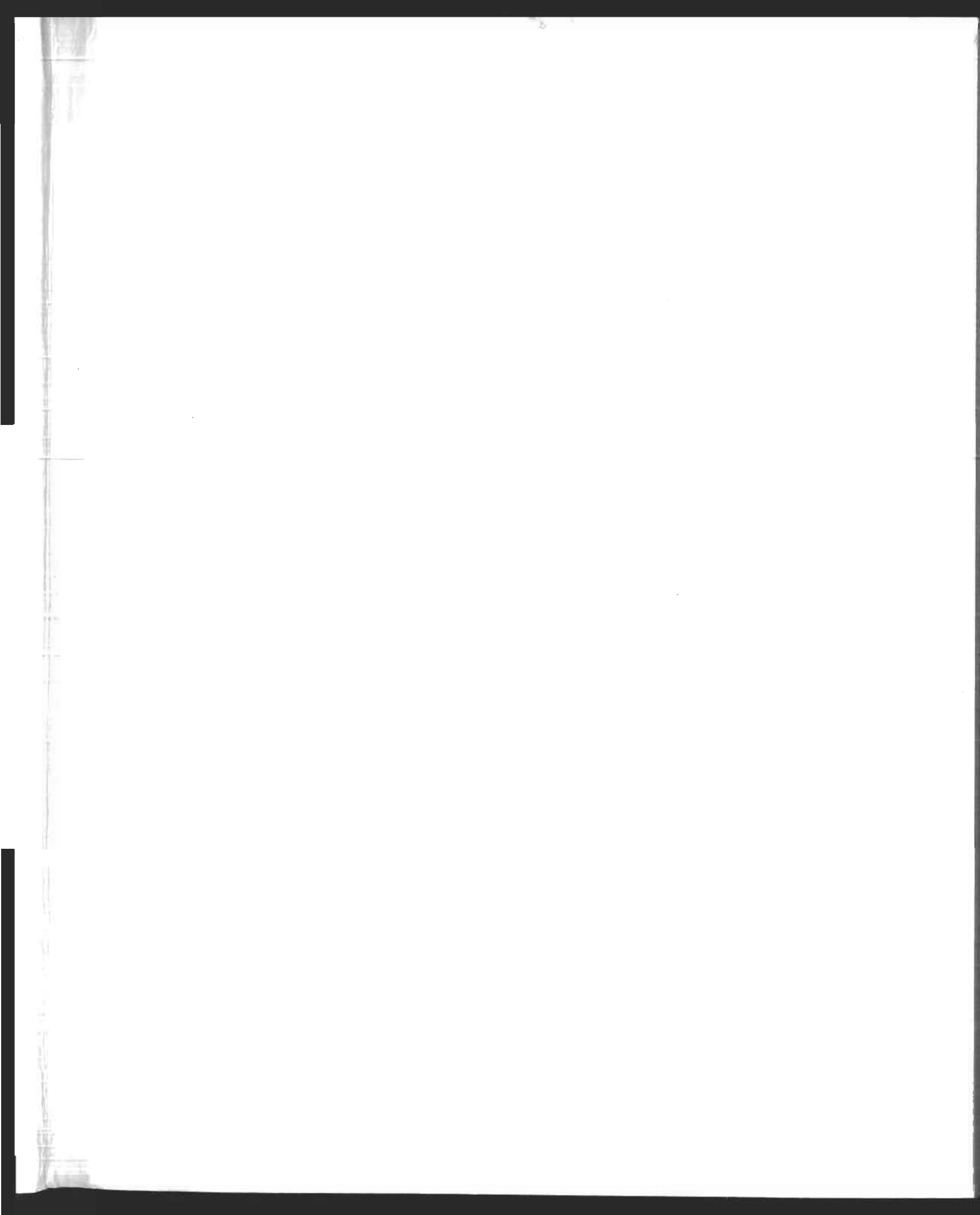
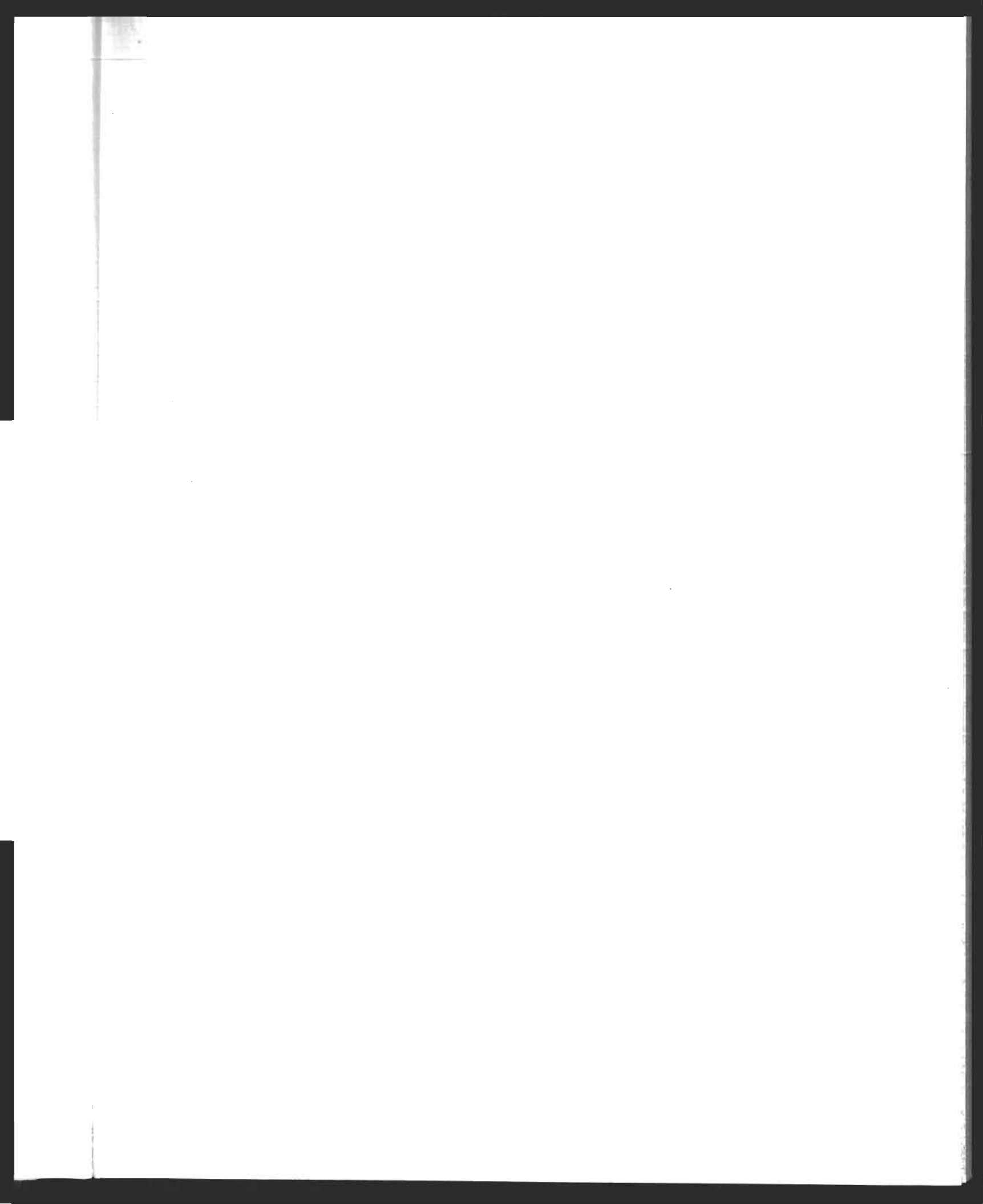


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AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE STUDY OF GAMBLING

by

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We accept this thesis as conforming to
the required standard.

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THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

September, 1972

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ABSTRACT

The systematic study of gambling has not been undertaken by many anthropologists. Yet, there exist data within the ethnographic literature of native North America to warrant serious comparison of gambling practices. This thesis attempts to formulate an anthropological framework for the study of gambling.

The implications of an anthropological framework are examined by isolating the variables to be considered. Generally they fall into two broad fields, symbols or symbolic complexes and politico-economic institutions or power relations. The perspective of anthropology concerns both these fields and the relationship between them. This perspective is termed holistic and it is proposed to study gambling holistically.

A definition of gambling is enunciated. The properties of gambling as an institution are discussed and variables are isolated, including the distinction deep play/shallow play. The possibility of treating gambling as a cultural text to be interpreted is suggested.

Five cases of hand game gambling in North America are examined in terms of the framework. Certain common features are demonstrated and the consequences of studying gambling are considered. Conclusions are presented in order to summarize the analysis of five cases and to assess the applicability of the framework.

Michael R. Quinn

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

My understanding of gambling has increased immeasurably since the initiation of the research which led to this thesis. Largely responsible for this part of my education are native Indian and non-native gamblers. Their skill, enthusiasm and involvement drew attention to the activity of gambling as one which deserved study. The anonymity of these individuals ought not to conceal my gratitude.

Wendy, my wife, has played considerably more than a supportive role in the research and writing of this thesis. It was her own interest in the music associated with slahal that brought us into a position to observe a gambling match and meet the gamblers. As the research on gambling music continued, our interests developed, often in dialectical fashion, yet with congenial results.

I wish to acknowledge the assistance of my thesis advisor, Professor Michael Ames, and my committee members, Professors Wilson Duff and Yunshik Chang, in the preparation of this thesis.

INTRODUCTION

When I first began to think about the significance of gambling it occurred to me that I could remember few references to it in the published ethnographies, and no mention of the institution in any of the theoretical articles I knew. A brief search in several bibliographies revealed only a couple of books which made explicit reference to gambling in their titles and some scattered journal articles that appeared to deal with the topic. After more research it appears that the study of gambling has occupied only the residual interest of most anthropologists. During my investigation of the literature a variety of articles and books turned up, many of them written by psychologists, sociologists, psychiatrists and legislators. In contrast, anthropological concern with gambling, as an institution, seems mild.

The anthropological literature of gambling consists largely of descriptive accounts of the paraphernalia, and catalogues of the games which are associated with gambling in different cultures. In the modest body of monographic and theoretical material on gambling are a few items, which are given detailed consideration below. (see Flannery & Cooper, 1946; Desmond, 1952; Helm & Lurie, 1966; etc.) Our attention is drawn outside the anthropological literature quite consistently by the published material on

gambling. It is conceivable, but not always feasible, to derive data from sources apart from the ones sanctioned by the discipline (e.g., ethnographies). The difficulty arises, however, in reconciling the diverse perspectives of physicians, lawmakers and psychologists, for example, with the information they generate. Any serious comparative study of gambling from an anthropological perspective would demand at least a modicum of uniformity in the data presented. If theoretical variables are to be isolated and generalizations to be formulated, similar kinds of information are required of each case that is studied. Furthermore, our canons of objectivity do not necessarily prevail in other disciplines, possibly discrediting the application of such data to anthropological problems.

There exists a small core of articles, chiefly the work of social psychologists, which investigates the nature of games and their social functions, on the one hand, and seeks to formulate a typology of games and game characteristics which can be correlated with societal features and levels of complexity on the other. (see Roberts, Arth, and Bush, 1959) In one case (Roberts and Sutton-Smith, 1962), the variables to be correlated are type of game and child-training practices. The categorization here of games, by the predominance of strategy, skill, or chance in determining their outcome, is questionable. The subsequent correlation of these features with child-rearing practices raises more

questions than it answers. However, the inadequacy of these sources for the present study is that they do not pertain to gambling per se. Gambling can be separated from the events or games gambled on, both concretely and analytically. The similarity of gambling games and non-gambling games, as well as related practices is examined briefly in the next chapter.

Some of the articles cited above may deserve more attention than I can pay them in this context. The demonstrated correlations are provocative enough. For example, in the article "Games in Culture" it is suggested that the presence of game-type (skill, chance, strategy) is related to the level of socio-political complexity of a society (Roberts, Arth, Bush, 1959). Yet, is it valid, even for their purposes, to make that correlation after categorizing games the way they do? Chance, strategy and skill clearly are aspects of all games. If games are considered to be exercises in mastery of different features of the environment, perhaps it is relevant to characterize them according to the prevalence of these features. However, this typology tends to ignore the player's view of the game, which may very likely differ from the observer's. (Games of chance, e.g. are often conceived of as battles of wit or strategy in guessing, and may in fact be exercises in mastery of this type for the participants.) I think that the categories chance, skill and strategy actually represent

the variable of complexity of games. This being the case, the authors have managed to demonstrate the direct relationship between the complexity of games present in a culture and the complexity of the culture itself. Without some clarification of the tri-partite classification of games, it is difficult to conclude more from the evidence. The specific study of games apart from gambling falls outside the scope of this paper. Thus, the value of the abovementioned articles in this research has been mainly suggestive.

