

## DRESS AND ORNAMENT

### CLOTHING

During mild weather, especially while working, men wore no clothing whatsoever. When protection from the cold was needed a fur robe was worn hung from the shoulders with a thong which passed around the neck. The side opening provided freedom for the arm on that side; it was shifted to the opposite side when there was a desire to use the other arm. When the free use of both arms was necessary the opening was moved to the front, allowing the back and shoulders to remain covered but exposing the front of the body. These robes, which hung to the middle of the thigh, depended for their outline shape upon the method of their fabrication. Four distinct modes of manufacture were used. Most commonly several small skins, or fewer large ones, were tanned with the fur adhering and sewed together to form a roughly rectangular garment. The most frequently used small skin was that of the mountain beaver (often erroneously called the wood rat).<sup>1</sup> These pelts were quite small necessitating several to form a single robe. Perhaps second in frequency of use was the skin of the Oregon bobcat. Three or four of these sufficed for one robe. In similar manner were used many other furs, including the raccoon, beaver, muskrat, and the most valuable of all furs, the sea otter. Two skins of this last animal were required for each robe. The second type of robe was that made from the skin of a single animal with the outline left irregular according to the natural shape of the pelt, but with the extremities cut off. Such skins as those of the deer, bear, cougar, and elk served this purpose. All were tanned without removing the hair. Perhaps even more frequently used were robes of the third type, skins cut in strips, twisted, and woven by twining with thin, strong cords. Thus a blanket was formed with fur exposed equally on both sides. Such a method was used for fragile skins and also when it was desired to produce an especially fine garment. Rabbit skins, with which this technique is best known elsewhere, were so used by the Chinook but not as extensively as those of the mountain beaver, raccoon, or sea otter. The fourth type of blanket was that made of the wool of the mountain goat spun into cord and woven on the loom. No details of this technique are known beyond the fact of its use. Whether dog wool or other fibers were intermixed is uncertain. Such robes or blankets seem to have been relatively uncommon and it is probable that most of them were imported from the north.<sup>2</sup> In any event it was necessary that the wool be imported for the goat was not found in Lower Chinook territory.<sup>3</sup>

For protection from the rain a poncho-like garment of small rushes was worn. This was merely a rectangular mat with a slit at the middle for the neck. Since it was open at both sides it permitted free arm action and was frequently used while paddling the canoe.

<sup>1</sup>See physical environment.

<sup>2</sup>See Gunther, *Klallam Ethnography*, p. 221; Haeberlin and Gunther, pp. 30 f.

<sup>3</sup>See physical environment.

No other garment was worn by men except the basketry hat (described below). Moccasins and breech cloth were wholly unknown.

Women wore a cape or robe identical to that of the men except that it was shorter, never reaching below the waist. Consequently fewer skins were required but the same techniques were employed. In addition, women wore the shredded cedar bark skirt. This was the invariable garment. The robe was discarded except when exposure required it, but the skirt was worn at least whenever in company with men. The skirt was made by shredding the inner bark of the cedar into small strands by the use of a bluntly sharpened bone implement. These were arranged in skirt-like form by twining for several inches at the upper edge. This band did not form a circle. The skirt was wrapped around the waist and tied tightly at the side. The shredded pendants hung somewhat lower in back than front, reaching nearly to the knees. Sometimes the lower ends of the fibers were gathered into small bunches and knotted. Other materials than cedar bark were frequently used. Indian hemp or nettle fiber made finer and longer-lasting skirts, while small rushes were used in making rougher and poorer ones.

For maximum protection women made use of a small garment which covered the breasts and extended to the waist in front, passed under the armpits and was tied in back. This was a small rectangular piece made of twisted and woven strips of fur similar to some of the larger garments.

A rain garment of rushes identical to that worn by men was likewise utilized by women.

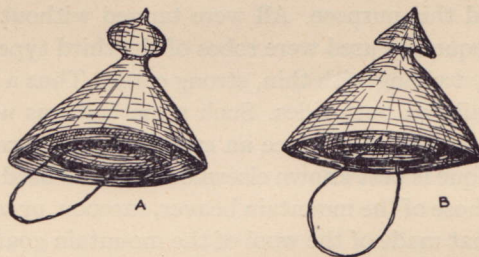


FIG. 19. Basketry hats. (A) With round knob; (B) With conical knob.  
(After Lewis and Clark.)

