

Session 2

Chapter 4 – Free People, the Origin of Cultures, and the Advent of Private Property


Chapter 5 – Many Seasons Ago

Don Fournier – OLLI Discussion Group




Chapter 4

- We started living our lives on an ever-smaller scale as populations grew:
 - Prehistoric human communities ranged over far more territory than their modern counterparts.
 - Hunter-gatherers traveled long distances.
 - Band members could be drawn from a wide pool of individuals.



Chapter 4 (cont.)

- Moieties existed on a large scale allowing travelers quarter and a group in which to belong.
- This was destroyed by European settlers.
- Travel has gotten easier, but our communities have shrunk.



Chapter 4 (cont.)

- ▶ Living our lives on an ever-smaller scale as “smaller”, ever-diminishing proportions of people actually traveled over long distances or far from home.
- ▶ Postglacial populations were called “Mesolithic” and it was a time of technological innovations.

Chapter 4 (cont.)

- Just what was equalized in 'Egalitarian' Societies is not entirely clear and may be defined negatively:
 - The absence of hierarchies,
 - The absence of relations of dominance or exploitation.
- Should we be the same in ways that really matter?



Chapter 4 (cont.)

- Differing groups could have radically differing value systems, so is there a universal, objective standard(s)?
- Since the 18th century this appears to be focused on property arrangements.
- Since hunter-gatherers had no property, were they therefore egalitarian?

Chapter 4 (cont.)

- Are we free today?
 - We have “formal freedoms” (rights).
 - We can travel as long as we can afford it and can get a passport/visa.
 - We are free to flout authority (unless we need a job) or don't break any laws.
 - Early humans and Indigenous intellectuals opt for “substantive freedoms” (ability to do so).

Chapter 4 (cont.)


- Poverty Point is a stone age site in Louisiana.
- It reveals that prehistoric humans might have trafficked in more than material goods.
- Its precise mounds adhere to standard units of measurement and proportion indicating knowledge transfer.

Poverty Point Louisiana



Chapter 4 (cont.)

- Constructed over 3400 years ago.
- Home to hundreds, perhaps thousands.
- Ceremonial center and trading hub, unmatched in North America at that time.
- Materials to build carried in from over 800 miles away.



Chapter 4 (cont.)

- The ideas about private property may have arisen from ideas of the sacred and sacred places.
- Certain objects were the province of only certain members of prehistoric societies and used in sacred rituals.
- The true owners of land and other natural resources were gods or spirits.

Chapter 4 (cont.)

- When European settlers came, they viewed that indigenous people were not maximizing the use of the land and they had a moral duty to take it over.
- This paved the way for conquest and colonization.
- Remember good ole “Manifest Destiny”.



Chapter 5

- Why Canadian foragers kept slaves and their Californian foragers didn't:
 - Cultural distinctions and the means of production led to radically different cultural values between the Northwest Coast tribes and the Californian tribes, with the Yurok in a “shatter zone” between them.

Chapter 5 (cont.)

- The Northwest Coast groups:
 - Densely populated area.
 - Raided other tribes and held captives as slaves.
 - Slaves did all the menial work and the commoners did art/woodwork and handcrafts.
 - The elite were warriors and lorded over everyone, holding elaborate potlatches that encouraged overeating, theatrical contests, and immoderate consumption of all kinds.