The brief review of the published material on gambling is not intended to be exhaustive or conclusive. It is intended simply to show the nature and extent of anthropological interest in gambling. A caveat emptor is issued against the indiscriminate adoption of either conclusions or data from other sources in support of generalizations dealing with anthropological variables. It is the purpose of this paper to develop an anthropological framework for the study of gambling. In doing this, various points of view will be considered. To be examined in detail are several accounts of gambling in native North American societies. The reasons for this ethnographic focus will be explained later on. In formulating an anthropological approach to gambling I have leaned heavily on two articles. An exposition of the ideas contained therein will precede the analysis of the ethnographic material.

CHAPTER ONE

A holistic perspective

I have made several references in the preceding pages to the anthropological inadequacy of various accounts of gambling. This inadequacy, it was suggested, lay in their failure to provide anthropological explanations for the practices described. It would hardly be reasonable to expect specialists from other fields to express concern for the same variables and relationships which anthropologists have staked out as their territory. Yet our interests are not exclusive, and we must be careful to distinguish the perspective from which we propose to look at the subject.

What makes the anthropologist's approach to behavior unique, in my opinion, is that it should be holistic. This is a fundamental, and very traditional, way of distinguishing the viewpoint of anthropology from the other social sciences. More needs to be said about the theoretical and methodological consequences of analysing behavior in this way, especially to elucidate the variables and relationships which enter into a "holistic" view. This may appear to be a digression from the study of gambling, but it is not. It is absolutely crucial to the study of gambling, first of all, to clarify what is meant by an anthropological framework.

On a list of the categories of behavior to be studied by anthropologists, one normally finds at least the following minimum: economic, political, kinship and religious or ritual aspects. An anthropological account will then consist in some explanation which relates these features of an institution to the culture from which it is derived. This is admittedly sketchy and provides very little in the way of a heuristic device in seeking to study a particular institution anthropologically. It says little more than look at all aspects of the unit in question and all the relationships between these and other features of the culture.

It is possible to specify more carefully how anthropological concerns will be served in examining a particular institution. This is not to be construed as a proposal of new directions in anthropology, but merely a statement of what is ordinarily done in the field. The inspiration for this statement is two-fold: first, the need to spell out what an "anthropological approach to gambling" will do; second, the discovery of a lucid and insightful article by Abner Cohen in the journal Man which deals with the problem as it arises in a different context (Cohen, 1969).

Cohen turns our attention to a rather basic cleavage among the recent practitioners of anthropology. There is

a tentative dichotomy of anthropologists into two camps according to the emphasis of their studies: "the action theorists" and "the thought structuralists." This is not a strict division, as must be obvious, but in many cases an inclination to concentrate on one variable more than another, while holding "other things equal." The variables under discussion here, power relations and symbolic action, are at the root of all anthropological inquiry and interpretation according to Cohen. Furthermore, he states that anthropologists have been concerned particularly with the study of the relationship between these two major variables. How Cohen arrives at these conclusions and what relevance they have for the study of gambling are discussed below.

In all the various kinds of work which anthropologists do, there is a common thread, some focus, which gives identity to the accretion of techniques and ideas. According to Cohen, the commonest element is the attempt to study the social structure holistically. More specifically, this concern of social anthropologists has resulted in their dwelling on four broad areas of institutions: economic, political, kinship and ritual. (This "averaging out" of anthropological interest is based on the recurrent format and content of ethnographic monographs.) Looking more closely at these four institutional fields we see that political and economic institutions are intimately related as are kinship and ritual institutions. It is taken for granted here that these institutional categories are, in

fact, really aspects of all behavior. Although sometimes problematic, the analytic separation is common enough to permit its adoption here.

The reason that economic and political institutions tend to blend together under analysis is that the relationships that they embody are often overlapping or identical. This can be seen by considering how economic institutions are comprised of relations between men as well as the means of production of the society. Cohen points out that such relations are relations of power and in that sense not unlike political relationships. In any case, by moving to a slightly higher level of abstraction, we may observe the fundamental similarity of economic and political relations, and how they can be subsumed under the heading "power relations." In a similar fashion it can be shown that kinship and ritual institutions are fundamentally alike and may be subsumed under the heading of symbols or symbolic complexes. Following Cohen, both kinship and ritual institutions are characteristically normative, cognitive, affective (rather than neutral) and conative (impelling men to action). These common characteristics are illuminating since they suggest that the separation of kinship and ritual is somewhat arbitrary, and for present purposes, unnecessary. The term "symbol" as it is used in Cohen's analysis is interchangeable with "custom." Thus we are left with two broad areas which concern social anthropologists, namely

symbol systems and power relations.

Cohen proceeds to distinguish between symbolic forms and symbolic functions. We are alerted to the fact that different forms may perform similar functions. I believe this awareness in general is acute among anthropologists, who have the advantage of comparative ethnography to assist the development of general principles. Nevertheless, the interchangeability of kinship and ritual symbols in articulating essentially political groupings is well demonstrated in the literature. Many of the recent studies of the process of acculturation trace the substitution of symbolic complexes for one another while the symbolic function of articulating groups within the society in question is unchanged. The converse is equally possible, however, and symbolic forms may be adapted to new purposes (functions) in situations of change.

Social anthropologists analyse symbolic forms in order to discover their symbolic functions. One of the most important of these functions is the objectification of relationships between individuals and groups. We can observe individuals objectively in concrete reality, but the relationships between them are abstractions that can be observed only through their symbolism. Values, norms, rules and abstract concepts like honor, prestige, rank, justice, good and evil are made tangible through symbolism, and men in society are thus helped to be aware of their existence, to comprehend them and to relate them to their daily life.

(Cohen, 1969, p. 220)

Analysis in anthropology is distinguished from description. The former is concerned with interdependence or the dialectical interaction between the two broad variables of symbolism and power relations. Description is usually achieved by a concentration on one variable or the other. However, these two enterprises are not qualitatively distinct but rather a matter of degree. This brings us to Cohen's dichotomy of anthropological trends into the "action theorist" and the "thought structuralist" schools.

Action theorists are apparently concerned with describing the manipulations of individuals, within the social system, in their quest for power. The symbolic complexes which govern the behavior of the individuals is kept outside the consideration of these theorists. Cohen argues that these accounts are suggestive but not explanatory because they fail to consider the dynamic involvement of symbolism in both the activities of the individuals and the formation and maintenance of groups. The so-called "thought structuralists" in Cohen's view have opted to ignore social relations almost completely while searching for the inherent logic in symbolism. Following Lévi-Strauss, their pre-occupation is with the relationship of symbols among themselves. Cohen suggests that the thought structuralists find an imperfect correspondence between the logic of symbolic categories and the relations of men "on the ground"

and opt in favor of ignoring the latter to preserve the former.

It is clear from the above discussion that whether or not we agree that most current anthropology can be subsumed under two rubrics, the predominance of one variable over the other will lead us away from a holistic, and thus a uniquely anthropological analysis. Similar criticisms to Cohen's may be levelled at other "schools" of anthropology which often become reductionist in their explanations. For example, the Whiteans, and more particularly the followers of Sahlins and Service, the so-called neo-evolutionists, may be charged with neglect of the variable of symbolism. The cultural materialist slant in their work and in others', drawing on Marx as it does, has certainly helped us balance the more extreme particularistic movements in the field. The evolutionists have re-emphasized the importance of cross-cultural comparison and generalization as a foil to intensive studies of singular cases. Yet, their theoretical position has been to treat what Cohen has called symbolism as merely the dependent variable in a relationship where the physical environment and politico-economic structures are the independent variable. There is a tendency in this school of thought which at its most extreme might be called "neo-environmental determinism." The point here is that although the methodological contribution of this genre is significant and their philosophical and theoretical influence

substantial, there is a strong reductionist flavor.

Cohen notes that:

Thought structuralists have greatly refined our understanding of the nature and working of symbolism. They have re-emphasized the view -- recently weakened by the departure of many anthropologists from some of the tenets of classical Durkheimian sociology -- that the symbolic order is not just a mechanical reflection or an epiphenomenon, of the political order, but is a fact having an existence of its own, in its own right. (Cohen, 1969, p. 225)

Let me summarize Cohen's argument as it has impressed me. Anthropologists are engaged in the common enterprise of studying the social structure holistically. This is accomplished by the description and isolation of two major variables in our data, symbolism or symbolic complexes and political or power relations. Subsequently, our analysis consists of the working out of the relationship between these two variables. These concerns dictate the format and content of our substantive work, the ethnographic monographs. They have also dominated our theoretical papers. However, recent trends indicate a tendency by different schools to dwell on one variable to the neglect of the other, admittedly a matter of emphasis, but nevertheless undermining the unique perspective of social anthropology. We must re-orient ourselves to the exploration of the central theoretical problem in anthropology, namely the interdependence of symbolism and power relations. The following comment illustrates this need:

This is noticeable in some post-graduate work of recent years which tends to concentrate on one variable to the neglect of the other. The main reason why this one-sidedness appeals to beginners is that it requires little analytical effort. It solves for them the irksome problem of having to find a 'problem' for the analysis of ethnographical data. To concentrate on the study of either power relationships or of symbolism does not involve a great deal of analytical effort; it poses mainly problems of unidimensional description. An account of how individuals struggle for power, or of how people behave symbolically, is a categorical description of facts which can be either true or false. It is only by posing problems involving the investigation of sociological relations, or of dialectical interaction, between different sets of fact or invariables, that significant analysis can be undertaken.
(Cohen, 1969, P.227)

I wish to take up one last point before going on to relate this paradigm of anthropology to gambling. Cohen does not make it explicit, but I feel that his recommendations for the pursuit of anthropological inquiry can reconcile two further trends in the field, namely the particularistic versus the generalizing or comparative. In most ethnographies the author attempts to give a total picture of the society in question. Depending on his own affiliation he may emphasize the symbolic or the power relations. Yet, as a rule, there is an attempt made at an analysis in Cohen's sense, i.e. of the interdependence of these two variables. Perhaps ethnographies are the most faithful representation of the esprit of anthropological research. However, papers or monographs devoted to the exploration of theoretical issues

and comparative studies may represent the field less favorably. Such works tend to become more controversial without any marked improvement in their quality. The dictum that we concern ourselves with the symbolism of power relations is valid outside the particularistic tradition of ethnography. Comparative and general studies can be aimed at the elucidation of this theoretical problem. I hope that the study of gambling which follows will be judged as positive evidence of this possibility.

CHAPTER TWO

Gambling variables

One of my first impressions of gambling as an activity is that it tends to evoke strong responses in its participants and even in non-participant observers. I am judging, of course, from a limited number of gambling experiences, but ones which belong to at least two different cultures, namely the Euro-American and the contemporary native Indian. Without much persuasion I think most observers or players themselves would agree that whatever dynamic factors are present in the gambling referred to above, the affective aspect of behavior is overwhelmingly represented. No doubt any gambling experiences the reader may have will corroborate this common-sense description. It is important that the expressive nature of gambling be made immediately apparent. I do not deny the possibility of treating gambling as a form of economic transaction. Indeed, this has been done by game theorists and those interested in questions of subjective probability, etc. (see e.g. Cohen and Hansel, 1956; Cohen, 1960; Bergler, 1970). Such accounts are not relevant to the present study, however. The treatment of gambling there is formal and often mathematical and eschews the examination of the variables which dominate our interest.

That gambling has a strong affective component and that it provides expressive outlets for participants need not be a source of contention. It will be useful, however,

to look at gambling as an abstraction and to state clearly what it is we mean to study and thus provide some basic definitions. As a beginning I cite the following definition provided by Devereux in his extraordinarily lengthy and detailed study of gambling in the United States:

. . . an activity in which two or more persons engage, under certain rules and conditions specified in advance, to make a transfer of any specified amount of property contingent upon the outcome of a future and uncertain event. (Devereux, 1949, p. 28)

If we consider this definition for a moment it is possible to isolate a few basic elements which constitute gambling in a formal sense. These are: the gamblers, the wager (including both the bet or stake and the terms) and the event. As a minimum, these elements must be present in order to constitute gambling. Games, it can be seen, lack the wager element and in themselves cannot be considered gambling. There are, of course, rules and conditions specified in playing games, but the absence of an agreement for the transfer of property distinguishes them from gambling. I wish to digress for a moment to elaborate the distinction between games and gambling and to raise the interesting question of divination as it relates to the above.

