and remained through the crisis of the following year (Cook 1973:104-106; Batman 1985:101-106; Buell and Skladal 1968:71-85).

In the context of this blooming interest in the northwest coast, Spain made the decision to occupy Nootka Sound. Several factors contributed to this decision. First, Spanish authorities were now aware that the English were operating between Canton and Nootka. Second, it was believed (erroneously) that Russia intended to send an expedition down the coast to occupy Nootka Sound by 1789, or 1790 at the latest. Finally, the decision was based on the recognition that Spain needed a northern buffer for its territory along the coast. Otherwise, every indication was that Nootka Sound, as well as the long coastline down to San Francisco that Spain claimed by right of prior discovery, would be lost by default to the encroaching European powers.

As part of Spanish hopes to consolidate their claim on the region, by 1790 the governor of New Spain²⁵ was planning the creation of a private joint-venture company to engage in the sea otter trade. As conceived, this company would take advantage of two popular trade commodities in New Spain—beaten copper from mines in Mexico and abalone shells from the fisheries of California. The Spanish would be able to offer more for pelts than the competition from other nations because of the much shorter shipping distances and greater supply of trade commodities, and would be effectively cutting off the competition's ability to turn a profit. When this happened, foreign intrusion would cease. The envisioned company would engage in a triangular trade, and “carry cattle and supplies from Monterey and San Francisco. Furs and lumber could be shipped from Nootka to the Orient, and cloth and garments obtained in China and the Philippines should be shipped to the northwest coast for the Indian trade, the garrisons, and the crews operating there” (Cook 1973:197).

International and domestic political circumstances resulted in this company not being realized, but that is not relevant for my investigation. Rather, for my purposes it offers crucial insight into the motivation and the process behind the planned incorporation of new regions. Very specifically, *private* interests would be used to fund the exploitation of primarily *luxury* goods, in place of official political-military expansion on an empire's frontier. The high return on luxury goods allows for the development of the infrastructure needed to support trade in bulk goods, through which an imperial presence would *eventually* be supported. Additionally, the potential costs associated with failure are passed to the private venture until appropriate levels of return are realized, when governmental involvement becomes either warranted or cost-effective. Similarly in the North

²⁵ Juan Vicente de Güemas Pacheco de Padilla Horcasitas y Aquayo, conde de Revillagigedo governed New Spain from 1789 to 1794.

Pacific, the Russians were first drawn into the fur trade by private interests, and were soon contemplating agricultural stations and harbors on China's northern frontier in order to support this trade and solidify their imperial expansion (Gibson 1969, 1999).

The competition for the strategic natural harbor of Nootka Sound commenced in earnest, which brought the European powers to the brink of war.²⁶ Somewhat ironically, the controversy at Nootka Sound began as a rather minor dispute between sea captains at the edge of the known world. Simply put, the Spanish—in support of their claims to sovereignty—seized British ships operating under Portuguese papers in 1789.²⁷ Other ships present at Nootka, the American vessels the *Columbia* and the *Lady Washington*, maintained amiable relations with the Spanish commander Martínez and were allowed to proceed to China.²⁸ Later that summer, an additional American vessel²⁹ was also seized for operating in violation of Spanish sovereignty.

These seizures occurred in an atmosphere of resentment and distrust in Europe, and England used the situation to press diplomatic advantage over Spain. Because of the European political situation, Spain was isolated from its

²⁶ See Cook (1973). The clash at Nootka provides an intriguing potential case of the impact an external arena can have on behavior in the system. As such, it is hoped that a more detailed examination of the crisis at Nootka can eventually be undertaken with this in mind. For an intricate discussion of the diplomatic and personal intrigues involved in the crisis, see (Cook 1973:146–270; also Manning 1966; Pethik 1980).

²⁷ Estéban José Martínez (who also had his silver spoons pilfered on the earlier Pérez expedition) was the Spanish officer in charge. The *Felice* and *Iphrogenia*, were seized and released under a bond that stated, if the Spanish courts requested, the ships were to be turned over to Spanish authorities. Later, British ships *Northwest America*, *Princess Royal*, and *Argonaut* were seized and sent south to San Blas.

²⁸ The *Columbia*, captained by Robert Gray, returned to Boston on August 9th, 1790 and became the first American ship to circle the globe, and the first to start the triangle trade between the northwest coast, Canton and Boston (Buell and Skladal 1968).

²⁹ The schooner *Fair American*, captained by eighteen-year-old Thomas Metcalfe, who was accompanying his father, Simon Metcalfe, and the brig *Eleanora* out of New York. They had been separated and were to rendezvous at Nootka. The *Fair American* was sailed to San Blas, where viceroy Conde de Revillagigedo ordered the ship and crew released. Unfortunately, young Metcalfe immediately set sail for the Sandwich Islands where King Kamehameha's warriors overpowered the ship. All were killed except for one crewmember, Isaac Davis, who was enslaved. Four years later, Simon Metcalfe and a younger son, along with the entire crew of the *Eleanora*, were killed by the Haida on the northwest coast (See Cook 1973:198).

traditional ally, France, and Britain argued that the “seizures at Nootka Sound in time of peace were an insult to His Britannic Majesty and an offense ‘against the law of nations’” (Cook 1973:206). Britain demanded satisfaction on claims incurred by the seizure before any discussion on Nootka could even take place. This had the effect of requiring Spain to give reparations for an offense it denied having committed, without providing means for discussion about the grounds which justified its action (Spanish claims to sovereignty on the coast). British Prime Minister William Pitt knew from the outset that Madrid would refuse, and thus hoped to parlay the situation into a confrontation. The rationale behind such an approach is as follows:

Construed as an insult to flag and nation and employed adroitly, it could extort assent to a principle never before conceded by Madrid: recognition of a British right to make settlements in any unpopulated area nominally claimed by Spain by right of prior discovery, but never colonized. Pitt would contend that unless an area were settled and effectively controlled, titles based on prior discovery were not binding. The principle of occupation, once recognized in a treaty, would not only provide unhindered access to the northwest coast, but it would legitimize beachheads anywhere that Madrid’s territorial claims were not bolstered by settlement. The ploy, if successful, would facilitate the achievement of a long-sought British objective: economic and political penetration of Spanish America (Cook 1973:206).³⁰

The British recognized that if they acceded to Spanish claims of sovereignty they would effectively be shut out of the nascent fur trade. So, Pitt used the affront of the seizure at Nootka Sound to press for a diplomatic advantage over Spain. Additionally, the Nootka incident became tied to resentment over Spanish claims to Pacific islands and the “sore question of fishing grounds off southern South America and the Antarctic” (Cook 1973:215).³¹

Essentially, the crisis at Nootka Sound was used as a rallying point for systemic power interests (particularly the hegemonic interests of Britain). Since the two sides’ positions were mutually exclusive—and the issues involved seemed of sufficient import to go to war—the network of alliances at the time put Spain, France, Austria, Denmark, Russia, and the United States against the forces of Great Britain, the Netherlands, Prussia, Sweden, Poland, and Turkey (assuming that every nation lived up to its alliances). As Manning (1966:284) notes: “For a

³⁰ It is important to recognize that Britain itself had traditionally observed and argued for the right of prior discovery as a means of protecting British interests.