Basketry hats were extensively used by both men and women. These were sub-conical in form with slightly flaring brims and superimposed at the crown with a small knob in round or conical shape. The knob was integrally woven with the body of the hat. A secondary brim was provided inside the hat so that the wide brim might be held up and away from the face. A string was fastened to this inside brim for fastening around the chin. Lewis and Clark illustrate one type<sup>4</sup> (see Figure 19). They were wholly waterproof, being twined of cedar bark, spruce root, and bear-grass. Whether the bear-grass was used only as overlay is uncertain. Designs and figures were woven into the hats, commonly using black and white (light) contrasts, but sometimes colors. Realistic designs such as whales and canoes are described by Lewis and Clark.<sup>5</sup> How long such designs had been in use and whether or not these were trade pieces, is unknown.

<sup>4</sup>Thwaites, vol. 4, pp. 23 f.

<sup>5</sup>*Idem*, p. 24.

That style of dress did not vary from the mouth of the river to at least as far up as Puget Island is indicated by Lewis and Clark's descriptions.<sup>6</sup> But Broughton, while near Puget Island, observed, "Their clothing was chiefly deer skins, though a few had garments made of sea otter skins."<sup>7</sup> At an indefinite but short distance upriver Cox observed the use by women of a skin apron or possibly breech cloth.<sup>8</sup> Ross writes specifically of the woman's breech cloth but does not state by what group it was worn.<sup>9</sup> Boit, in the earliest of all observations upon Chinook clothing, suggests that the women wore a small apron of woven fibers.<sup>10</sup>

Dance or ceremonial regalia consisted of the best of one's clothing together with a few additions. A cedar bark band about two inches wide was worn around the head with several eagle feathers projecting upward from it (see Frontispiece). The band was painted red and black with a simple geometric design such as a wavy line. Sometimes it was decorated with dentalia. Whether or not this was a recent custom is uncertain.

Sometimes a single eagle feather was worn in the hair. Down of the fish duck was sprinkled over the hair, whitening it. The band and down were used by both men and women.<sup>11</sup>

#### BODY CARE, PAINTING AND TATOOING

As one follows the comments on body care and cleanliness of the Chinook from the first writers through succeeding years, there is an almost uniform progression from favorable remarks to those less and less favorable.<sup>12</sup> Thus we have substantial documentation for the usually assumed progressive degradation attendant to greater and greater contact of northwest natives with whites.

These people, Clark observed, "Appeared much neater in their diet than Indians are commonly, and frequently wash their faces and hands."<sup>13</sup> Lewis comments in a similar vein, "They are fond of combs and use them when they can obtain them; and even without the aid of the comb keep their hair in better order than many nations who are in other respects much more civilized than themselves."<sup>14</sup>

From a somewhat different point of reference Franchere declares that "They possess, in an eminent degree, the qualities opposed to indolence, improvidence and stupidity: the chiefs, above all are distinguished for their good sense and intelligence. Generally speaking, they have a ready intellect and a tenacious memory."<sup>15</sup>

But in 1840 Wilkes writes, "Both sexes are equally filthy, and I am inclined to believe they will continue so; for their habits are inveterate, and from all the ac-

<sup>6</sup>Cf. Thwaites, vol. 3, pp. 208 f.; vol. 4, pp. 23 f.

<sup>7</sup>Vancouver, vol. 2, p. 58.

<sup>8</sup>Cox, p. 76.

<sup>9</sup>Ross, pp. 91 f.

<sup>10</sup>Boit, p. 248.

<sup>11</sup>Lusier; Thwaites, vol. 3, pp. 208 f., 238, 359 f.; *idem*, vol. 4, pp. 86, 94, 185 f.; Coues, p. 749; Ross, pp. 89, 91; Franchere, pp. 242-44; Cox, p. 69; Swan, p. 155; Boas, *Chinook Texts*, p. 220.

<sup>12</sup>With notable exceptions among objective observers such as Swan.

<sup>13</sup>Thwaites, vol. 3, p. 274.

<sup>14</sup>Thwaites, vol. 4, p. 184.

<sup>15</sup>Franchere, p. 261.

counts I could gather from different sources, there is reason to believe that they have not been improved or been benefited by their constant intercourse with the whites. . . ."<sup>16</sup> How true!