It may be shown now that an alternative way of distinguishing gambling from games is to note that the former consists of the mobilization of empirical means to empirical ends. That is, one gambles in order to win

property and this understanding is fundamental to the enterprise. One plays games to win, presumably, but the reward is intangible and non-empirical. Thus a game in this sense is comprised of the use of empirical means (i.e. the agreed upon rules and conditions) to non-empirical ends. At this point the psychologists jump in to provide explanations of game-playing and its social significance (see Roberts, Arth, and Bush, 1959, above). Following this line of analysis we can consider the frequently-noted similarity of certain games and the practice of divination. (see e.g. Moore, 1957; Lesser, 1933) In divination the diviner attempts to ascertain certain information, e.g. the location of animals or water by means of certain techniques. e.g. the examination and interpretation of the cracks in burnt shoulder blades of animals. Both ends and means are empirical, however there is no scientific connection between them. Certain games appear to be adaptable to divinatory purposes and vice versa. This interchangeability suggests the similarity in the symbolic forms of such customs despite the discrepancies in symbolic functions.

Consider briefly the implications of the definition of gambling I propose to adopt. This may be done in the way of a structural analysis of the properties of gambling as they have been described thus far. Gambling is first of all, a form of interaction among the player/participants. The nature of this interaction is quite variable, as I shall demonstrate below, but presupposes a means of communication.

The communication referred to need not be verbal as the case of the handgame in North America illustrates.

However, some minimal cultural sharing is necessary since the gambling requires the comprehension and acceptance of items in the wager. This feature of gambling, indeed of nearly any kind of intercourse short of open violence, is of utmost sociological importance. In conceptualizing the setting for gambling we must immediately acknowledge the presence of shared institutions, at least as pertains to the wagering itself. It can be considered problematic, and made a focus of inquiry, to what degree shared institutions exist between gamblers or gambling groups. Moreover, the similarity of gambling and other institutions as interaction between individuals and groups can be compared and contrasted. These and related questions will be addressed later on, in recommending areas of research on gambling.

Devereux notes that "Rules vary (in gambling) but involve procedures for determining who has lost and who has won." (op. cit., p. 29) There is thus a determinate relationship between the outcome of events wagered on and the selection of a winner, i.e the recipient of the property transfer. The gamblers are, in effect, relying on a decision which is external to themselves but not outside their sphere of influence in all cases. To what degree control over the outcome of events is available to the players and the nature of that control is the variable which characterizes the events or games which players gamble on. (Recall the

typology of games based on the predominance of physical skill, chance, or strategy) Also in Devereux (1949, loc. cit.) is the statement:

Gambling thus involves the addition of an artificial interest in the outcome of an uncertain event, an interest which did not exist prior to or independently of the wager.

This may be stated in a different way which is consonant with an earlier reference in this paper to Cohen. Gambling is cognitive and affective in that it directs the attention of the players selectively and predisposes them negatively or positively, but not neutrally, toward the event. Following Cohen, we are alerted to the inherent symbolic nature of gambling. This feature will be discussed more fully below.

We may return for a moment to consider some further sociological implications of the definition of gambling. The existence of the wager as a crucial element of gambling presupposes both the availability of property to stake and a means for determining value in order to conclude the bet. Wagerable property may be variously defined according to the gamblers and the culture in question. However, the concept of property minimally suggests an economic system in which property is created and a political system by which it is controlled. This holds true whether there are simply two gamblers or a complex set of teams or sides. The notion of value raises again the question of shared cultural traits. The assessment of value can be particularly problematic in

the absence of a code or currency. Yet, in order to gamble at all the value of the wagered property must be recognized by the players, however they accomplish it. I mentioned above that gambling constituted a transaction of sorts, and that point may be elaborated. Devereux states that, ". . . the gambling transaction is zero-sum: that is, the winnings are exactly equal to the losses." (op.cit. p. 29) Whether or not there is the introduction or removal of property (the inverse of a zero-sum transaction, as I understand it), there is at least the circulation of property implied by the wager. Thus, the players are implicated in an economic system that regulates the production, and a political system that regulates the flow, of property.

As a preliminary to the presentation of Geertz's material I would like to examine some symbolic aspects of gambling in the abstract. Regardless of the event wagered on, there is a definite assignment of the identities of winner and of loser to the gamblers. This quality is inalienable from and characteristic of gambling although not exclusive to it (games, e.g. have means for determining the winner and the loser). Players are thus engaged de facto in a competition for the scarce status of winner. The degree of competition and conflict is highly variable among gamblers as we shall see from a discussion of Geertz's paper. However, the competitive situation is never absent from gambling despite the strength of commitment of the

players to the identities the wager assigns them. It must be obvious, as well, that the determination of victory or failure in gambling is more straightforward, more black and white, than in most everyday life situations. The nature of gambling, that is, the wagering of something of value on the uncertain outcome of events, make it analogous to many real-life situations of the players. This is a crucial similarity, one which will be shown to characterize the activity in the minds of the players as well as the observers.

A brief summary is in order to refocus our view of gambling so far. In the realm of symbols and symbolic complexes we have shown that gambling:

- has strong affective, cognitive and conative components in terms of Cohen's formulation
- comprises a purposeful/competitive situation/
par excellence
- assigns an identity to participants, namely the status of winner and of loser
- constitutes a dramatic representation of everyday life for the players

With regard to the variable of power relations, gambling:

- is a form of interaction and thus requires a minimum of shared culture to communicate

- presupposes an economic system which generates property and a political system which controls access to it
- requires common values towards property of its participants and by implication, mutual participation in a system of exchange

These characteristics are derived inductively, so to speak, by an examination of the essential elements of gambling according to our definition. Further on, similar kinds of characteristics will be suggested based on a comparative analysis of gambling practices in several societies. We now turn to Geertz and his distinction deep play/shallow play.

Geertz's contribution to the study of gambling stems from his interest in the cockfight and its significance to the Balinese. (Geertz, 1972) During a period of fieldwork in Bali he discovered the remarkable involvement of his subjects in the betting and fighting of cocks. The specific ways in which cockfighting reflects Balinese culture need not concern us here. However, he came to certain conclusions about gambling, and the attitudes of gamblers whom he observed, that are very illuminating. First of all, he notes that up to a point one can explain the motivation of gamblers in terms of the economic rewards of winning the wager. In the

case of bets of relatively small value vis à vis the economic resources of the gambler, the marginal utility of winning is apparent. However, Geertz consistently observed that gamblers were betting enormous sums in relation to their resources and that the marginal disutility of losing far surpassed the benefits of victory. In order to reconcile this seeming inconsistency, he borrows the distinction "deep play/shallow play" from Bentham. Deep play occurs when the economic utility of the amount wagered is less than the disutility; the gambler is "in over his head". Shallow play is the converse of deep play and is not discussed much further, since it characterizes gambling of minor sociological significance. It is clear that strictly economic or rational interpretations of deep play are inadequate. The explanation, as Geertz points out, is really simple. Placing a wager on the outcome of any event creates interest in that event (see Devereux above). Placing a large bet creates considerable interest and an "excessive" bet makes the contest meaningful indeed. And, the meaning here is not difficult to locate, given the identification of Balinese men and the cocks they bet on. The cockfight, i.e. the "deep" cockfight, is a symbolic battle to the death of the cock-owners, and their status, their prestige, is at stake.

It is in large part because the marginal disutility of loss is so great at the higher levels of betting that to engage in such betting is to lay one's public self, allusively and metaphorically, through the medium of one's cock, on the line. And though to a Benthamite

this might seem merely to increase the irrationality of the enterprise that much further, to the Balinese what it mainly increases is the meaningfulness of it all. And as (to follow Weber rather than Bentham) the imposition of meaning on life is the major end and primary condition of human existence, that access of significance more than compensates for the economic costs involved. (Geertz, 1972, p. 16)

Having thus narrowed his field of inquiry, Geertz proceeds to examine the symbolism of the deep cockfight as it relates to Balinese social structure through the mechanism of "status gambling." He demonstrates that the symbolic identification of cocks and men is pervasive in the folklore, mythology and literature of Bali. Furthermore, the representation of everyday status concerns metaphorically in the cockfight is shown with reference to anecdotes and clichés. The behavior of Balinese men in the care and breeding of cocks is characterized by symbols and symbolic complexes. What then is the particular importance of the gambling practices in reinterpreting the cockfight? Geertz answers:

What makes Balinese cockfighting deep is thus not money in itself, but what, the more of it that is involved the more so, money causes to happen: the migration of the Balinese status hierarchy into the body of the cockfight. (op.cit., p. 17)

The critical feature of deep gambling is the endowment of meaning, through symbolic complexes, on the enterprise. The sociological significance of gambling in the Balinese setting is the activation of a symbolic field in which the participants act out in mutually intelligible ways their concerns in everyday life.

Cohen states that, "Symbolic forms are the products of creative work. Their internal structure is a dramatic structure and their study is partly a study in the sociology of art." (op.cit., p. 220) In Geertz we find, "As any art-form -- for that, finally, is what we are dealing with -- the cockfight renders everyday, ordinary experience comprehensible in terms of acts and objects which have had their practical consequences removed and been reduced (or, if you prefer, raised) to the level of sheer appearances, where their meaning can be more powerfully and more exactly perceived." (op.cit., p. 23) The parallels in the approach advocated by Cohen to such behavior and the one adopted by Geertz, simplifies the task of working out the variables in studying gambling. Geertz delves into the symbolic functions of the cockfight, a kind of structural analysis, in order to demonstrate the links between the symbolic and the actual in Balinese thought. Given our previous analysis of gambling as an abstraction, it is not too difficult to fill in the cockfight and arrive at the central theme as Geertz does. That is, the association of status affirmation and re-affirmation with the life and death struggle of the cocks. The Balinese thus portray their own concern with status rivalries, to themselves, as a life and death struggle. It is not necessary to dwell on the symbolism of cockfighting any longer, interesting as it is in Balinese life.

Another comment from Cohen on symbolic function:

. . . all politics, all struggle for power, is segmentary. This means that enemies at one level must be allies at a higher level. Thus a man must be an enemy and an ally with the same set of people, and it is mainly through the 'mystification' generated by symbolism that these contradictions are repetetively forced out and temporarily resolved.
(op.cit., p. 221)

Geertz refers to the cockfight as, ". . . a simulation of the social matrix, the involved system of cross-cutting, overlapping, highly corporate groups -- villages, kingroups, irrigation socieites, temple congregations, "castes" -- in which its devotees live." (op.cit., p. 18) He continues to explore the pattern of betting which emerged from his observation of scores of cockfights. The most general principle which is derived states that a man will bet on a cock which is owned by a kinsmen, and in the absence of a close kinsmen, one bets on an allied group rather than an unallied one, and so on, in concentric rings of alliance. The dramatic nature of the cockfight thus serves the symbolic function of uniting or re-uniting alliance groups through an expression of support and solidarity which is variable. Moreover, in a setting in which alliances are a dramatic matter, the cockfight provides a public forum for the display of support and alignment. For example,

. . . the institutionalized hostility relation, puik, is often formally initiated (though its causes always lie elsewhere) by such a "pardon me"

bet (against the grain) in a deep fight, putting the symbolic fat in the fire. Similarly, the end of such a relationship and resumption of normal social intercourse is often signaled (but, again not actually brought about) by one or the other of the enemies supporting the other's bird. (op.cit., P. 20)

In concluding the presentation of Geertz's material I wish to draw attention to an approach which the author advocates. He suggests that, ". . . one takes the cockfight, or any other collectively sustained symbolic structure as a means of "saying something of something" . . ." (op.cit., p. 26) Stated differently, the author recommends studying customs or symbols to understand their meaning to the people who created and maintain them. He compares this endeavour with the exegesis of a literary text and contrasts it with the "classical" approach to analysis of such cultural forms. This need not represent a radical re-ordering of anthropological priorities, but merely a shift in emphasis from "dissection" of cultural systems to their interpretation. Thus,

What sets the cockfight apart from the ordinary course of life, lifts it from the realm of everyday, practical affairs and surrounds it with an aura of enlarged importance is not, as functionalist sociology would have it, that it reinforces status discriminations (such reinforcement is hardly necessary in a society where every act proclaims them), but that it provides a metasocial commentary on the whole matter of assorting human beings into fixed hierarchical ranks and then organizing the major part of collective existence around that assortment. Its function, if you want to call it that, is interpretive: it is a Balinese reading of a Balinese experience; a story they tell themselves about themselves.