³¹ Nor would this be the first time Britain waged war for the control of fur-trading areas, as this was a prime motive for the French and Indian War of 1754-63 (a.k.a. the Seven Years’ War).

time it seemed that all Europe would be drawn into a war over what, on the face of it, appeared to be an insignificant quarrel between two obscure sea captains.” The dispute that began over exploitation of a ‘luxury good’ in an external arena was pushing the powers of the system toward a conflict that could engulf the entire Western world and would involve conflict on every ocean. Indeed, this had the potential to become a truly world war, with the victor gaining the spoils of hegemony in the continuing struggle for colonial possessions.

The Nootka Convention of 1790 avoided the outbreak of war. This agreement was vague and somewhat ambiguous (and thus open to considerable interpretation), especially when translated from the original French to English or Spanish (Manning 1966:284; Cook 1973:235–236).³² However, the essential result of this and subsequent Conventions was that Spanish territorial claims were undermined, and Britain gained its first internationally recognized access to the Pacific coast of North America.³³ From then forward, the dispute would center on how far south British claims could be pushed, since Britain had also reached agreement with Russia regarding the southernmost extent of exclusive Russian claims in the northwest. Additionally, the crisis served to break the diplomatic ice between London and Washington, largely because of British desire for a neutral United States if war broke out with Spain.³⁴

Eventually, further conflict on the European continent, in the form of the French Revolution, served to draw European interest away from the northwest

³² Cook (1973:236) gives an example of the difficulty in strict interpretation of the Convention: “The French original reads *depuis* the month of April, 1789, which translates into Spanish as either *desde* (since) or *después de* (after). When published in Spanish and English translations, *depuis* was rendered as *desde* and *since*. Floridablanca interpreted the pact as entitling Britain to coastal access solely from Nootka northward. The British consistently construed article five as giving subjects of both nations free access to the coast north of the northernmost Spanish settlement extant in April 1789. (Martínez had arrived at Nootka on May 5.) The latter interpretation allowed the British to make settlements anywhere north of San Francisco Bay, to which the Spanish would also have free access.”

³³ “By the terms of the convention on Nootka signed in late 1790, both powers had agreed to equal rights with respect to trade with the Indians and fishing and navigation in Pacific waters, although English ships were barred from sailing within ten leagues of the Spanish American coast in that part of the new World” (Hull 1966:142).

³⁴ Pitt also cultivated relations with the Republic of Vermont (which was independent of the United States) as part of an ongoing British effort to develop buffer communities under British protection.

coast. This was complemented by the rise of America in the eastern part of North America. With the eventual arrival of Lewis and Clark overland in 1805 (despite Spanish efforts to thwart their expedition),³⁵ as well as American purchase of key areas of land from the Indians around Nootka,³⁶ by the turn of the century the area was falling under increasing American influence. Incursions on former Spanish territory would continue, and the debate would soon shift to one of contention between competing British, Russian and American interests.

B. Marking Territory: Formalizing Borders and Solidifying Claims

The Spanish concession of exclusive sovereignty over Nootka Sound marks an ebb from the high-water mark of the Spanish Empire in the Americas. Never again would Spain contend for new territory, but was forced instead to fight a rear-guard action in an effort to protect what possessions it already held. Other powers—notably Britain, Russia, and a nascent United States—were not hesitant to step into the void produced by imminent Spanish decline and would continue to encroach upon former Spanish holdings. In a context of Spanish domestic distractions and resultant international decline, the struggle for control over the northwest coast of America became a two-pointed question. The issue (as Britain had exploited) was not only which country had the most *legitimate* claim to the region, but also (and perhaps more relevantly) which country was best *positioned* to support and defend its claim.

³⁵ Cook (1973:460, see 446-483 for full account of Spanish efforts) notes that four successive expeditions set out from Santa Fe for this purpose between 1804 and 1806. Cook concludes that the triumph of Lewis and Clark “damaged Spain’s chances of retaining sway over the vast hinterland between New Mexico and Nootka” and that “Spain’s primary interest in the pacific Northwest was in retaining it as an unexplored buffer zone of protection for Mexico’s mines” (1973:485). Once again, we see the Spanish actively attempting to maintain a ‘zone of ignorance’ for their imperial benefit.

³⁶ Recognizing the enormous potential of the area, John Kendrick, captain of the *Lady Washington*, had purchased large tracts of land during his initial visit, and subsequently recorded the deed with Samuel Shaw, the United States consul in Canton (See Buell and Skladal 1968:93). Cook (1973:323) records that Kendrick negotiated “a purchase from Ma-kwee-na and five subaltern chiefs. In return for ten muskets the chiefs put their ‘X’s’ to a deed of sale of everything within a nine-mile radius of Chastacktoos harbor ... on condition that natives be allowed to continue residing and fishing there.” A year later the Spanish also secured a deed of purchase from Maquinna (Ma-kwee-na), though the chief expressly exempted the land already conveyed to Kendrick. Kendrick was killed in Hawaii in 1794, accidentally hit by a British trader’s (the *Jackal*) cannon charge being fired as a salute to a recently victorious king of Oahu.

Plate 5 – A New Map of America from the Latest Authorities



Cary, John (1806). “A New Map of America from the Latest Authorities,” originally published by John Cary, engraver and mapseller, London.

Image courtesy of Reed College Library, Special Collections Department.

<http://simeon.library.reed.edu/collections/antmaps/>

In discussing the process of incorporation, the struggle between Britain and Spain is a contest to determine which state would gain exclusive sovereignty over the region and thereby bring the new territory into the domain of the winning party. Accordingly, the region shifts from existing in the ‘prestige goods network’ to the ‘political-military network,’ and is more formally incorporated. By doing so, the region would shift from existing in the ‘prestige goods network’ to the ‘political-military network,’ and therefore be more formally incorporated. Thus, the delineation of borders and the resulting formalization of territoriality are critical steps in the incorporation process. Why? The very nature of territoriality in the expanding state system is such that it is *exclusive*. The process of resolving conflicting claims to territory is part and parcel of the process of incorporation, as clearly demarcated property rights are central to the concept of capitalism. If

a region has goods of sufficient import to drive trade linkages, property rights eventually have to be codified, and territory delineated.

