



Aboriginal Slavery on the Northwest Coast of North America

Leland Donald

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With his investigation of slavery on the Northwest Coast of North America, Leland Donald makes a significant contribution to our understanding of the aboriginal cultures of this area. He shows that Northwest Coast servitude, relatively neglected by researchers in the past, fits an appropriate cross-cultural definition of slavery. Arguing that slaves and slavery were central to these hunting-fishing-gathering societies, he points out how important slaves were to the Northwest Coast economies for their labor and for their value as major items of exchange. Slavery also played a major role in more famous and frequently analyzed Northwest Coast cultural forms such as the potlatch and the spectacular art style and ritual systems of elite groups.

The book includes detailed chapters on who owned slaves and the relations between masters and slaves; how slaves were procured; transactions in slaves; the nature, use, and value of slave labor; and the role of slaves in rituals. In addition to analyzing all the available data, ethnographic and historic, on slavery in traditional Northwest Coast cultures, Donald compares the status of Northwest Coast slaves with that of war captives in other parts of traditional Native North America.

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