(Geertz, 1972, p. 26)

Geertz would probably not argue with the fact that good ethnographers have been engaged in precisely the enterprise he encourages for many years. However, many anthropologists have avoided this sort of analysis in their concentration on the sociological functions of the behavior they study. What Geertz urges is a more explicit and rigorous treatment of cultural forms which has as its central focus the discovery of the meaning of those forms to the people who sustain them. This is quite different from the "structuralism" of Lévi-Strauss as the following statement explains:

. . . rather than taking myths, totem rites, marriage rules or whatever as texts to interpret, Lévi-Strauss takes them as ciphers to solve, which is very much not the same thing. He does not seek to understand symbolic forms in terms of how they function in concrete situations to organize perceptions (meanings, emotions, concepts, attitudes); he seeks to understand them entirely in terms of their internal structure, 'indépendant, de tout sujet, de tout objet, et de toute contexte.'

(op.cit., p. 36)

The radical nature of Geertz's proposal to treat cultural forms as texts arises not from the methodology of doing so, or even from the descriptions one might expect from such a method. Rather it is the implications for the analysis of symbolic function which are revised. He tells us, in essence, that the symbolic function of an event like the cockfight resides in its ability to dramatize social concerns of the observers and to reorient their perceptions by selectively emphasizing their particular values, attitudes,

concepts, etc. By extension, the cognitive orientation thus reinforced will tend to support certain political structures. However, he insists that the consideration of sociological functions should follow the analysis of cultural forms and the working out of the relations and values which they make explicit to the participants. Geertz exhorts us to treat the cockfight as a text in order to see an essential feature of it which might be obscured by treating it as a rite or pastime, namely, " . . . its use of emotion for cognitive ends." (op.cit., p. 27)

In summary I wish to review the salient points of Geertz's article for our framework of gambling.

- the distinction deep play/shallow play establishes the differences between gambling for money (where marginal utility is greater than disutility) and gambling for status (the utility is less than the disutility)
- two corollaries of deep play/shallow play are:
 - 1) the role of status concerns in wagering -- specifically, the determination of bets according to alliances
 - 2) the role of money in gambling -- a means of endowing the event with meaning and signalling the gambler's concern with extra-economic issues

- the dramatic nature of an event like the cockfight and the expressive and symbolic aspects of the gambling which enriches it
- the treatment of cultural forms such as the cockfight in Bali as a text to be interpreted
- the implications of the analysis of symbolic forms as texts for the discovery of symbolic functions (specifically, their cognitive qualities)
- the consequences of the foregoing discussion of symbolic form and function for the problem of discovering the relationship between symbolism and relations of power.

I have not elaborated the last point, but I feel that it has been stated and restated in different ways in the previous review of Geertz. Geertz makes the relationship between symbolism and power relations problematic. He indirectly invites us to reconsider how symbolic forms may function to articulate political groupings (see e.g. the discussion above of institutionalized hostility relationships and the cockfight and also the network of alliances and the cockfight). His way of treating cultural forms maintains them as a separate variable (symbolic) from political relations. The interdependence of the two variables is asserted, neither one being subsumed under the other in an

independent-dependent relationship. The precise nature of the relationship is not stated, but his analysis of cockfights is replete with suggestions about how symbolic complexes relate to concrete situations.

We move now to a tentative formulation of the variables involved in a study of gambling, prior to attempting an application of the framework. We shall be almost exclusively interested in what Geertz has termed "status gambling." Status gambling arises from deep play and is signaled by the amount and nature of the property wagered. Why exclude so-called "money gambling?" For anthropological purposes it is justifiable to focus on the cultural forms which promise to yield the most provocative results in analysis. It has been demonstrated above that gambling of the former type can be fruitfully analyzed for its symbolic functions. Furthermore, the majority of ethnographic material is concerned with status rather than money gambling. Geertz also points out that the gamblers involved in deep play are also the individuals who in ordinary life are involved in long-term status rivalries (op.cit., p. 17). Such gamblers are the "solid citizens", the "establishment" in society. Money gambling appears consistently to attract the lower strata and women and children. The correlation of social role and status with gambling participation is interesting in itself. However, it is secondary, though relevant, to the analysis of the symbolism of status gambling.

We have seen from the previous analysis of gambling in the abstract, that questions of identity, competition, inter-group relations, shared cultural traits, and general economic and political issues may be asked. In the discussion of Geertz's ideas we were introduced to the concept of cultural text and the interpretation of gambling in terms of its cognitive features. Moreover, we have noted the dramatic, symbolic nature of gambling in general. Formulating a coherent profile of gambling from these features, we might arrive at something as follows:

Beneath the superficial economic aspects of gambling resides a substratum of symbolism which lends a dramatic quality to the activity. Our purpose in describing gambling practices is to discover the meaning of the patterns of wagering and playing as they are understood by the gamblers. We can then begin to ask questions about the symbolic functions of the activity -- e.g.

What interpersonal relationships are emphasized?

What characteristics are associated with winning and losing?

How does gambling reorganize, reorient or reaffirm the player's perceptions of the game and everyday life?

We may also investigate the ways in which, on an abstract level, relations of power interact with the symbolism of gambling -- e.g.

Which relations are isolated by gambling?

As a public arena for the statement of
personal alignments, how does the betting
pattern affect group formation?

Thus, our general orientation towards gambling is holistic.
Our concerns include neither the symbolism nor the sociological
significance of gambling exclusively. Rather, we shall
inquire into both these aspects and the relationship
between them.

CHAPTER THREE

Five hand game cultures

In the next section of the paper I shall examine five ethnographic accounts of gambling. My purpose in reviewing this material is to demonstrate how gambling may be studied anthropologically. Why I have chosen these particular groups is explained presently.

The availability of literature on gambling is really quite limited as I noted earlier. I refer specifically to articles or monographs which have as their main topic, gambling, or a related game complex. In the general ethnographic literature there are numerous references to games and gambling as part of an inventory of the culture under scrutiny. (see e.g. Brewster, 1970) However, the "pickings" are meagre, indeed, when one is looking for an analysis of gambling. Thus, finding any sort of interesting article on gambling is eventful and I have had to carefully consider each one. I have been fortunate in one respect. My initial interest in gambling was more or less restricted to the gambling complexes of native Indians of North America, especially one referred to as the "hand game." Seemingly by coincidence, several of the rare articles which delve into gambling features have been concerned with the hand game. I seriously doubt that I could have located five reasonable descriptions of other gambling complexes without an inordinate amount of bibliographic work, if at all. Thus, I decided to

deal solely with these accounts, related as they all are to the hand game. There are some methodological advantages to this selection of materials, obviating the need to dwell on the nature of the gambling game after the initial presentation. Moreover, it permits me to focus on the variations in wagers, betting, and related features, other things being (fairly) equal. The goals of the analysis are comparative and general, whereas the individual sources are mostly particularistic studies.

I shall provide a brief, general description of the hand game so that the subsequent discussion of tribal variations is more meaningful. The hand game is usually described in the literature as a guessing game or a game of chance. (see Lesser, 1933; Culin, 1907) The opponents in the game are arranged on opposite sides of an area which they enclose, facing each other. The play consists of one or more members of one side, which is designated the "hiding side" for the play, concealing a small token or tokens in the hands. The other side, or "guessing side", must guess for the proper location of the token. The roles of hiding side and guessing side alternate when the location of the tokens is successfully determined. Sticks are often used to keep score of the incorrorect guesses and the game is over when all the sticks (or a multiple of that number) is in the possession of one side. There are elaborate variations of this basic format. For example, the variable elements of

the hand game are: paraphernalia, musical accompaniment, tally sticks and method of scoring, seating arrangements, value and timing of bets to name a few. The common features of all the games include: the basic group nature of the game, despite the assignment of specific roles such as guesser and hider to members of the side; the symbolism of conflict and competition which comprises game lore; the opportunity for players to utilize strategy and skill in the game, as well as relying on chance or luck to determine the outcome; the absence of verbal communication, other than the music; and the reliance on hand signals and gestures to conduct the game.

The hand game was commonly associated with trading and festival gatherings of dispersed bands and villages. Since verbal exchanges were not essential for participation, it was possible for even linguistically unrelated groups to play together. The gambling was often heavy, with considerable wagering of property in an atmosphere of economic recklessness. Allusions to gambling in different mythologies exist, but the moral value they attach to its practice is quite variable. There are even frequent references to the intervention, in traditional times, of supernatural forces in the hand games. The purposeful search for, and acquisition of, spirit power or assistance on specific occasions is not unknown. Where people gambled on the hand game they often gambled on other

games and sports as well. However, in many cases, the hand game sessions attracted the most serious gamblers who made the largest commitment in terms of property, particularly in the setting of inter-tribal matches. The aesthetic aspects of the games were often enhanced by musical accompaniment which was sometimes simply vocal, and sometimes percussive and vocal. Betting was ordinarily of two kinds: initial bets on the outcome of the entire game which were placed in advance of the play; "side bets", which were determined by the outcome of a single guess and were consummated immediately. Wagers were also characteristically dyadic, and without odds, so that the standard bet of one unit of property brought the victor a unit of similar value (i.e. if gamblers bet one dollar each, the winner has two dollars, the loser, nothing.) These general features will become more comprehensible as specific characteristics are presented and discussed below.

The first article I want to examine describes gambling among the Gros Ventre of Montana during the latter half of the nineteenth century. The authors (Flannery and Cooper, 1946) are concerned with social implications of gambling and state,

Our anthropological sources yield a fairly generous amount of information on the world distribution of gambling, the games and sports gamled on, the valuables wagered, the payment of gambling debts, and the ritual accompaniments of gambling. On the other hand, the same sources yield

extremely meager information, and for most gambling peoples none at all, on such social aspects of gambling as: its mode of meshing into the prevalent social organization (who gambles, with whom, and for what), its effectiveness in fulfilling or thwarting the wishes of the individual gambler and in meeting or blocking the needs of integral and fractional social groups; individual differences in participation and the motivations responsible for them; native attitudes towards gambling; the economic and other factors that are favorable or unfavorable to the rise and persistence of gambling in culture as such or in given cultures. Field and library studies of these and most other social aspect of gambling have been almost entirely neglected by anthropologists. (op.cit., p. 391)

Flannery and Cooper's interest in the social implications of gambling has led them to report details of what they title the "bettor-wager" pattern of the Gros Ventre. Their emphasis on the relational and political aspects of gambling results in some provocative conclusions but leaves the realm of symbolism largely unexplored. Enough ethnographic data is provided, however, to build up, inductively, a description of gambling which combines a consideration of the symbolic and relational aspects.

The Gros Ventre gambled on games other than the hand game. One in particular, the wheel game, was considered a serious event when played for high stakes, as it often was. There appears to be a fair amount of tribal lore about such games between individuals in the special relationship of "enemy-friends." Enemy-friendship was a deliberate pact stressing competition for status within the tribe and loyalty

in defense against outsiders. Enemy-friends were capable of, and expected to be, ruthlessly competitive with one another. In gambling they played for the highest stakes and sought the total "ruin" of each other. However severe the loss of property in such session, the "ruin" was more metaphorical than actual, as there were always kinsmen and allies to provide for the loser. The Gros Ventre recognized, themselves, that defeat in a wheel game with enemy-friends resulted in a ruinous loss of prestige. This type of gambling is mentioned to illustrate its essentially dramatic or metaphorical nature, and the awareness of this character by the participants and observers.