By the beginning of the 19th Century, the region was fairly familiar to the outside world. For example, if we examine John Cary's map of 1806 (Plate 5), the former zone of ignorance is considerably pushed back. The coast is well defined, and only regions inland lack considerable definition.

Indeed, since Lewis and Clark had not yet returned with their wealth of information by 1806, we can see that the zone of ignorance is pushed toward the interior of the American West, north to Alaska, and now holds sway over the "Icy Sea" beyond. Upon the return of Lewis and Clark, the interior of the American West would be drawn into the 'information network' of the United States, and the political-military network shortly after. Even then, however, the information network had important distortions, as exhibited by American settlers bypassing the 'American Desert' of the Great Plains in their desire to reach Oregon and California.

Once trans-frontier trade has begun (because some good is deemed to be "worth" more in the expanding capitalist world-system than in the goods' native region), the eventual transition of a region from external arena to inclusion within the political-military network (PMN) is most explicitly characterized by the formalization of boundaries through treaties or other "official" documentation. This newly formalized territory is almost immediately reflected in updated, contemporary maps, which may be evaluated to ascertain the "real" extent of the system. Thus, the process of drawing boundaries is a basic reflection of, and one of the first steps toward the insertion of, the political structures of the system into (formerly) external arenas.³⁷ Much in the same way that a region is removed from the realm of "myth" and deemed "real" by merely placing it somewhat accurately on a map, the same region is moved further along the spectrum of incorpo-

³⁷ It is no coincidence that the notion of territoriality is also central to the definition of "state", as is the notion of distributing resources. It is noteworthy, however, that the definition of territoriality and notion of borders extends to external regions that have economic or political worth, yet often remains unresolved in regions that are "within" the system but relatively "worthless." For example, some modern states still have unresolved border disputes but feel no pressing need to resolve them (e.g. China and India, Peru and Ecuador, Western Sahara), while others maintain "undesignated" boundaries (e.g. internal areas on the Arabian peninsula) because the undesignated regions contain no extractable resources or populations. It does not seem unreasonable to recognize that these phenomena exist only because these regions are perceived as not being worth the effort to formally codify.

ration by officially designating recognized borders. Thus, it is not enough to have the lines drawn on a map, but other system members must recognize and tacitly agree to them. Furthermore, indigenous peoples have only limited influence on this dialogue. Local leaders are able to influence initial allocations of land or territorial access, but soon lose control once systemic interaction is more advanced and are left out of the later dialogue of demarcation.

The Nootka Conventions marked the beginning of the process of formalization for the northwest coast of America. Suitably, the diplomatic squabbling over the placement of the "official" border provides a framework for the final stages of the region's formal incorporation. Spanish interests were first to thwart American expansion for fear that the northern frontier would prove vulnerable and Mexican mines would be threatened. While Jefferson's purchase of Louisiana did bridge the gap between the Mississippi and the Pacific, American claims were still vague and inconclusive on the Spanish frontier. This was solved in the Transcontinental Treaty of 1819, which fixed the southern boundary of Louisiana. As a consequence, Spain surrendered to the United States any claim to territory west of the Rockies and north of the 42nd parallel, and withdrew from the stage of the northwest coast (Graebner 1988; Walker 1999).

By contrast, the United States and Britain both maintained an interest in the region and had—through the Convention of 1818—agreed "to leave the region west of the mountains equally and freely accessible for a period of ten years to the vessels and citizens of either nation without prejudice to their respective claims" (Graebner 1988:8). This situation was brought back to the forefront of international diplomatic circles in September, 1821 when Czar Alexander I issued an imperial decree that declared the entire coast of North America above 51 degrees to be exclusively Russian (because this lay midway between the Russian settlement at New Archangel and the Columbia River). This decree complicated American claims based on the assumption of Spanish rights under the Treaty of 1819 up to 60 degrees, and considerably lowered the previous line of 55 degrees granted to the Russian American Fur Company in 1799. Vigorous British and American protests ultimately led to the Conventions of 1824 (with the US) and 1825 (with Britain), in which the Russians agreed to a southern boundary of 54.40° degrees. This allowed Russia to maintain control of Prince of Wales Island and effectively solidified the disputed border between contending Russian and British claims (Graebner 1988; Walker 1999).

In his examination of then-contemporary maps, Walker (1999) makes an observation that is of interest for the consideration of the 'zone of ignorance.' He displays a portion of H.S. Tanner's "A Map of North America" with the boundary and notation "Boundary as claimed by Russia" far inland, but also asks us to "note the presence still of...the Caledonia River...an imaginary river system

which was also appearing on updated versions of both John Melish's 'Map of the United States' and on Aaron Arrowsmith's great map of North America" (1999: 81). Clearly, the realm of myth and ignorance is tenacious in its mental grip. Even when borders are becoming official, the zone of ignorance is pushed only slightly into the hinterlands.

Ultimately the resolution of Russian claims left the long coast between 42 degrees and 54° 40' to two remaining contestants, the United States and Great Britain. The irony should not be overlooked that these are the two nations that arrived last on the scene and arguably should have had the least legitimate claim to the region, but such are the vagaries of international diplomacy and history. Originally, during the first three boundary negotiations of 1818, 1823, and 1826, the British and Americans agreed on a joint occupancy without partition of the Oregon Country (as the region was now known).

The Americans, however, maintained claims to the 49th parallel (and some as high as 54° 40' due to the assumption of prior Spanish rights), and argued that prior discovery conferred rights to the Columbia River drainage system. The presence of a Pacific Fur Company post (an American enterprise) at the mouth of the Columbia added support to this claim, and American negotiators argued that the principle of contiguity favored the extension of the 49th parallel to the Pacific. In contrast, the British were not willing to give up access to such a long stretch of coastline and its resultant frontage on the Pacific. Even though Vancouver readily admitted that Robert Gray had discovered the Columbia and that its course was first explored by Lewis and Clark, British diplomats "hoped that by neutralizing American claims of prior discovery, exploration, and settlement they could reduce the contest to a matter of actual occupation" (Graebner 1988:9). This was a stronger position for Britain, since the region north of the Columbia had been consistently in the possession of the Hudson's Bay Company. However, negotiations stalled, and no settlement was reached. The principle of 'joint occupancy' was extended indefinitely, with each nation holding the privilege of terminating the agreement with twelve-month's notice. This state of affairs continued into the 1840s (Graebner 1988; Walker 1999; Cook 1973).