On the other hand, that excellent observer, Swan, at an even later date remarks:

While the Indians are engaged in curing salmon, or when they are boiling the blubber of a whale or seal, they are as necessarily dirty as the crew of a whale-ship or butchers in a slaughter-house; and at such times, casual visitors form an opinion that they are a filthy, greasy set, and we find many writers willing to assert that they regularly anoint their bodies with fish-oil and red ochre. Such, however, is not the fact. As soon as their work is done, they wash themselves, and generally bathe two or three times a day. All the painting or oiling I have ever seen them do is rub a little grease and vermilion, or red ochre between their hands, and then smear it over their faces. The women will also paint the head, in the line of the parting of the hair, with dry vermilion, and give an extra touch to their eyebrows; but I have never seen either men or women put oil or grease of any kind on their bodies. The women tattoo their legs and arms with dotted lines, but without any particular figure or design; they are also fond, during the blackberry season, of dotting their limbs with blackberry juice. The tattooing is done with charcoal and water, and pricked into the skin with needles. I very seldom saw a man with tattoo-marks on him.<sup>17</sup>

Lewis and Clark make similar observations regarding painting and tattooing. They suggest that the tattoo designs consisted of parallel lines of dots arranged either around the limbs or linearly.<sup>18</sup> Figures are also mentioned but it is intimated that these were not aboriginal. They add that such decoration was a mark of upper class membership,<sup>19</sup> a point corroborated by Mrs. Luscier.

Facial painting was used for war,<sup>20</sup> ceremony, relief from illness, or mere decoration. Broughton observed that the Chinook "surpassed all other tribes with paints of different colors, feathers, and ornaments."<sup>21</sup> It seems certain, despite Swan, that the body was painted as well as the face, though not as extensively.<sup>22</sup> On the face solid coloring was most commonly used, varied with bands across the cheek bones and around the chin. Special designs were used, as directed by one's guardian spirit, when the painting was used as a therapeutic measure. Red, black, and white were the colors most frequently utilized. Red was made of mineral pigment scraped from the outcroppings, pulverized, and baked in a bark fire. Black was made of alder charcoal. White was obtained from an outcropping on a precipitous cliff near Tillamook territory. The clay was reached only by lowering the gatherer down the cliff on a rope.<sup>23</sup> All pigments were mixed with either bear or elk oil.

The hair of both sexes was parted in the middle and allowed to fall loosely about the shoulders (see Figure 4, page 69). It was not allowed to grow much beyond the shoulders, and was kept back of the ears as much as possible.<sup>24</sup> The

<sup>16</sup>Wilkes, vol. 5, p. 116.

<sup>17</sup>Swan, p. 112. Cf. Boas, *op. cit.*, p. 236.

<sup>18</sup>Thwaites, vol. 4, p. 186.

<sup>19</sup>Thwaites, vol. 3, p. 241.

<sup>20</sup>See warfare.

<sup>21</sup>Vancouver, vol. 2, p. 77.

<sup>22</sup>Cf. Franchere, p. 244.

<sup>23</sup>Thwaites, vol. 3, p. 231.

<sup>24</sup>Cf. Thwaites, vol. 4, p. 184.

part, as Swan mentions above, was often painted with red ochre. Mrs. Luscier explained that in recent years it became the practice for women to plait the hair into two braids and gather it up with a thong at the back. Men, at the same time, came to use one braid occasionally.<sup>25</sup>

Men consistently plucked out the scanty beard growth except that a small tuft was sometimes allowed to grow on the chin.<sup>26</sup>

Ears of both sexes were pierced, both in the lobe and around the rim. Five holes was usual for the rim. From these ornaments were hung, usually of dentalia.<sup>27</sup>

Men had the nasal septum pierced, but not women. Through the opening a thread was passed from which hung dentalia or other ornaments.<sup>28</sup>

Women bound their ankles by encircling them with cordage, causing a swelling of the leg above the wrapping. This was the "deformity" so often referred to in the early literature.<sup>29</sup>

The favorite native bead, ornament, and medium of exchange was the imported dentalium.<sup>30</sup> This was used for pendants, necklaces, arm bands, bracelets and ankle bands. It is interesting to note that when glass beads were received blue ones were preferred.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Cf. Swan, p. 154.

<sup>26</sup>Cf. Franchere, p. 240; Boas, *op. cit.*, frontispiece; Dunn, p. 124; Kane, p. 181.

<sup>27</sup>Cf. Thwaites, vol. 4, p. 187; Scouler, p. 165.

<sup>28</sup>Cf. Thwaites, *loc. cit.*; Lee and Frost, p. 101; Cox, p. 69.

<sup>29</sup>Cf. Thwaites, *loc. cit.*; Dunn, p. 123.

<sup>30</sup>See trade.

<sup>31</sup>Cf. Thwaites, vol. 3, pp. 328, 352 f.; *idem*, vol. 4, p. 187; Franchere, pp. 245 f.