We need not dwell on the local variation of the hand game proper (i.e. style of implements, music etc.). The authors point out that the hand game was the most widespread object of serious gambling among the Gros Ventre despite the somewhat more sensational wheel games between enemy-friends. Enemy-friends also gambled on the hand game and, in any event, the hand game attracted wider participation of the community. The authors discovered an ambivalence of attitude among the participants towards gambling and explain it thus:

The foregoing ambivalent attitude can, we believe, be accounted for, in large part at least, by the data we have, incomplete though these data are. It is pretty clear from the prevalent bettor-wager pattern that the Gros Ventre recognized two more or less conflicting aspects of their gambling: a recreative one and a predatory one. Certain kinds

of gambling were indulged in predominantly for friendly recreation, to have a good time together. The minor wagering therein merely added a little spice and zest to play, while the losers suffered no appreciable loss or hurt. Other kinds, the common games for large stakes and the occasional ones for career prestige were indulged in predominantly for gain at the expense of the losers, for acquisition in which the losers suffered losses that were grievously felt and that seriously hurt. As the bettor-wager pattern shows, gambling of the first kind was recognized as consistent with the accepted canons of in-group altruism and benevolence; that of the second, as inconsistent therewith.

(op.cit., p. 416)

I think the best characterization of these sentiments on the part of the Gros Ventre points to the recognition of deep play and shallow play in their gambling. The so-called "predatory" gambling is status gambling and the depth of meaning in such play is its dramatization of concerns of personal identity and group solidarity. Precisely because participation in high stakes games put personal relationships "on the line", did they threaten the constitution of the community. In a sense, the stake in a serious or "deep" game was not only the prestige of the players, but because of this risk, their ability to relate to one another in appropriate ways subsequent to the game. The authors note that, "The Gros Ventre were consciously concerned with fomenting solidarity within their ranks: for one thing they were a fighting people beset with powerful enemies." (op. cit., p. 416) Thus, " . . . Gros Ventre attitudes on gambling appear to have been influenced very much by concern for

altruism and accord, very little by economic values." (op.cit., p. 418) The ambivalence of the Gros Ventre serves as a note of clarification on the nature of deep play in general.

Flannery and Cooper discovered that the complexities of the bettor-wager pattern could be reduced to a fairly simple set of determinants. Each of these factors says something about how the Gros Ventre viewed gambling, and, by implication, how they viewed the social matrix of their group. First, gambling was more frequent and for larger stakes when the "we-group altruism, cohesion, and loyalty" was less intense. (op.cit., p. 413-14) The importance of group solidarity and the need to promote loyalty in Gros Ventre villages was noted above. Given this consideration, gambling was thus regarded as a serious competitive and even divisive, factor in interpersonal relations. Once again, gambling was more frequent and for larger stakes, the greater the degree of familiarity and licence permitted between players. The opposite was true as well: the greater the degree of respect and avoidance demanded, the less frequent the gambling and the smaller the stakes. Here we notice that competition for status in gambling is restricted to individuals whose relationship is less bound by conventional behavior -- e.g. the people whose interaction is familiar and casual. Where behavior is circumscribed among individuals, e.g. those roles demanding respect, and even avoidance, the possibility

of competition for status in gambling is ruled out. This attitude is instructive, for it tells us that status rivalries are really possible only between status equals or near equals. In other words, one doesn't gamble seriously with a close kinsmen such as a parent because there is no prospect of altering one's status vis à vis that individual. On the other hand, one gambles fiercely with a relation such as an enemy-friend because the similarity of one's status promotes rivalry for prestige in the village. This feature of deep play also explains the exclusion of women and children from the really serious games. In order to have a truly competitive situation, it must be at least fairly matched. (Geertz notes that the most serious, most intense cockfights are the ones in which the cocks are most closely matched and the betting is consequently at short odds, i.e. even money -- Geertz, 1972, p. 22)

A factor which barred gambling entirely was the element of the sacred and/or ascetic which was associated with certain offices and the persons occupying them. One conclusion we might draw from the prohibition of gambling with individuals of sacred association is that gambling was an activity somehow offensive to sacred interests. However, I think that there is a more satisfactory explanation which is faithful to the attitude the Gros Ventre maintain. Gambling is primarily an activity for status-equals and an opportunity for the victorious players or team to demonstrate

superior abilities and enhanced prestige. We have already observed that the rivalry in gambling is keenest between individuals in an institutionalized competitive relationship. To gamble with the occupant of a sacred office would not only contravene the requirements of respect toward the individual, but would create a contest between the challenger and the divine forces which endow the individual with sacredness. The authors note that, "It was believed, too, that the keeper (sacred office) could not lose if, against the rules, he really did gamble." (op.cit., p. 413)

It is thus not conceivable, in the Gros Ventre view, to arrange to compete in a contest, the outcome of which is pre-determined. Even serious, ruthless gambling, in order to confer prestige, must allow the possibility of either player winning. The final factor in the pattern is the absence of gambling of any kind between bitter enemies, in this case the Gros Ventre and the Sioux. As the authors note, the existence of gambling presupposes, "... a minimum of friendliness between the players, or at least the absence of deadly and unqualified hostility." (op. cit., p. 414) We are thus reminded that despite the unleashing of competitive zeal in the most intense gambling matches, the vanquishing of one's opponents is still symbolic or metaphorical. Gambling may permit the display of conflict but it does so in a dramatic form in which the hostility of the players is circumscribed.

We have a picture of Gros Ventre gambling which emphasizes the fundamentally competitive, but orderly characteristics of its practice. In summary:

- gambling is related to the social structure of the Gros Ventre; it serves to dramatize the alliances which maintain the society and is therefore subject to the same expectations of proper behavior as everyday relations are. When these expectations are observed, gambling is a legitimate activity which attracts the participation of most members of the society
- serious gambling involves competition for status and results in increments in prestige for the winners and losers; tribal lore underlines the gravity of all-out gambling for career prestige and the devastation of opponents; however, the losses, even when extensive, are not permanent as they might be in actual warfare; losers can make a new beginning and thus the lessons from gambling may be well learned without incurring irreversible damage
- the bettor-wager pattern constitutes a code of gambling and applies equally to games and sports besides the hand game; to the extent that this is a consciously recognized code of the Gros Ventre, we have evidence supporting the

previous interpretations of gambling

Flannery and Cooper offer some insightful observations about the nature of Gros Ventre gambling which permit generalizations about the activity. Although their interest is explicitly sociological and they tend to focus on the relational aspects of gambling, it has been possible to derive a profile of the symbolism of gambling in that society. The symbolic aspects of Gros Ventre gambling seem to emphasize the competitive nature of gambling and thus, of life in general, but the need to engage in competition in orderly ways. Furthermore, the acquisition of prestige through gambling, as through exploits in everyday life, can properly occur only with reference to certain individuals. Stated differently, one strives in gambling, as in life, to achieve high status, but not at the risk of jeopardizing crucial relations with kinfolk in one's community. The pursuit of status in gambling, because of its dramatization of conflict, is viewed ambivalently, unless certain relations of harmony and peace are explicitly excluded from the competition.

Flannery and Cooper actually advance our study of the relationship between the symbolism of gambling and power relations, without addressing themselves to that question. Various factors have been discussed to show that the Gros Ventre regard gambling as a dramatization of conflict through

competition. The limitations of gambling in vanquishing opponents are noted above. Moreover, the bettor-wager pattern eliminates the most disruptive kind of confrontations such as those between close relatives and sacred officials against ordinary tribesmen. Given all these restrictions, what gambling says to the Gros Ventre is that one engages in conflict with one's opponents and vies for power but chooses the enemy carefully and never forgets one's friends. Yet, the ambivalence persists:

. . . Toward gambling practiced within the limitations of bettor-wager pattern, there was, by and large, no strong disapproval. Such gambling was in the main taken for granted. Yet such approval as was given, even as regards much of the gambling that conformed to the bettor-wager pattern, was in certain respects qualified and circumscribed. (op.cit., p. 415)

Because they were conscious of fomenting solidarity in their ranks the Gros Ventre were suspicious of any activity which promoted conflict too close to home. In gambling, the symbolism of conflict was balanced with the symbolism of harmony. Apparently this was a delicate balance which was closely observed by participants. Gros Ventre gamblers (this included most every man, woman, and child in the society) were faced with reconciling the contrary identities of competitor and ally. Gambling appeared to do this, but only when constrained by a code of proper behavior.

The next article I wish to examine begins as follows:

The purpose of the present study is to describe the gambling complex as it existed among the Yakima in the period from 1860-1880, to see its integration into Yakima culture and to discover, so far as possible, its functions in that culture. (Desmond, 1952, p. 1)

The Yakima reside in southern Washington and the information provided relates to the latter half of the nineteenth century. Their gambling complex was characterized by seasonal variations in the intensity and frequency of play and an emphasis on two principal forms and a host of minor ones. Gambling was heaviest on the bone game and on horse races. The attitude of Yakima breeders towards their horses is not unlike the Balinese sentiments towards cocks. Considerable time, energy and walth were invested in the cultivation of race horses, and it was often the wealthiest, most established individuals who were intensely committed to the sport. Horses had the additional quality of comprising a standard of value of property, the race horse being the most valuable and sought after possession of the Yakima. The bone game was the two-set, four bone variety in which one bone of each set was marked by a groove in the center. The object of the game was to guess the location of both unmarked bones, each set being manipulated by a hider on the same side. Gestures and signals obviated the need for verbal communication in both the playing and the betting. We shall now explore the incorporation of gambling in the culture of the Yakima.

Desmond's closing statement on Yakima gambling provides a good point of departure:

Thus, although out-group rivalry was keen, and expressed itself characteristically in gambling, it was so controlled that the harmonious relations among all people of the region -- based as it was on intermarriage, frequent contacts for trading, common exploitation of some resources, and the like -- were not unduly disturbed. (Desmond, 1952, p. 56)

This statement tells us something about the context of Yakima gambling, namely the complex network of inter-village and regional affiliations. While locating gambling in this setting, Desmond demonstrates how it is functionally related to the two broad institutional fields of symbolic complexes and politico-economic relations. The Yakima attitude towards gambling contrasts with the Gros Ventre ambivalence, "Anyone who had anything to bet could bet. No one advised against it." (op.cit., p. 49). In general, the Yakima appeared to stress the importance of successful interpersonal relations, whether at the level of the village or the region. The concept of generosity was well established and firmly rooted in Yakima psychology. It was the characteristic attitude in personal dealings and gambling was no exception in demanding a willingness to part with property. Desmond notes that:

A person who was in a position to meet wagers offered and who consistently refused to do so, or one who bet only a "sure thing", was considered niggardly and lost status, regardless of his other attainments. The regular bets were publicly displayed and everyone would know who bet what and could estimate how big the wagers were in proportion to the property owned by the

individual. Thus, even a person in relatively modest circumstances could maintain prestige by betting according to his means. (op.cit., p. 50)

Gambling was associated symbolically and in practice with certain magico-religious observances. Notably, "sweat house rites" were enacted for enterprises such as hunting and gambling: "The procedure included songs by the sweat house leader, talking to the sweat house as if to "a wise old man, a shaman," and asking for success." The association of supernatural power with gambling ventures was common. It was believed that the singing accompaniment of the principal player somehow activated the power and improved the chance of winning. A similar concept was attached to shamanistic curing. Yet in two respects gambling was distinct from other magico-religious pursuits. Certain objects were explicitly excluded from the universe of wagerable property. Among these were magico-religious objects such as bells and drums. Furthermore, gambling was totally absent from the winter dances and ceremonies. In fact, during serious games between important principals, " . . . pregnant women stayed away lest their children be born with a 'pride' for gambling. Children under two years were also kept away lest the power injure them, and mourners did not attend to avoid bringing bad luck to their companions." (op.cit., p. 40) Also, "Gambling was taken seriously and was not considered a time for joking or laughter." (op.cit., p. 37)

In a more recent article on the ceremonial integration of the Plateau area Brunton states that:

Gambling was a form of conflict
 Still, it was an institutionalized,
 ceremonial vehicle for the expression
 of conflict and it allowed expression
 on intergroup conflict in a controlled,
 ceremonial setting. In this light it
 may be viewed as cathartic.

(Brunton, 1968, pp. 7-8)

That the gambling complex of the Yakima was not undramatic
 is clear from the foregoing statement by Brunton and by
 other bits of evidence of Yakima attitudes towards the
 practice. Desmond remarks that gambling:

. . . helped to cement in-group solidarity
 without causing out-group rivalry of such
 dimensions as to threaten harmonious
 relations. Strong in-group solidarity
 resulted, of course, in out-group
 competition, but the gambling situation
 was such that it had no serious
 consequences.

(Desmond, 1952, p. 53)

He refers here not only to the nature and amount of wagerable
 wealth gambled, but more importantly to the essentially
 metaphorical nature of conflict in gambling.