By 1842, the 'Oregon Question' was gaining increased political attention in the United States. President Tyler riled congressional interest when he placed the onus on the British for not resolving the boundary. Senator Linn of Missouri introduced a bill designed to encourage American occupation of Oregon, which was then narrowly rejected by the House Committee on Foreign Affairs because it violated the joint occupancy convention. Nevertheless, the combination of the great westward emigrations of 1842 and 1843, the completion of John C. Fremont's trans-Mississippi West survey in 1843 (with its resultant maps and publications), and increased public interest given to the Monroe Doctrine's claim

that the American continents "were not thenceforth to be considered subjects for future colonization by any foreign power" greatly increased political pressure to resolve the issue of Oregon. With Britain abandoning its claim to the Columbia River, by 1846 the Oregon Treaty was signed and the boundary was fixed at the 49th parallel. It was quickly ratified in Congress and Parliament. The dispute over the actual water-route boundary through the Straits of Juan de Fuca was not settled until October 1872, nearly 100 years after the start of the fur trade around Nootka Sound (Graebner 1988; Walker 1999).

C. Impact of the Sea Otter Trade - External Arena

Up until now, I have largely ignored the impact of the sea otter trade on the residents of the external arena. I shall briefly distinguish some significant ways in which the trade did impact the Indian material culture, economy and government along the Northwest Coast, and in the Nootka Sound area in particular. In order to do this, it is important to characterize the geography of the region, as this shapes the inhabitants as well as their pre-contact society.

The northern Pacific Coast of America resembles that of Scandinavia in many ways. It is heavily forested with mountain ranges rising abruptly from the water, but the warm ocean flow of the Japanese current moderates the climate and prevents snow from remaining for any length of time. Rainfall, however, is a consistent characteristic during the period from October through April. The coast is characterized by many islands (large and small) with a multitude of navigable straits. Because of the steep mountain ranges running along the coast, the region is isolated from easy overland contact with the rest of the continent and has evolved largely as an 'island' unto itself with a very distinguishable native coastal culture. The waterways and sheltered channels along the coast formed natural highways for native travel, and there were few overland trails and trade routes (Drucker 1965, Goddard 1972).

Because of the rather moderate climate and abundant rainfall, the region is densely covered with vegetation. This includes a variety of trees: hemlock, Douglas fir, spruce, and cedar (red and yellow) which is especially important because of the ease with which cedar wood can be worked and its resistance to decay in moist environments. Several varieties of edible berries are prevalent, including blueberries, huckleberries, strawberries, thimbleberries and salmon-berries. These complement other useful flora, such as a selection of ferns, reeds and mosses.

The fauna of the region is also diverse. The important land animals include deer, elk, mountain goat, and along some river drainages, moose. Bears were also common, though the grizzly was generally found only in the north. Sea mammals, however, were of greater importance. These include the whale, seal, sea lion

and porpoise, as well as the sea otter. Above all, the greatest food source was fish, and especially salmon. Salmon was a great staple in the region, and was as important to the natives of the Northwest as buffalo was in the Plains region. A variety of other salt-water fish—cod, herring, smelt, halibut, and eulachon—supplemented this diet, and shellfish (oysters, clams, mussels, and crabs) were also of importance (Drucker 1965, Goddard 1972).

1. Pre-contact Status Quo

The society, economy and culture of any region are shaped by the geography and resources available (or unavailable) to the people of that region. The northwest coast of America is no exception. The material culture of the region is dominated by two factors: extensive dependence on exploiting resources from the sea, and the development of a very skilled woodworking society. As may be imagined, the natives of the region were skilled fishermen, and equally adept at hunting sea mammals. Travel was almost entirely by water, in large canoes made from cedar logs. Cedar is soft and easily worked, yet resistant to decay, and logs were often of sufficient size to yield canoes up to sixty or more feet in length (Drucker 1965; Goddard 1972).

The woodworking aspects of society should not be underemphasized, as woodworking skill in this region was unrivaled by anything else in the Americas. Cedar provided the essential basis for travel (canoes and paddles), and was also used to make numerous everyday items. Wooden containers and dishes were often stylized into zoomorphic shapes, and great skill was put into making even utilitarian items (e.g. sea otter clubs, cradles) functional and attractive. Boards were bent to create containers and boxes, and considerable effort was put into finishing the wooden beams of the communal houses (rectangular plank houses were universally used at important permanent locations, and each housed an extended family group).

Weaving was also an important craft, and the basketry and the textiles of the region reflect a variety of techniques. The main materials used were “the tough flexible roots of the spruce, inner bark of both red and yellow cedar, cattail or tule stems, bark of the wild cherry tree, mountain goat wool, dog wool, down of ducks and other birds, the ‘down’ of various native plants, and for decoration grasses, fern stems and the like” (Drucker 1965:34). Some groups wove cedar-bark garments and blankets, though otter-fur robes were also worn when available. Additionally, conical hats of spruce root covered with cedar bark were common, as may be expected in such a rainy climate (Drucker 1965; Goddard 1972).

The main focus of life in the region, though, is on the ocean. Many tribes in the region depended on the annual salmon run to set in stores for the winter, and

would transport large cargoes of dried salmon to their winter villages by lashing two canoes together and placing planks over the space between. The Nootka were no exception. They were exceptional, however, in their pursuit of whales and other large sea-mammals, often miles out to sea. Whaling is relevant not just for the food and oil it provided, but it also had important religious significance as whaling rituals were used to influence supernatural forces. Regardless, the Nootkan skill at sea hunting exceeded that of most other societies in the region.

The social organization of the region is best described as chiefdoms. Social groups were organized around kinship and associated with a geographic locality. Diamond (1997) notes that chiefdoms develop a redistributive economy based on tribute, and that complex chiefdoms often start to take on the characteristics associated with a traditional ‘state.’ He also notes that the American Indians of the Pacific Northwest, such as the Nootka, were in some ways unusual in that organized agricultural food production did not arise. Instead, the region was rich enough in sea and wildlife to support a complex hunting-gathering society and agricultural cultivation was largely absent. There was a considerable level of societal complexity as “food surpluses generated by some people, relegated to the rank of commoners, went to feed the chiefs, their families, bureaucrats, and crafts specialists, who variously made canoes, adzes, or spittoons or worked as bird catchers or tattooers” (Diamond 1997:274). In general, signs of social complexity in addition to a stratified society include slavery (which was present in the northwest), the utilization of luxury goods by the elite (evident in the process of the potlatch), public architecture (communal buildings, totems) and indigenous literacy. While not literate, the natives of the region exhibit many other characteristics of a complex society (Diamond 1997, see also Wolf 1982, Fried 1967).

The role of wealth is closely related to the social organization of the region, as the emphasis placed upon wealth and property and the ceremonial distribution of wealth distinguishes the natives of the Northwest Coast from other North American societies. Wealth, in turn, allowed a family to show its greatness. A variety of objects were regarded as valuable: sheets of beaten copper from placer deposits, pelts of sea otter, robes of mountain goat wool, and rare shells (particularly *Dentalium pretiosum*). Drucker (1965:49) notes that “these shells are the only valuable that can be compared to money and then only in the southern part of the area, distant from the source of supply, where the slender tapered creamy-white shells were minutely graded into sizes with fixed standards of value.” This is reminiscent of a similar practice in Africa, where cowrie shells were widely used as currency, though not as widely accepted or used (Hogendorn and Johnson 1986). Regardless of whether we consider this to be a genuine primitive currency, objects of value were traded in networks stretching hundreds of miles up and down the Pacific coast. A very active trading system and culture of

accumulation was present prior to European encroachment. This is most plainly manifested in the function and nature of the *potlatch*, as previously discussed.

