COAST SALISH ESSAYS

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but in the wetter season it would be bound to the plank house of its extended family. Because of its use as a smokehouse, the plank house is thus an important instrument of production, and the ownership or control of a house at the site of a fish weir used in the fall may have had as important social and economic consequences as ownership or control of the weir itself. In the Salish area, weirs were in fact usually public property but houses were not.

In many other parts of the coast, climatic conditions probably did not permit as much preserving of food outside as in the Salish area. During the three months of summer, Victoria (in the Salish area) gets an average of 14 days of rain (out of an annual total of 133) while Port Hardy (in Kwakiutl country) gets 38 (out of a total of 204), Masset (Haida) 41 (out of 210), and Prince Rupert (Tsimshian) 46 (out of 215). During an average year Victoria gets a total of 2,092 hours of sunshine while Prince Rupert gets 1,019, or roughly half (figures from Kendrew and Kerr 1955). Precipitation is also greater on the outer coast to the south than in the central coast Salish area. These differences certainly have implications for food preserving and possibly for social relations.

It should also be noted that not all species of salmon, perhaps not even all populations of the same species, keep equally well. My Salish informants say that fatter fish last longer and thus sockeye and dog salmon are their favorites. Other species may not last through the winter months.*

Another very important method of storage is rendering of fat into oil, which can then be kept in such containers as seal bladders (in the Salish area), kelp bulbs (Kwakiutl), or wooden boxes (Chinook). Throughout most of the coast, dried fish or meat was eaten after being dipped in oil; sea-mammal oil was used from the Salish and Nootka southward, and eulachon oil was used from the Kwakiutl northward. On the Fraser, where seal oil was less plentiful, salmon oil was also used (Duff 1952:66). This constant use of oil seemed excessive to Europeans but it may have compensated for the scarcity of carbohydrates (Drucker 1951:62; Rivera 1949:34; see also note 5 of the present paper).

In the north, oil was also used for preserving some kinds of berries. From the Chinook southward, meat was preserved by pulverizing it and mixing it with grease. Salmon eggs were first allowed to get "high" and to form a kind of cheese-like substance, and eulachon were also allowed to decay before rendering; however there was evidently no general practice of allowing fish to decay. Storage pits are reported for a few areas and so are raised caches, but probably throughout most of the area preserved food was stored in boxes, baskets, and bags placed on racks inside the dwelling house.

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*[I was quite wrong about this. As Curtis (1915:28) reported for the Kwakiutl, it is the leaner fish that preserve longer. Sockeye are relished for their fat but do not last as long; "dog salmon" (now called "chums") are lean and last longer. For a detailed study of salmon preservation, see Romanoff 1971.]