We observe, then, among the Yakima, a continuity in
 the symbolic aspects of gambling and other magico-religious
 practices. In the hierarchy of ceremonial observances
 gambling is clearly beneath the winter dances and other
 expressly sacred rites in importance. However, there are some
 important discontinuities in the symbolic association with
 gambling, as noted above. Gambling, particularly the bone
 game, appears to be located at a midway point in the magico-
 religious scale, between the subsistence techniques of
 everyday life and the ceremonial observances of the most

sacred order. One interpretation might be that gambling is concerned with fundamentally "secular" interests, namely property and prestige. However, it elevates these concerns to a more general level by means of the dramatic interest created by the betting and the aesthetics of the game. Compare, for example, the Yakima attitude with the Gros Ventre prohibition of gambling by occupants of ritual offices. Desomond provides considerable information on the intertwining of gambling and the Yakima economy and this is discussed presently.

The Yakima exploited their resources on a seasonal basis, thus creating a recurrent pattern of activity which was closely linked to the availability of roots, game, fish, etc. Added to this were the changes in geographical mobility occasioned by the extremes of winter. The basic pattern consisted of:

- a winter period of relative leisure and confinement to home villages; minimal subsistence activities, repair of equipment; celebration of winter dances and ceremonies
- a spring period of intensive economic exploitation and dispersal to root grounds and hunting areas

- an early summer period of convergence on a common site for the extraction of roots and the celebration of feasts -- "the big time"
- a late summer convergence on camas grounds by two groups and the celebration of a second "big time"
- an early fall dispersal to hunting and berry sites during which activity was intense
- a late fall period of congregation at winter sites in preparation of accomodation, but with relative leisure and the persistence of high geographical mobility

Gambling was practiced throughout the year but the correspondence of intensive gambling with certain periods is marked. The largest gatherings during early and late summer, the "big times" were witness to intensive gambling. Also the period of relative leisure preceding the winter, saw the largest concentration of gambling. The economic associations here are clear. Gambling flourished during times of inter-village gatherings in an atmosphere of feasts and trade and during the round of inter-village visiting in

the leisure period prior to winter.

Desmond notes that,

Wagers were always of the dyad type, regardless of value. The intensity of interest and the amount wagered, however, depended primarily on the social distance of the opponents. Little was wagered on intrafamilial or intravillage games and sports. Competition was much keener and the stakes higher on intervillage contests especially when the villages were in different areas or represented different linguistic groups. (op.cit., p. 47)

The bettor-wager pattern is fundamentally the same for the Yakima as it is for the Gros Ventre. Gambling stakes decreased and the interest in the game lessened as opponents became more familiar. However, especially gifted gamblers, so-called "professionals" (usually those who had gambling "power") were often the source of the most intensive games. As might be expected, men of wealth were often the most notorious gamblers and the paradigm for the ultimate gamble in Yakima eyes is the wagering, by men of means, of all their property on a single gamble. This is looked upon favorably and enhances the prestige of such a gambler enormously.

I wish to provide a brief overview of the gambling habits of the Yakima and a few comments on the symbolic functions of gambling as they practice it. First of all, the Yakima are inextricably bound in a complex network of alliances with neighboring tribes as Desmond and Brunton

point out. The economic system of the entire region is based on seasonal, but intensive, exploitation of particular sites and the subsequent exchange of goods over the entire region to facilitate equitable distribution and consumption. It is incumbent on the Yakima to sustain good relations with their trading partners, since the transactions deal not only with manufactured items, but primarily with foodstuffs unobtainable in their exploitation region. The Yakima thus encourage attitudes of generosity in the deployment of property. There is a connection between the use of property and the acquisition of prestige. Gambling is a basic model for this type of behavior since the accepted canons of betting urge not only generosity, but recklessness in wagering property. However, as Desmond points out, the wagers are restricted to property at hand and in the possession of the individual betting. Furthermore, foodstuffs are never wagered. Thus the spectacle of the intensive game with high stakes, and its message about proper attitudes towards wealth and prestige, has limited costs in terms of everyday goods and resources. (see the opening citation of Desmond)

In keeping with the previous analysis of gambling we may ask, what does gambling say to the gamblers about their own social order? The meaning of the gambling is in the way it associates wealth and prestige. In a society of traders it says that property ought not be coveted but given freely and generously, to promote the esteem of one's

fellowmen. In the context of Yakima regional economy and social organization this appears to be an important lesson. Moreover, the enterprise of gambling was regarded as a legitimate form of competition. It carried the possibility of supernatural intervention in the form of gambling power and demanded the same preparation (sweat bath rites) as other ventures of import. In a sense, there is a validation of the meaningfulness of enterprises in the interpersonal field. That is, gambling, like hunting, commands preparation and diligence, and the rewards of the two ventures are thus likened symbolically. To win at gambling is akin to success in hunting -- thus the acquisition of prestige and property compares with the production of food. The main points of contrast between the gambling of the Yakima and of the Gros Ventre seem to be related to the differences in the socio-political environment of the two groups and their economic systems.

In the gambling literature in anthropology is a monograph on the Pawnee hand game by Alexander Lesser (Lesser, 1933). His interest in the gambling complex of that tribe was rather different from the perspective on gambling advocated here.. He was explicitly concerned with the study of cultural change and selected the transformation of the Pawnee gambling hand game into the Ghost Dance hand game during the latter years of the nineteenth century as his case in point. Nevertheless, he provides some detail

about the gambling habits of the Pawnee and enlightens us further by his analysis of the change from gambling to ceremonial features of the game. We shall be especially interested in noting the modification of hand game symbolism as it was adapted to the new context of the Ghost Dance.

The play of the Pawnee hand game was essentially the same as for the ones already described. The tokens for concealment were single bones instead of pairs and the seating arrangement was semi-circular but opponents still faced each other. Betting was dyadic and the property wagered included the items of highest value in Pawnee society, i.e. blankets, shirts, horses, etc. The game was typically initiated by a challenge, as among the Yakima, and competition intensified as the social distance between opponents increased. Thus, inter-tribal games were the keenest, inter-band games next, and intra-band games rather small and modest in stakes. The familiar themes of competition and conflict were clearly present. Lesser observes that:

. . . It was a game for men only, and primarily an adult's game; the women did not participate and were not supposed to come near where the men were playing. The game was conceived as a warpath, and so dramatized: and warpaths for the Pawnee were activities excluding the participation of women. The men's game was usually a contest between two Pawnee bands, in which one would visit the other for the express purpose of playing a hand game and gambling on the result. (Lesser, 1933, p. 139)

There was considerable ceremony in the preliminaries and the seating arrangements during the games between bands or tribes. One gets the feeling that hostility was lurking behind much of the visiting and gambling forays of the Pawnee, and to assuage mutual fears of attack and reprisal the participants tended to rely on established conventions and formalities of behavior.

Once again we may note the dramatic nature of the gambling complex -- its identification with the enterprise of raiding, "going on the warpath", and the affairs of adult men. Despite the symbolism of bloody conflict, the hand game fell short of physical violence and occurred in a setting of orderliness and formality. The formality of the game procedures and preliminaries contrasts with the unchecked hostility of real warfare, and may seem ironic to us. Yet the Pawnee were obviously capable of expressing conflict in the gambling, without disrupting the harmony of relations between opponents. The use of music and the gesticulations during the play of the game signal its affective, expressive elements. One convention of the game serves as a further link between the warpath and gambling:

To follow the trail of the bones when they are won and carried across to the other side is to trail the enemy. The guesser searches for tracks. A player on the hiding side goes to the fire for handfuls of cold ashes from the fire's edge. He

sprinkles it like falling snow. He calls aloud, "The snow covers up the tracks now, you cannot see them." Thus after an enemy raid in late fall when men started after the retreating war party to regain captured horses the falling snow obliterated the trail. To the Pawnee the little dramatic act has similar power to obliterate the unseen trail of the bones from hand to hand, to blind the guesser. The guesser shields his eyes with his hand and peers through the falling ashes to see the tracks. (op.cit., p. 144)

The bettor-wager pattern of the Pawnee appears to have less of the status of a code than it did among the Gros Ventre. This can be explained in terms of the circumstances of gambling. When the Pawnee wished to initiate a game of any magnitude it was necessary to pre-arrange with one's band members a time and a destination -- i.e. the site of another band. Thus a party of gamblers was already constituted prior to the play, with agreement to challenge another band and oppose them as a group. Furthermore, Lesser indicates no presence of side bets during the game. The wagers seem to be confined to the preliminary arrangements before the actual play and adhere to the dyadic model as mentioned above. There is a tendency in Lesser's account to play down the significance of the wagers and the composition of sides, although he refers to inter-tribal friendships in the arrangement of inter-tribal hand games:

Inter-tribal friendship was a definite formalized relationship in former times. It was of paramount importance, as through interlocking friendships tribes traditionally hostile to each other were drawn into peaceful relations. (op.cit., p. 149)

He suggests that the paradigm for inter-tribal hand games may have been the decision by an inter-tribal friend to challenge another to a game. In this case we might question the importance of such games in promoting peaceful relations. The evidence is not all there, so one must speculate, but perhaps the gambling competition replaced the warpath as alliances shifted and economic circumstances changed. Despite Lesser's cursory treatment of the wagering of the Pawnee, I suspect it was an important feature of hand games in much the same way as money was shown to intensify the significance of the cockfight in Bali. The Pawnee were wagering horses on hand games and surely this cannot be disregarded. Raiding parties, which were an integral feature of their life, were organized around precisely the same objective: the acquisition of neighbors' horses.

Lesser states that:

. . . The change in the aspect of culture we have been considering was a transformation of a gambling hand game into a Ghost Dance hand game ceremony. What persisted was the game itself, with its forms of play and arranging for play; what were eliminated were the gambling aspects, and the associated war party simulations; what was added to make the new form was the generic type of ceremonialism and ritualism of the Pawnee, and the concepts and suggestions of the Ghost Dance religion and the Ghost Dance ceremonial forms. (op.cit., p. 321)

One is tempted to conclude from the historical evidence of the Pawnee that perhaps the similarity of gambling to ceremony is close enough to allow for a transformation in

symbolic form and a shift in symbolic function. However, the circumstances of the Pawnee prior to the advent of the Ghost Dance may have exerted more of a determining influence on the adaptation of the hand game as a symbolic form. Birefly, they were in a state of cultural disintegration after a lengthy period of breakdown of the traditional tribal symbols and increasing dependence on the American government. Their economic and political status had changed drastically in half a century, with the result that most cultural complexes had fallen into disuse and were forgotten. This is especially true of much of the ritual practices which were private knowledge and died with the last occupants of ritual positions. Thus, there were only certain old customs available for revival during the Ghost Dance period and one of these was the hand game. We can only draw conclusions about the nature of gambling among the Pawnee with great caution. The symbolic functions of gambling prior to the Ghost Dance were consistent with those in Yakima and in Gros Ventre society. That the hand game became a Ghost Dance ceremony is due to historical circumstances. In being so transformed the gambling aspects were eliminated.

Lesser's contribution to our understanding of gambling relates to the similarities and differences between gambling and ceremony. He has shown that a game, mainly a set of rules and procedures for determining a winner and a loser, may be adapted to different purposes. What does this say about gambling? The element of risk of wagerable

property disappeared from the Pawnee game in its transformation, as did the symbolism of the war party. By implication, the meaning of the activity was completely altered. Symbolic form and function changed. In a sense this evidence confirms the conclusion that serious gambling is firmly rooted in the competition for prestige. Furthermore, the association of gambling symbolism with the social hierarchy cannot be maintained in the absence of wagers and betting. Serious gambling requires a commitment of valuable property and its significance cannot be sustained by participation alone (without betting). Lesser notes that:

The conceptual change comes out clearly in the new idea of the significance of winning and losing. It is said the winners are the faithful, the losers the sinners; the winners are the honest folk, the losers the liars; the winners are the good people, the losers the evil. (op.cit., p. 318)

The similarity of conceptualization above points out the relatedness of the ceremony and games described earlier. Gambling, too, is concerned with so-called non-empirical ends, but by contrast achieves those ends in the dramatization which ensues from the manipulation of empirical means -- property.