Various foodstuffs, materials for shelter, clothing, and means of transportation were also calculated as wealth. Accordingly, so were the places from which these materials came, to the extent that each group regarded the areas it utilized as the exclusive property of the group. This led to the creation of an intricate system of property rights. Each group “used habitation sites, fishing grounds, clam beaches, hunting and berrying grounds, forest areas where timber and bark were obtained, through right; outsiders entered by invitation or in trespass” (Drucker 1965:49). Great emphasis was placed on the controlled access to specific areas and their unique resources, and certain family groups even held rights of salvage along any given beachfront. This paid big dividends if a dead whale happened to wash up, and special varieties of whaling rituals were even performed in hopes that this would be the outcome. Controlled access to resources is an integral element to the accumulation of wealth.

As Kardulias (1990:31, citing Torrence 1986) notes, restricted access to a resource area is a key trait in distinguishing specialized production. The other trait is the need for efficiency if a commercialized system is involved, which is also evident in Native American cultures involved in the fur trade. In reference to indigenous development, specialized production may be defined as “non-subsistence activity which is performed by a particular or restricted number of households within a community; the individuals in such households then exchange their products or services for foodstuffs and items produced by other specialists” (Kardulias 1990:31–32). Additionally, specialization may also develop as a community-wide phenomenon. The Indian culture around Nootka Sound was definitely specialized, but such specialized production is not limited to the sea otter trade. Another example of specialization is found by examining the practice of dentalia fishing.

The species of dentalium valued by the natives grows in beds at moderate depth and in only a few places on the seaward side of Vancouver Island. The fishing grounds were the property of particular family lines, and the knowledge of how to locate them was a closely held secret. The beds were located by calculating an angle between two natural features onshore, though knowledge of the approximate angle and of the appropriate onshore features was crucial if one was to locate the dentalia beds. Rather ingenious gear was used to acquire the mollusks from the sea floor. “[T]he device was fairly efficient, the dentalia beds rich, and the Nootkan dentalia fishermen must have been industrious at their trade, for they obtained great quantities of the molluscs, which they carefully cleaned, sorted into three sizes (long, short, and in-between), and traded to neighbors packed in neat wallet-like cedarbark baskets or in fathom-long strings” (Drucker

1965:152). The shells increased in value the farther from the fishing grounds one got, and were actively traded along the North Pacific coast.

The preceding section should serve to give a quick overview of social, political and economic aspects of life in the region prior to contact with Europeans, though a number of detailed studies are available for those wanting more information. However, we should recognize that the region had a well-developed and distinguishable culture. Additionally, it had a robust network of trade and a defined property rights system. Finally, the social and political order was well evolved and possessed intricate rules of hierarchy and status. So what were the effects of European contact on this region?

2. Post-Contact Alterations

I make no claim that the region was static and utopian prior to contact with European powers. Indeed, as there were two main language groupings among the coastal societies and some contact with other Indians from the interior, the coastal societies underwent modification as a result of interaction with one another and the environment. However, once European colonization and exploration began, the pace of this change accelerated rapidly.

Changes among the native inhabitants’ social order are readily apparent and traceable, almost to the moment of initial contact with Europeans. One of the most commonly discussed ways in which European expansion into the external arena of North America impacted native life is by the introduction of new diseases. Considerable literature exists relating the depopulation of Native American populations in general, with some areas experiencing up to a ninety-percent decrease in population (Reff 1991; McNeill 1998). While death rates this high were not experienced among populations on the northwest coast, reports of epidemics of measles and smallpox correspond to Spanish voyages and subsequent contact in the region (Cook 1973). With each smallpox epidemic capable of killing 10–30% of the natives, it is not unreasonable to accept estimates that between 1774 and 1874 the native population along the Northwest Coast (from southern Alaska to the Oregon-California border) declined by 80%, or from about 200,000 to approximately 40,000 individuals (Boyd 1999).

The establishment of trading posts and missions served to further the spread of such diseases in the Spanish Southwest, as they served as centers of contagion as well as centers of commerce. In the Northwest, the second phase of the fur trade—that of land-based trading—began in the 1820s with similar consequence. Land-based traders established fixed forts and posts (e.g., Astoria, at the mouth of the Columbia), opened up interior routes of travel, and cultivated increased contact with basin, plateau, and coastal Indians. Boyd (1999) notes that commerce between natives and non-natives vastly increased the contacts

between peoples that accelerated the spread of disease. While this second phase of the fur trade lasted until about 1846, and eventually expanded to exploit other resources such as timber, fish, farmland and pastures, the deleterious impact on native populations would not be undone.

Disease may play a particularly important role in the examination of the incorporation process as it is applied to different geographic regions. Specifically, it is due in large part to the differing disease vectors (direction of infection) between North America and Equatorial Africa that the historical experience of colonization and incorporation differs. In North America, the local population suffered, thus easing conquest and expansion. In contrast, in the tropics of Africa the Europeans were more likely to fall ill and perish, necessitating the use of local middlemen resulting in the rise of a merchant elite.

In the Northwest, contact with European traders also generated new wants and created new trade flows among the northwestern Indians. Specifically, since the goods provided by the Europeans greatly enhanced the status of a chief who could give away such goods at a traditional potlatch, more emphasis was placed on gathering goods that the Europeans would want in exchange (e.g., sea otter pelts). This had several additional consequences beyond merely the creation of new wants. Despite the abundance of wildlife on the northwest coast, sources confirm that during some winters after regularized trading, tribes in the Nootka Sound area experienced unaccustomed famine. After traders came with tempting trade goods, "Nootka males became excessively preoccupied with sea otter hunting, whereas in former times they had dedicated more time to whaling, salmon fishing, and other pursuits connected with laying in a food supply for the lean season." (Cook 1973:313).