Northwest Coast Indigenous Lodging

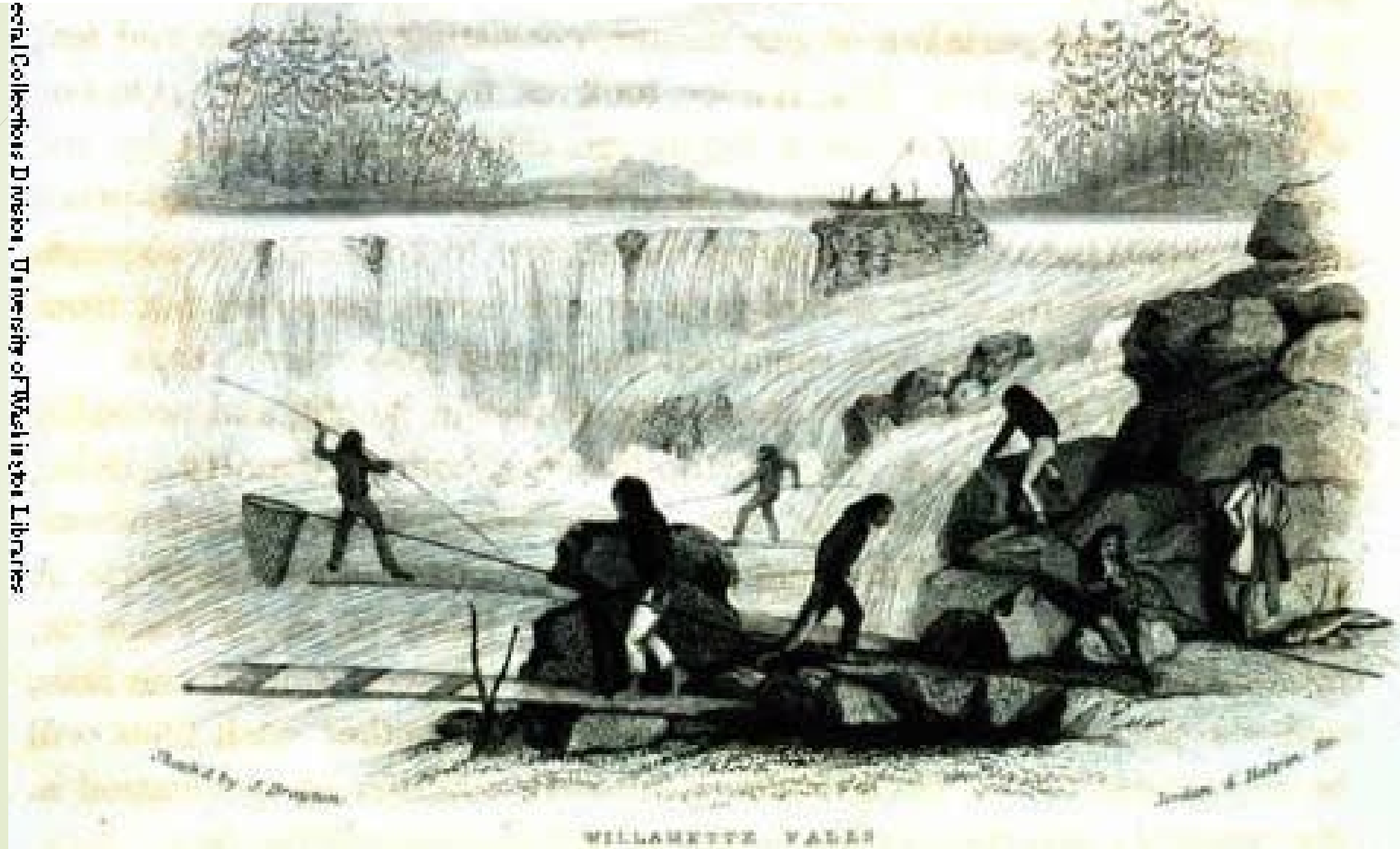


Pacific Northwest Totems




Catching Salmon at Willamette Falls

Special Collections Division, University of Washington Libraries





Northwest Coastal Diet

- Fish (salmon, trout, halibut, herring)
 - Sea mammals (whales, otters, seals)
 - Shellfish
 - Birds
 - Wild plant foods (bulbs, roots, berries, seeds)
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Chapter 5 (cont.)

- Yurok tribe is an “abstemious” and “puritanical” group who retained foraging as their primary source of food.
- They did raise tobacco and other plants for ritual use.
- They preferred not to fish and relied on acorns and other tree nuts.
- Even the wealthier worked hard.

Chapter 5 (cont.)


- This avoided stockpiling of food which would put them in hazard of being raided.
- The Yuroks were polar opposites from the Northwestern Coast tribes.
- The authors call this schismogenesis.
- These two groups determined over time to set their own value systems.

Yurok Dwelling




Yurok Dwelling





Chapter 5 (cont.)

- Farther south, the Californian tribes still avoided agriculture, but did fish where it was available.
 - They also seemed to be a lot less worried about being raided.
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Coastal Miwok Site



Miwok Housing



Larger Miwok Shelter



Food

What did the Miwok eat and how did they get their food? The Miwok mostly ate deer, elk, antelope, bears, rabbits, beaver, squirrels, wood rats, fish, columbine, milk, weed, wild pea, sheep, and sorrel. Miwok get their food by fishing, gathering, hunting, and planting. They cooked their food in an oven called a earth oven. They also ate roasted grasshoppers and yellow jackets.





Reading for Next Week

- Chapter 6 – Gardens of Adonis
- Chapter 7 – The Ecology of Freedom



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