The next monographic work on gambling we shall consider deals with the hand game of the Dogrib of the Northwest Territories. (Helm & Lurie, 1966) They appear to play an extraordinarily complex variant of the game whose

basic features are now familiar. Single tokens are concealed in the hand of the hider and one guesser on the opposing side gestures to indicate his guess. On the hiding side there are eight active hidere at the beginning of play (and seven more in reserve), so that the guesser is in fact making eight simultaneous choices by his gesture. As he guesses correctly the hider is eliminated and this continues until all hidere have been guessed correctly. There are intricacies in scoring, as well. A game is won by accumulating the entire set of tally sticks in play, not once, but twice. This is marked by a separate scoring or tally stick which signifies one set of sixteen sticks has been won. Further complications include a practice of reinstating eliminated players at the point in the play when the hiding side has accumulated all the tally sticks. These procedures provide for a really challenging contest and require considerable skill on the part of players, particularly guessers who can indicate exact guesses by an elaborate set of signals.

Before examining gambling symbolism we might look at the aesthetics of this complex game.

The style and impact of a game in action eludes precise description. The tempo of play is fast and hard, with the deafening clamor of drums and the shouted chants of the drummers accompanying the play. The intensity of the syncopated beat that goes from loud to louder as climaxes in the game

occur imparts a driving quality to the play. In response to the throb of the drums (or on some occasions to their own voices chanting without drums) the players of the hiding team move in rhythm. From their hips up, the kneeling men bob, weave, and sway . . . Players may close their eyes or roll them heavenward, producing on some faces a trance-like effect. The two-syllable unit of chanting cry made by the drummers is delivered with wide-open mouth, head thrown back, with strained features by some and at full voice by all.

(Helm & Lurie, 1966, p. 30)

The authors note the expressive nature of playing the hand game and assert that it had intellectual challenge for the players. Skillful gamblers were aware of using strategy in guessing the location of tokens, chiefly by the scrutiny of hiders' expressions in a general effort to "psych them out". Although the element of chance was obviously present in the outcome of games, the skill of certain individuals in "guessing" and the complexity of procedures and gestures made this contest much more a battle of wits and skill than merely a game of chance.

Guessing correctly is metaphorically stated as "killing" the opponent and the manoeuvre of reinstating eliminated players as "raising the dead". (op.cit., pp. 29-38) To what extent the Dogrib regard the present day game as a matter of life and death, even symbolically, is dubious. Nevertheless, there are references to the former seriousness of the game during the time of significant fur trade activity. Inter-tribal gambling was tinged with hostility as the political relations between tribes

vascillated in the competition for the trade. Indeed, there are account of individuals in the past who were the possessors of great "power" for performance in the hand game. The existence of other observances of a ceremonial nature for success in the game is not indicated. Nowadays it appears that the gambling complex is conceptualized as an integral part of their cultural expression during certain seasonal assemblages:

The hand game has two qualities which distinguish it from other forms of gaming play among the Dogribs: it is a community and group festive event, and it serves and is recognized to be an expression of inter-group competition, reinforcing intra-group identification. (Helm & Lurie, 1966, p. 81)

The nature and degree of the symbolic integration of the game in Dogrib life is difficult to ascertain from the material the authors present. However, one can observe certain patterns in team affiliations for the game.

The Dogribs apparently refer to the gambling sides by the proper names for the regional affiliations of the players. That hand game participation and regional affiliations are closely related has already been established. Further evidence is revealed by the fact that the Dogrib "crew", which is actually a hunting party organized to track caribou, is ordinarily composed of the men of one region, thus also the men who gamble together. It is also reported that the hand game is commonly played during the caribou hunting period and that the stakes are the pieces of dry

meat which are taken on the hunt. In the active fur trade era the ingatherings were the scene of intensive gambling and the games seem to have been initiated by leaders of regional groups who had come to sell their furs. Given this background, what can we say about Dogrib gambling?

Much of this is speculative, since the authors did not provide all the ethnographic links. The Dogrib were very loosely organized for much of the year, isolated in their bush camps. At critical periods they gathered together, to trade furs, conduct feasts, arrange marriages, hunt caribou, etc. At these times gambling was practiced and, consistent with the bettor-wager pattern noted earlier, the more intensive games occurred between less closely related groups. Knowing little of Dogrib symbolism it is difficult to associate the gambling metaphors with everyday situations. However, the game itself was essentially a contest between the guesser and all the hidors simultaneously. It is possible, although not substantiated, that guessers were also regional "bosses" who acted as hunt leaders and trading chiefs. This would conveniently explain the role of guesser as leader of his team and also would suggest a link between game order and the social structure. We do know that inter-regional disputes were not uncommon and thus the social cleavages dramatized in the hand game matches correspond to everyday situations. But, in order to give a really faithful interpretation of Dogrib gambling we must

consider another undeniable factor -- the presence of the whiteman:

Although neither Whites nor Indians would be at Rae except for the others' presence, the areas and means of social interaction are for the most part narrowly defined, and they operate as largely separate social worlds, with only occasional individuals in the two groups entering into any kind of peer relationship. Treaty discussions made evident both the interdependence and the mutually unsatisfactory channels of communication on which such interdependence is based.
(op.cit., p. 7)

The Dogrib are no longer spread out in bush camps and the importance of the ingatherings has consequently changed. Many have taken up residence at the fort and the signs of cultural decay so common in North America during the past century, are appearing. Members of the Indian community are apparently concerned over the extent of card playing and its effects on their morale (op.cit., p. 80) Also, I suspect, although the authors are not specific, that the presence of white administrators means that the dependence of Dogribs on government "assistance" is already high. " . . . the formal treaty sessions, when problems of Indian economics and political life and of intra-community Indian -- White and Indian -- government relations are raised and solutions sought, are serious and important to the Dogrib." (op.cit., p. 7) Since the gambling complex described is partially centered on the treaty sessions, there are symbolic functions of the games

which are not derivable from a consideration of former Dogrib life styles alone. How the games serve as an expression of Indian identity, and the importance of this expression, is explored more fully below.

In concluding the discussion of the Dogrib material, I wish to reiterate the ambiguity of the symbolic functions of gambling in a changing society. The authors of the monograph do not address themselves to this question and their comments on changes in gambling are scattered and inconclusive. Their work tells us, in great detail, about the elaborate techniques and procedures for playing the Dogrib hand game. We are left to puzzle out the symbolism of the game and its articulation with the traditional and contemporary social structure.

The last gambling people we shall consider are the Coast Salish of British Columbia and northern Washington. The sequence of tribes thus far has been Gros Ventre, Yakima, Pawnee and Dogrib. By examining the practices of the Salish gamblers we shall have shifted the "ethnographic present" from the mid-nineteenth century gradually to the present. The Salish are still gambling and the activity attracts the moderate attention of quite a few, and the fervent interest of a host of regulars. For information on Salish gambling I have relied on the monographic study of Salish ceremonial life by Kew and on my own impressions formed at a succession

of games during the past three years. (Kew, 1970)

Unfortunately, I have not been a real participant in the gambling and cannot speak from first-hand experience of the emotions and feelings of the players. I have had the opportunity, however, of discussion "slahal", the Salish bone game, with different players and former players and of incorporating their interpretations with my own observations.

The aesthetics of slahal are not unlike those of the Dogrib hand game. Singing, drumming, and movement accompany the manipulation of the bones by the hiding side. Two sets of bones are used, the object being to guess the location of the unmarked bone in each pair. Score is kept by means of tally sticks, one stick being given to the hiding side for each incorrect guess of a set of bones. Sides change when both sets of bones are correctly guessed and the singing and drumming begin almost immediately by the new hiding team. The guessing side is represented by one guesser, but on occasion (of a string of incorrect guesses) his role may be assigned to another principal on the team. Betting is dyadic and of two types: centre bets and side bets. The former are characteristically large, placed in advance of the actual play, and recorded in a kind of ledger. The money thus wagered is wrapped in a scarf and left conspicuously between the two teams. Side bets are typically smaller and are placed at various times during the play and comprise a wager on the outcome of a specific guess. Such bets appear to be

very impromptu during the course of play and may cumulatively account for more circulation of cash than the centre bet. Whereas centre bets are mostly confined to the principals, side bets may be placed by anyone present at the game.

Nowadays an important setting in which slahal games are played is weekend war canoe races in the area of the lower mainland of B.C., northwestern Washington and the east coast of Vancouver Island. These events are festive occasions arranged by Indians for the racing of war canoes. A variety of villages enter canoes and the competition for prize money is fairly keen. On several of these weekends the general public is welcomed to the events and Indians host White spectators at the festivals. Slahal games may be started as early as the afternoon of the first day of the weekend and can continue well into the next morning, to be resumed again the following afternoon. Slahal is played in other setting, as well, for example by invitation at private gatherings on reserves for the express purpose of gambling. Kew situates slahal in a larger context of inter-village ceremonialism which binds the participants in a network of ties with other participants dispersed over a fairly large residential area.

Kew observes that the most striking feature about a slahal game is its Indianness. My own impressions corroborate this conclusion. The participants in a game

may arrive in late-model cars, they may stay at nearby motels, they may dress in recent fashions, and may curse in the best Anglo-Saxon. Nevertheless, their involvement in gambling is purely Indian in flavor. The movements, the music, the spatial organization, even the shouts and cajoling, are easily identifiable as Indian. This is a crucial feature of the games. That a tradition with such strong Indian character should survive and flourish in the present day cannot be dismissed lightly. In explanation of the seemingly anomalous survival of slahal Kew offers this statement,

The game itself marks off a social field for Indians where they specifically may find achievement which is denied or doubtful outside that field.

(Kew, 1970, pp. 309-10)

He goes on to explain that the political and economic situation of the Indians vis a vis the dominant White society is such that experiences which reinforce positive self-images are largely absent. Other aspects of Salish ceremonial life are similarly explained in terms of "relative deprivation" theory. In general, we find that various features of Salish traditional culture have survived the pressures of an assimilationist White policy. Expressive and ceremonial complexes, especially, persist to afford the present-day Salish access to positive reinforcement of his identity in the absence of analogous experiences in the larger community.

It would be difficult, and perhaps not even fruitful, to attempt to isolate a better-wager pattern for Salish gambling. Kew states,

. . . much more investigation of the process of team formation would be required to make firm statements about the significance of the oppositions which the game encapsulates. It is not a simple one of village vs. village.
(Kew, 1970, p. 304)

At some games it appears that Canadian players are opposed to American players. At others the "Island people" compete against the "Coast people". In both cases team affiliation is not strict despite the group labels applied. In a sense it would be a misrepresentation of slahal to analyse it in terms of categories designed for different circumstances. Fifty or more years ago, perhaps, Salish villages competed against one another in inter-village matches. At that point in their history the operation of sociological factors which generated group loyalty may have been directly expressed in the gambling complex. However, the same circumstances do not obtain today. As Kew demonstrates for Coast Salish ceremonialism in general, old forms may be adapted to new functions. In the case of slahal playing there has not been a radical change in the meaning of the game as we observed with the transformation of the Pawnee hand game. Slahal players are still very much interested in winning money and this no doubt motivates their participation in the games. However, the significance of the gambling complex has changed with the change in the economic and

political situation of the Salish. The reaffirmation of Indian identity has become a primary symbolic function of the games. The implications of the analysis of slahal playing, as well as the other ethnographic accounts, will be examined in the concluding section.

CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusions

This paper was begun with the intention of studying gambling anthropologically. I dealt first with the concerns of an anthropological analysis. A definition of gambling was offered and its elements systematically explored. A commentary on gambling by an anthropologist (Geertz) was then presented and discussed. This was followed by a consideration of five studies of hand game gambling in North America. Each account was examined in terms of the anthropological framework I propose to adopt. We are left now with the task of summarizing the findings thus far, spelling out the implications of the analysis and providing some sort of statement about the anthropological study of gambling. I will address these questions individually and collectively, as the material permits, in the following paragraphs.

The notion of studying gambling anthropologically was clarified with reference to Cohen's article. To study gambling anthropologically we must study it holistically. That is, we must take account of both symbolic and politico-economic aspects of the activity. To concentrate on one aspect to the exclusion of others will result in analysis which ignores one of our principal theoretical concerns, namely the nature of the relationship between

symbolism or symbolic complexes and the relations of power. We might then ask what sort of information about gambling should be sought? The answer is that in order to conduct an analysis of gambling we require considerable information on the non-gambling features of the society in question. We need to know about the kinship system, the social organization, the economic system, the ritual observances and cosmology and the existence of political groupings. We want information about the seasonal cycles as they affect production and residence and about the integrity of the culture and its involvement in larger political, possibly colonial systems. In essence, we need to work with the same kind of ethnographic accounts of culture in which the notion of a holistic study originated. It may be conceivable to write a monograph devoted to gambling exclusively, but it would be based on other data about the culture.