Among the goods most in demand by the Indians were copper, cloth, abalone shells, and almost anything metal. These new goods had a considerable impact on native art forms, and desire for metal was strong enough that initially Indians were seen taking down Spanish crosses (erected as means of claiming territory) in order to get the nails that held the crosses together. This thirst for iron is reflected in other accounts, as Cook (1973:147) relates that Captain Gray had to replace barrels "as the natives had stolen most of his barrels to get the hoops" (though we should note that stealing was an acceptable way for a native to obtain property, and was not considered morally wrong). Captain Kendrick, on the *Columbia*, narrowly averted total failure on his first trip to Nootka when the trade goods he had brought failed to interest the locals. Noting their interest in iron, he quickly had any unneeded iron (e.g., the spare anchor, capstans) fashioned into "chisels" by his blacksmith to trade with the natives (Buell and Skladal 1968:80). Buell and Skladal also note that on the next voyage, "a more adequate supply of trade goods was carried: sheets of copper, red, blue, and green cloth,

iron chisels, shoes, pea jackets, buttons, gimlets or boring tools, penny nails, old muskets and blunderbusses" (1968:90). Soon, any trader headed to the northwest coast regularly carried quantities of iron "toes" that could be fashioned into desired implements.

Why would the Indians have such a desire for metal? The answer should be obvious to anyone with even a basic understanding of carpentry. Metal implements are far superior to bone or stone tools when working with wood, the importance of which is magnified when taken in context of the highly developed indigenous woodworking culture. In fact, because of apparent benefits such as the introduction of metal, scholars continue to debate how destructive the early fur trade was. Some indicate that the trade was beneficial to both parties and produced the high point in Northwest Coast cultures (Fisher 1977). Others either take a more balanced tone, noting both advantages and disadvantages (Gibson 1992) or describe a native world much more dislocated because of the fur trade (Harris 1997).

The Indians should not be viewed as passive recipients of European trade. They very actively entered into the arrangement, seeking items that would benefit their lifestyle and negotiated accordingly. For example, the eagerness for iron indicates that it was in short supply, yet it has little directly negative impact on the culture. In fact, an abundance of iron likely resulted in an increase in woodworking and carving. Similarly, the introduction of sails on canoes, the trade in blankets and cloth, and even the introduction of firearms did not directly disrupt the social patterns of native culture, but increased efficiency and comfort. Other introductions, like smoking tobacco and the cultivation of potatoes, were similarly ambiguous. Tobacco was already cultivated in the region, but was chewed. Potatoes were introduced and quickly spread wherever conditions were favorable.

From the beginning the Indians were skilled at trading. Members of Cook's expedition observed, "they are very keen traders getting as much as they could for everything they had, always asking for more than what you would give" (Fisher 1977:140). Indeed, many chiefs were able to shape the trade so that it took place largely on their terms. Cook (1973:312) relates that after the first exposure to Europeans, "the chiefs had become exceedingly choosy in bartering their pelts." Chief Maquinna³⁸ grew adept at playing one nationality against another, and

³⁸. Alternately spelled Maquilla or Ma-kwee-na, he was chief of the Indians at Friendly Cove in Nootka Sound, and is reported to have died in 1795. Some confusion appears on this point because the word 'ma-kwee-na' also corresponds to 'chief'; though there is little question that one individual was known by this name during the contro-

was well known by all the captains calling at Nootka. His first exposure to the British, however, may have disinclined him to favor them in particular:

Upon visiting the *Harmon*,³⁹ Chief Ma-kwee-na was invited to sit in a chair on deck. A sailor sprinkled a small pile of gunpowder under the seat, with a thin trail of the substance leading out from it as a fuse. Ma-kwee-na was given to understand they were rendering him a salute reserved to honored personages, and he assumed the powder to be black sand until it was lit. Before he could get up, a blinding flash and roar elevated him from the deck. His robe offered scant protection from the searing blast, wounding both person and chiefly dignity; as proof he showed the Spanish the scars still visible on his rump (Cook 1973:101).

Over time the trade moved from the decks of the ship to shore and was drawn out over several days, which was more in keeping with native custom. Maquinna and other chiefs became more sophisticated about the prices they charged, eventually learning to wait until two or more trading ships arrived. Then they could get the traders to bid against one another and drive prices higher. Clearly, the Indians were trying to maximize their own benefit and were not just being passively exploited by the ship-borne traders.

Some of the indirect impacts of trade do tend to be more negative, however. For example, the impact of disease has already been discussed. In addition, some native groups clearly benefited more than others did. They tried to monopolize relations with the traders, and drive competitors away. This resulted in increased local conflict and accelerated the cycle of warfare in the region (which was further accelerated with the introduction of firearms). The combination of increased conflict and the presence of the fur traders also resulted in an increase in the practice of taking and selling slaves, particularly children. Slaves were often taken during raids, but the presence of the traders opened up a new “market” for the children, as “the purchasing of slave children, ostensibly to save them from cannibalism, continued to be common” (Cook 1973:314). An increase in the use of female slaves as prostitutes—and a concomitant rise in venereal disease—is another of the darker aspects of the contact with the fur traders and the encroachment of capitalism.

In addition to the introduction of disease, creation of new wants, and alteration of domestic cycles of accumulation, the contact with Europeans served to alter traditional modes of production/accumulation. Traditional socio-political

versy at Nootka. Later, a different ‘Ma-kwee-na’ was likely responsible for the massacre of the crew of the *Boston* in 1803.

³⁹ An English merchantman brought from China in 1785 by Captain James Hanna.

patterns were impacted, as lesser chiefs were able to exploit newfound wealth as the traders represented a source of wealth that was not subject to existing understandings of property rights. This resulted in a drastic increase in social fluidity throughout the region and destabilized traditional power structures. Eventually this change resulted in a drastic alteration of the traditional potlatch ceremony into what became known as the spectacular ‘rivalry potlatch’ (Drucker 1965: 61–65; Barnett 1968; Bracken 1997).

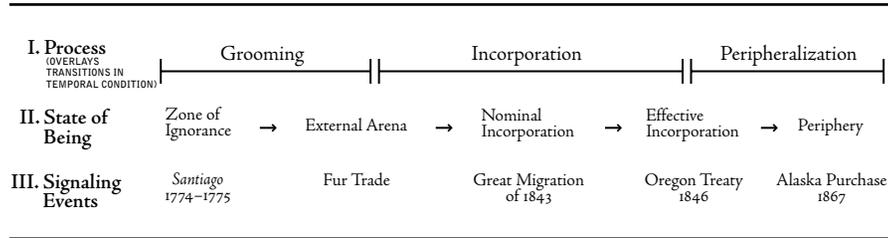
Additionally, the introduction of the trading post as an institution in the 1800s altered traditional demographic movements and served to create a localized dependent population (Krech 1984). The Spanish mission system similarly served as a mechanism of incorporation in the Californias (Pike 1956; Hall 1986). Missionaries arrived on northwest coast in the mid-nineteenth century with similar influence. Finally, once the region was more formally incorporated, native populations were either moved onto reservations or limited to a fraction of their traditional territory.

Regardless of the actual mechanism, it is evident that considerable impact is being exerted on a given region’s inhabitants well before it is traditionally considered “incorporated.” It is likely that the “grooming” or preparatory process begins immediately upon contact. This process takes hold to a varying extent dependent upon the presence or absence of certain environmental variables. Potentially, it seems plausible that diverse factors such as the disease vectors, geography, strength of indigenous polities, presence of multiple distinct populations, and population densities all play a significant role in determining the relative impact of core intrusion on an external area. Once effective trade patterns are established and appropriate desires ingrained, then a more active process of incorporation begins. It is at this critical juncture that control of the situation shifts to outsiders and the indigenous population is increasingly left out of the dialogue of incorporation.

EVALUATION OF INCORPORATION

The strength of the incorporating state necessarily should be expected to play a significant role in the incorporation process. For the purposes of this case, in the late eighteenth century Spain may be seen as a state that was losing strength. While Spain did have sufficient authority to fend off initial advances into its territory, it lacked sufficient resources to bring previously unexplored, yet claimed, territory under its control. Instead, Spain institutionalized the existence of a ‘zone of ignorance’ within its own claimed territory through conscious policy decisions. Why? Because exploration and discovery of a northern water route into the Pacific would have eased foreign intrusion (as secrets of such magni-

Figure 1 – Typography of Incorporation



Adapted From Carlson (1999:30; 2001:249)

tude eventually become public knowledge) and required considerable expense to defend. Only when threatened with potential challengers (e.g., perceived Russian expansion from the north, eventual British incursion into the Pacific, later overland and maritime advances by the United States) did Spain attempt to expand its control to these new areas of contention. Unfortunately for Madrid, it was incapable of fully meeting the challenge.

This also supports Hall's contention that incorporation is a matter of degree, can be a volatile process and that location within, on, or beyond the frontier of state control is important (Hall 1986, 2000b). Further, this case also points out ways in which the *type* of society being incorporated may shape the incorporation process. Particular cultural, political, and economic aspects of the northwestern Indians (e.g., the institution of the potlatch, emphasis on woodworking, skill at ocean hunting) made them more easily adapted to engaging in the sea otter fur trade, as they had an increased utility for the trade goods—and hence prestige—that were provided in exchange. In contrast, the Indians of the California coast lacked similar social institutions and peculiarities, yet were more easily assimilated into the Spanish mission system because of different environmental parameters and their more agriculturally oriented society.

If we recall the typography of incorporation used elsewhere, specific dates can be assigned to particular phases of incorporation in this particular case. One can develop the concept of a 'signaling event,' or 'trigger,' to mark the delineation of new phases of the incorporation process. For example, the 'signaling event' underlying the shift from zone of ignorance to being in the 'external arena' of the European system is the voyage of the *Santiago* in 1774–1775 and its visit to Nootka Sound. This opened an era of ongoing trade and 'grooming,' which moved the region increasingly into the system. Eventually the region became more nominally incorporated with the arrival of settlers. Up to 1841, Americans in Oregon consisted of fur traders, missionaries, mission helpers, government explorers, or similar trans-frontier occupants, but no farmers or settlers *per se*.

In 1841, the first band of 32 settlers arrived. Their significance is not in the

numbers of individuals, but rather that they blazed what would become the Oregon Trail and provided a venue for increased interest in local mission projects. The following year witnessed the additional immigration of more than a hundred persons, and the Great Migration of 1843 saw more than a thousand. Newspaper accounts purported that such migration was patriotic and holy, as mission (and national) interests in Oregon needed the protection that migration would afford. However, the economic motivations based on reports of free land, fertile soil, pleasant climate and abundant salmon, lumber, and waterpower had a significant impact as well. In any case, Caughey (1933:241) notes that succeeding years saw continued use of the Trail: "For 1844 the figures are uncertain, but estimates waver between 475 and 700, though there is mention of a round thousand. The next year brought more than three thousand.... In 1846 there was a slump to 1,350, followed by 4,500 in 1847, and 700 in 1848." While migration was reduced (and possibly reversed) the following year with news of gold in California, over 11,000 settlers moved to the region over just 8 years. Indeed, while the American claim to Oregon was formalized with the Oregon Treaty of 1846, "As clearly as in Texas the American *settlers* won Oregon" (Caughey 1933:246, emphasis added). By 1846, the region was well on its way to being effectively incorporated. Agriculture, and not the fur trade, would prove to be the focus for settlers.

The case of the sea otter fur trade also serves to illustrate that different policies of state expansion can have different implications for incorporation. For example, Russian expansion and colonization was characterized by a tributary method of accumulation, and most of their behavior and policy was geared accordingly. In contrast, Spanish colonization was oriented toward what is considered more traditional capitalist incorporation (the *encomienda* system), especially in the regions of California and the Southwest. However, it is important to realize that most of the processes going on in the area in question would not necessarily be considered part of the capitalist world-system according to Wallerstein. Instead, we have an example of the transitional 'grooming period' that occurs prior to the emergence of incorporation, when a region moves from pre-contact zone of ignorance to post-contact external arena. Then the process of incorporation can begin.

The case of the fur trade on the Pacific Coast is illustrative for another reason. It offers potential answers to the question, If 'contact' or 'marginal' incorporation does not contribute to the accumulation of capital, either for the core or some class or class segment within it, then why does it happen? The answer to highlights two shortcomings of the Wallersteinian conception of incorporation. First, by concentrating on the requirement of bulk trade in necessities, Wallerstein under-appreciates the role that 'preciosities' play in the expansion of the world-system, as well as the role they play in 'hooking' new areas into the

incorporation process. Second, by concentrating on the areas considered incorporated, the relevance of external arenas (frontiers) is overlooked. As this case illustrates, luxury trade in an external arena can have tremendous impact on the core and other incorporated areas *within* the system.

Why? Partially the answer lies in the desire for pre-emptive colonization. However, the underlying drive for such pre-emption, at least in the case of the northwestern coast of America, is for control of a profitable luxury trade and future income from it. Luxury goods appear to offset the otherwise prohibitive costs of expanding the capitalist system, and as such seem to play a *key* role in the broadening process. This indicates that the role such trade plays in the world-system is severely under-appreciated; it certainly indicates that the role luxury goods play in the process of incorporation needs to be more carefully considered.

In fact, if one looks at American policy immediately following the emergence of the fur trade, it becomes increasingly clear that this trade is instrumental in initializing the incorporation process. After Americans first entered the Pacific, ship owners supported the idea of official exploring expeditions. This would lower the risk of navigating little-known or uncharted waters, and would allow a foundation for increased naval protection. The United States Navy responded with limited patrols by 1820 and the formation of the Pacific Squadron, which expanded regular patrols ever westward across the Pacific to Southeast Asia. This expansion of official US naval presence was solidified by the eventual acquisition of California and Oregon, and saw the establishment of the East India naval station in 1835. Dudden (1992:15) observes that:

Indeed foreign policymaking was being imposed upon the United States, as it was upon Great Britain and France, by the growing numbers of its citizens active in the central and southern Pacific together with the increasing value of their properties there. The comparative abundance or lack of trade, then, created the policies to be formulated and enforced.