Given the ethnographic information, what questions will we pose? Stated differently, what gambling variables will we attempt to isolate? We may begin by seeking Geertz's distinction of deep play/shallow play. The symbolic aspects of status gambling may be distinguished from money gambling. Also, it is important to know who bets with whom and how much is wagered. This opens up the realm of relational aspects of gambling. We can subsequently ask a host of questions

about sub-variables entailed in the analysis of both the symbolic and relational aspects of gambling. For instance, when do people gamble? how frequently? what is wagered? what games, sports, and events are gambled on? what are native attitudes towards gambling? how is success in gambling explained? what changes, if any, have occurred in gambling practices? By posing these and related questions we have formulated an anthropological framework for the study of gambling. The basic assumptions of this framework are explained above and the results may be seen in the review of gambling in the various tribes under discussion.

I would like to briefly examine some of the conclusions of the analysis of gambling practices. To begin with, there are frequent cases of a kind of gambling that we have called deep play or status gambling. It has been consistently observed that gambling games can be dramatic vehicles in which the emotions of the participants are mobilized towards cognitive ends. We have discovered, in addition, that the greater the investment of property by players, the greater the significance of the game. Thus, high-stakes gambling involves concerns of prestige and status, and correspondingly the most significant games are played by well established, often wealthy members of the community. Furthermore, the significance of gambling is directly related to the status differential of the players. That is, keen competitors are close status rivals and tend to bet higher stakes. The games in which such individuals

are engaged are regarded as the most serious and noteworthy in the gambling annals.

Regardless of the competitive atmosphere characteristic of serious gambling, the prevalence of harmonious relations underlies any participation of the opponents. The rhetoric and symbolism of serious gambling tends to dramatize conflict and appears to engender hostility in the players. However, the experience of gambling is a metaphorical one and despite the emotions it arouses, violent, all-out conflict is not a normal part of the proceedings. It is stressed over and over again that the most competitive and hostile of gambling matches can only occur between rivals who have established and maintain minimal friendly relations. Gambling is very commonly associated with trading, such that trading partners often gamble against one another. There appears to be a continuum connecting hostility on the one end and the friendliest, most intimate relations on the other. Gambling locates itself towards the hostility end of the continuum but at a fair distance from raids and violent attack.

The symbolic functions of gambling are diverse but according to several authors the primary functions are the promotion of in-group solidarity and the expression of

out-group hostility. The fundamental expressive character of gambling has been demonstrated in several examples. One need only think of gambling aesthetics, music, paraphernalia, kinesics, etc. to be reminded of this feature. Gambling provides an outlet for conflict between groups and a means of cementing cohesion within the group, without disruptive side effects. A cathartic quality has been attributed to it. We have also considered Geertz's dictum to treat cultural forms as texts and thus seek their meaning in the interpretation of the participants. This has been possible for several cases of gambling and it has been shown that players appear to find significant associations.

The bettor-wager pattern has been studied where possible and added insight into the articulation of gambling symbolism and political groupings. The bettor-wager pattern is a link between the players' attitudes and the ethnographer's observations. In a sense the bettor-wager pattern reflects the social structure as it is conceptualized by the members of the society. Levels of allegiance are revealed in the amount wagered and the gamblers supported by a player. The bettor-wager pattern is a distillation of the cognitive orientation of the participants towards gambling. We are thus made aware of distinctions in status or affiliations or office which are regarded as significant ones by the people. This pattern is also an important

clue to the symbolic functions of the gambling complex. It relates the behavior we observe in a circumscribed setting such as a gambling match to the economic, political and ritual associations in the broader social context.

A specific tendency was noticed in the last three tribes considered to associate gambling with a situation of economic and political change. In this context gambling matches were an occasion for enunciating one's identity. The participants in games appear to have required this need. In Geertz's terms the participants were able to say something positive to themselves about their own identity. We may generalize this function of gambling to the other contexts that were examined. Whether or not rapid, disruptive change besets a group, there are always occasions for the proclamation of identity. Cohen pointed out early on that, "By objectifying roles and relations, symbolism achieves a measure of stability and continuity without which social life cannot exist." (Cohen, 1969, p. 220) The symbolism of gambling is laden with messages about relations and roles.

The anthropological study of gambling shares with psychological and sociological studies an interest in the cognitive and relational aspects of gambling. It diverges, however, from other approaches by maintaining an interest in the two broad variables at one. Our approach is holistic

so long as we investigate not only the two broad institutional fields, but the relationship between them. The anthropological study of gambling sheds light on this ancient and widespread custom, and in addition illuminates the theoretical problems to which some of our most important work is addressed.

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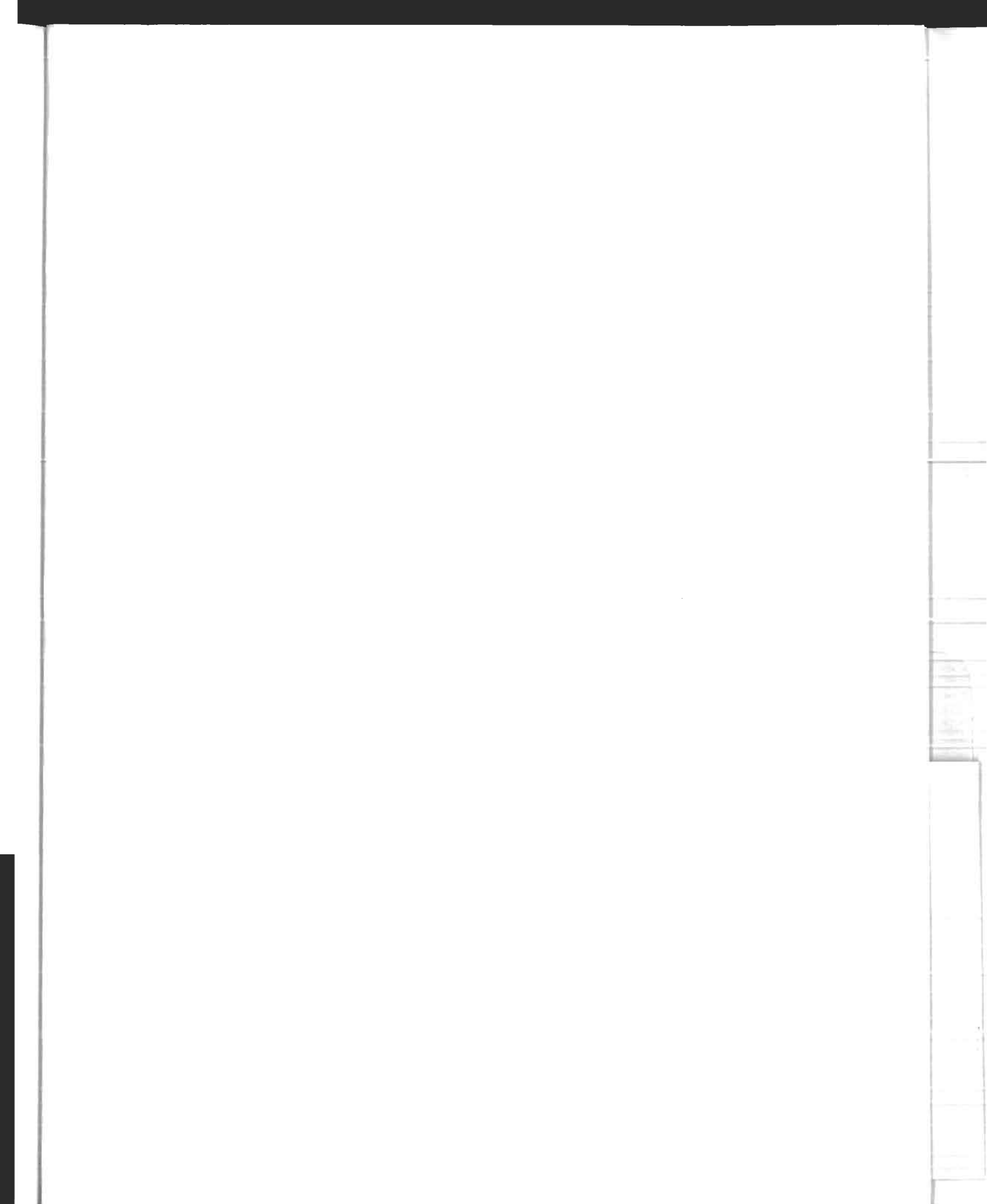
Instructor, Centre for Continuing Education, University of
B.C., 1971-1972 and 1972-1973.

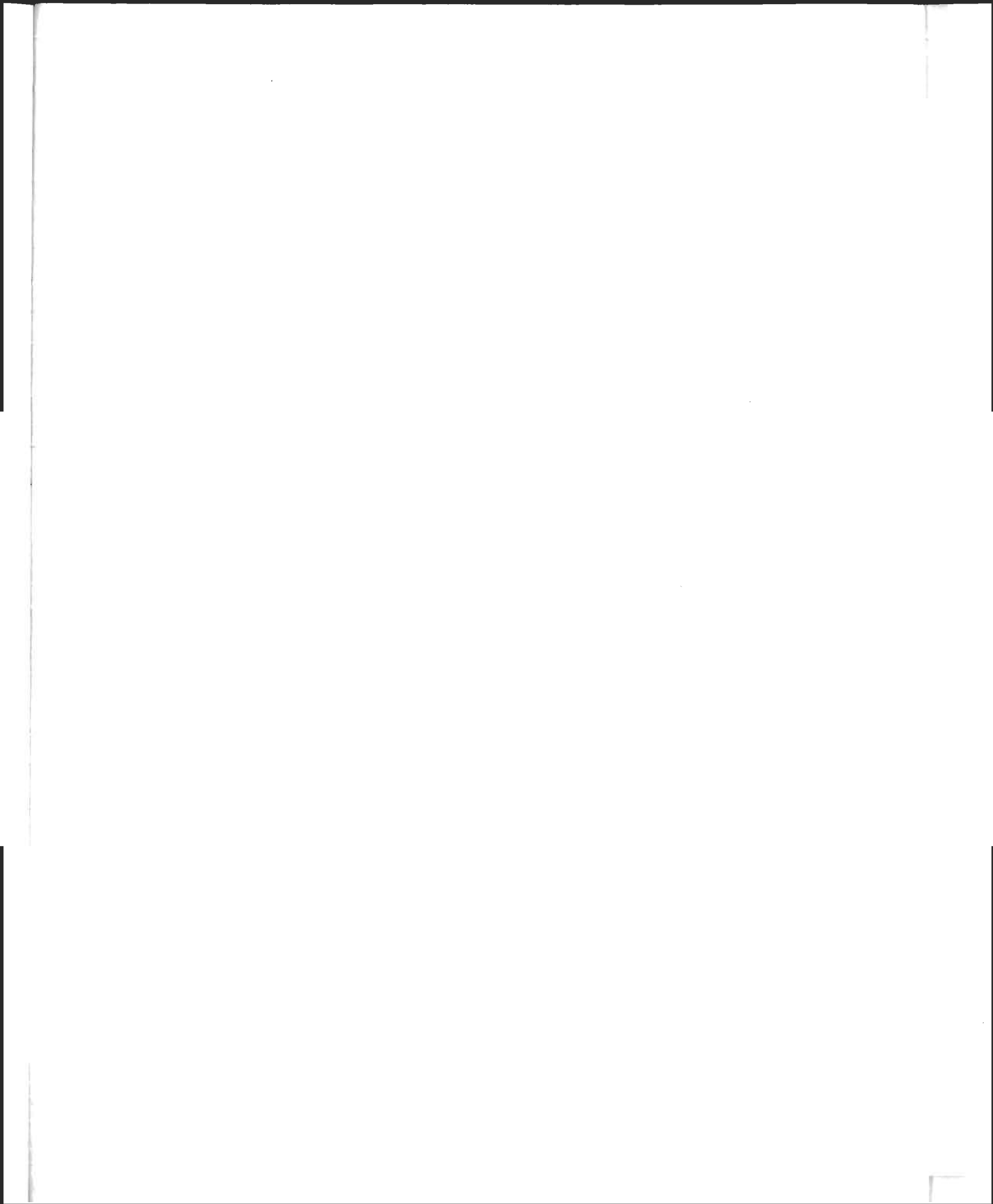
PUBLICATIONS:

AWARDS:

Teaching Assistantship, Department of Anthropology &
Sociology, University of B.C., 1970-1971 and 1971-1972.

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