The US Navy took on the role of official constabulary, and served to support American interests in the commercial rivalry between American and British competitors. Leaders of both parties in America hoped that the North Pacific Ocean would become “a vast American lake, the bridge to the wealth of the Far East from trading and whaling”⁴⁰ (Dudden 1992:17). It is clear that economic issues were driving political decisions in this period.

⁴⁰ This also resulted in President John Quincy Adams calling for “scientific exploring expeditions comparable to those of Britain, France and Russia to support the nation’s commerce with sophisticated knowledge of the globe” (Dudden 1992:16), which culminated in the Great United States Exploring Expedition of 1838-1842.

Finally, by taking a close look at various maps of the region as it is being incorporated one can actually “see” a degree of differentiation in the stages of incorporation. That the region first exists squarely in the zone of ignorance is not in question, as maps of this period make clear: there are broad unmapped regions and fanciful, mythical names (Anián) appear regularly. Clearly, this region is even outside of what is the ‘information network’⁴¹ of the world-system, and more solidly in the realm of myth. Similarly, this is the case for the Buache Map (Plate 3). Lower California is reasonably accurate, but the northwest has been replaced with “Fou-sang des Chinois” and an inner sea leading to the fabled Northwest Passage.

Even when a region is falling into the ‘information network’ anomalies still occur. First, not everyone has access to the same information. This imperfect dissemination leads to considerable time-lags between countries having the same information, and the same literal world-view. Second, until more information is acquired (and a region is firmly in the realm of the “real”) it is easy for misinformation to thrive. To illustrate the first point, see the Russian Academy (1758) map (Plate 4). This Russian map of 1758 triggered Spanish efforts to thwart Russian expansion, as the Spanish were unaware of the true extent of Russian presence in the Pacific. The same map still appears virtually unchanged over twenty years later, but translated into English and popularly marketed.

To illustrate the second point (that misinformation thrives), one need only view other contemporary cartographic offerings. Recall that Lower California was represented with reasonable accuracy in the early maps of the region (e.g., Ortelius [1587], Author Unknown [1586], and even Chino [1702] maps). However, by the late 17th and early 18th centuries, California had achieved the status of an *island* on many depictions of the region. For example Homann (1707),⁴² has the North American continent tenuously stretching far to the northwest and California adrift in the Pacific.

The appearance of California as an island is not a singular occurrence. Rather, it was quite common for Lower California to appear on maps as an island throughout the late 17th century. This is after being quite accurately repre-

⁴¹ See Hall (2000b:240) or Chase-Dunn and Hall (1997:54) for a discussion of these nested networks of incorporation.

⁴² Homann, Johann (1707). “Americae Septentrionalis ey Meridionalis, Novissima Repraesentatio...”(map), (North and South America, Newest Representation...), Nuremberg. Image available at the University of Minnesota Libraries, James Ford Bell Library. <http://www.bell.lib.umn.edu/historical/Hamerica.html>

sented by 1587! It is a telling case of a region existing in the fuzzy realm between the 'zone of ignorance' and actually being in the 'information network.' The region had slipped just far enough back into the realm of fantasy to require that more definitive proof be gathered if California was to be 'reattached' to North America. Similarly, Seutter (1731)⁴³ portrays California as an island, does not speculate as to the nature of the rest of Northwest America, but instead employs a well placed cartouche to fill in the otherwise empty region.

Finally, as the northwest was more fully absorbed by the expanding system and drawn into the 'prestige goods network' of the fur trade, an accurate depiction of the coastline was forthcoming. However, even when the region was being pulled into the 'political-military network' and more formally incorporated (as characterized by the boundary negotiations between Russia, Britain and the United States), elements of the zone of ignorance crop up in the form of make-believe rivers or non-existent mountain ranges. Taken as a whole, the maps used in the boundary negotiations between Britain and the United States are illustrative of the wider region being absorbed into the global political networks of the expanding system (Walker 1999).

And what of Nootka Sound and the sea otter? How did they fare in the telling of this historical tale? The sea otter was all but eliminated from the waters around Nootka by 1820,⁴⁴ though the animals were still commercially hunted until the beginning of the 20th century. In 1911 an international treaty protecting fur seals, sea otters, and polar bears from indiscriminate hunting was signed by Great Britain, Japan, Russia and the United States, and conservation efforts have seen the return of the sea otter to much of its original habitat, though in reduced numbers. As a catalyst of history, the sea otter led to the mapping and settlement of the shores along a 6000 mile 'river of fur,' and resulted in the eventual marginalization of the natives that had originally dominated the region.

With the decline in the fur trade, Friendly Cove and Nootka Sound receded from the realm of interest for the players in the system. Instead, the seal hunters and whalers that followed the initial expansion into the Pacific shifted interest

⁴³ Mattaeus Seutter (1731?). "Novus Orbis sive America Meridionalis et Septentrionalis" (New World with South and North America), Augsburg. Electronic image available at the Reed College Library, Special Collections Department. <http://simeon.library.reed.edu/collections/antmaps/>

⁴⁴ Cook (1773:Appendix E) places the number of vessels visiting the Northwest coast between 1774 and 1820 at 450. This number does not include Russian vessels unless they traveled south of Sitka. The busiest year was 1792, in which 32 vessels were active on the coast.

elsewhere. Vancouver Island existed as a preserve of the Hudson's Bay Company and was only formally admitted (as part of British Columbia) to provincial status in 1871. Logging had a start in 1914, though the first sawmill was not actually built around Nootka until 1938 (in conjunction with a gold rush in the area). More modern mills have been built, and once again ships from around the world sail into Nootka Sound. However, now the ships take lumber, pulp and newsprint to world markets, and leave the sea otter to amuse the growing number of tourists that are drawn to the region for its sea kayaking and sight seeing attractions.

As should now be evident, important changes, processes, and interactions take place well before a given region is traditionally considered incorporated into the world-system. Using historically contemporary maps allows one to parse out a more accurate interpretation of when a given region enters various stages of the incorporation process, particularly in regards to the information network. This provides a 'snapshot' of a region at a given time, and taken in context with more traditional historic accounts provides a more complete story of the expansion of the global state system. As we see with the case of the Northwest Coast, a tremendous amount of action takes place well before the region is traditionally considered incorporated, and this is a part of the story that has been largely overlooked. By shifting the focus to what happens prior to contact with systemic actors and then tracing social, cultural and economic alterations that occur during the period of incorporation, insight into the broader functioning of the expanding capitalist system is provided.

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