The Problem of Legitimacy: How Public Health and Race Converged in Tacoma and the Skokomish Reservation, 1881-1885

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In 1881 a man named Mon Lung was charged with the crime of hiding a smallpox victim during an epidemic outbreak until after the victim's death. In 1885, a Native American traditional medicine doctor named Tenas Charley was charged with the crime of curing a patient on the Skokomish reservation – an act that was legal anywhere else. Also in 1885, as part of the buildup to Tacoma's expulsion of the Chinese, the city government of Tacoma attempted to argue that the Chinese posed a public health risk. What these events have in common is minority conflict with white territorial authorities over the meaning and priorities of public health while those young institutions strove for local and federal legitimacy. In a time of frequent disease and few effective treatments, diverse populations but racially homogenous authorities, understanding the public health priorities of young governmental institutions reveals more about western mentalities than their mere fear of disease. Since the real causes and cures of disease were effectively unknown at the time, strategies for disease prevention and treatment were not based in biological reality but were culturally constructed. Thus race, too, was inextricably mixed with conceptions of contagious disease.

Nayan Shah, in his study of San Francisco's public health policy and the minority Chinese community there, points out the importance of conceptions of public health to self-conceptions of modernity (which, for Washington Territory, included achieving statehood). "Precisely," he writes, "because of public health's powerful influence in transforming social lives in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and its centrality in definitions of modernity, how public health operated demands critical evaluation."[1] Who defined "public?" What constituted a

[1] Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco's Chinatown* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 3. San Francisco, due to its unique racial history, is a perfect city to study the development of public health and the influence race had on concepts of "public" and "health/disease." Shah particularly explores the process by which the Chinese community transitioned from being conceptualized as diseased invaders to perfect citizens in the public health dogma of San Francisco. Though his analysis was

risk to the public, and how should government respond? When there is a choice between governmental action and extra-legal action, how should the government make its case as the most qualified actor? Are there acceptable alternatives to white visions of public health, and if so, what are they? Evidence from Washington Territory makes clear that race was indeed a factor in government decisions about public health. If a victim of disease both challenged the authority of white public officials and was a member of a minority group, then that victim came to embody the "inherent" nefarious qualities of his race. For example, the Chinese district in town was the only area which was daily inspected for smallpox, a power of the Health Officer granted by the city government in early 1881. The victim who escaped detection until after his death seemed to justify the special attention the community received. Tenas Charley's flagrant refusal to cease practicing tamahnous, the traditional medical/spiritual practices of the Twana, also signified to white authorities everything that was wrong with Native American culture. The local governments in Washington, on the verge of national legitimization, were exploring the boundaries of public authority, articulating the rights of individuals and the safety of the public, and balancing popular sentiment and the rights of minorities (racial and otherwise). Public health illuminates the decision-making processes government officials undertook in times of real crisis, but also reveals dominant social constructions of disease and the feared epidemic potential of racial minorities. Race relations, disease, and civic authority interacted in complex and sometimes surprising ways in Tacoma and Western Washington in the 1880's. White authorities constructed public health policies that reflected their ethnocentric conceptions of health and

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influential to me, Tacoma's relationship with its Chinese residents was fundamentally different. Thus my analysis focuses more on the meaning of government public health policy for white Tacomans rather than Chinese Tacomans, since the latter did not endure the 1880's.

disease, which contributed to certain kinds of oppression of minorities and highlighted the process by which governmental authorities legitimized their power to the white public.

In late 1881 New Tacoma suffered an outbreak of smallpox that afflicted much of the west coast.[2] Initially the outbreak was misdiagnosed as chickenpox by several doctors, one of which, Dr. Ballard, signed a statement printed in the newspaper declaring it so.[3] Only Dr. F.B.H. Wing insisted on diagnosing smallpox, a judgment for which he was appointed the city's Health Officer once the outbreak became so bad that the citizenry agreed with his opinion. Moving quickly, Dr. Wing and the Common Council of New Tacoma declared a quarantine – not only of victims, their family members, and nurses, but of the city itself.[4] The city hired armed guards to enforce restrictions against public gatherings and movements between towns, except for the mail carrier. As commerce was restricted, the city clerk was appointed the purchasing agent for the victims at the city's cost. A short distance north, the city council of Old Tacoma complained that smallpox is "the only thing that New Tacoma ever had which it was willing to share with us" and authorized its own quarantine between the two towns.[5] Steilacoom and Puyallup set up a shotgun quarantine[6] against Tacomans and assembled road blocks with armed guards.[7] The Common

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[2] Herbert Hunt, *Tacoma: Its History and Its Builders: A Half Century Of Activity* (Chicago: The S.J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1916), 1:278.

[3] Hunt, 1:278.

[4] The following evidence listed in this paragraph, if not otherwise footnoted, comes from: City of Tacoma, "Journal of the Proceedings of the Common Council of the City of New Tacoma," February 2, 1880 – July 5, 1883 (Rare Book Room, Northwest Room, Tacoma Public Library), entries of November 17 and 22, 1880, pp. 73-74; November 2, 1881, p. 124; November 4, 1881, p. 125; November 19, 1881, p. 133; November 21, 1881, pp. 135-136; December 16, 21, and 26, pp. 141-146. A note on terms: the Common Council of New Tacoma was the equivalent of the City Council of Old Tacoma. When the cities formally consolidated in 1884, the name of the council as well as the physical record of meeting minutes remained titled "Common Council."

[5] City of Tacoma, "Journal of the Proceedings of the City Council Meetings of Old Tacoma," June 9, 1874 – January 5, 1884 (Rare Book Room, Northwest Room, Tacoma Public Library), entry of November 7, 1881, p. 129. This crowded City Council meeting was the first in Old Tacoma to address the smallpox outbreak. The above quotation was, unusually, recorded verbatim in the minutes. Old Tacoma resented that the Northern Pacific Railroad Company built its 1873 railroad terminus south of the established city; this became New Tacoma.

[6] Literally, meant setting up roadblocks with armed guards who shoot anyone attempting to leave town.

[7] Hunt, 1:279.

Council had discussed measures to prevent a smallpox outbreak as early as November 1880, including building a "pesthouse" (an isolated hospital for epidemic victims and their caretakers), but this was not built in time to handle the October outbreak. Instead, Dr. Wing removed most of the victims to the steamship *Alida*, though a small number remained in private hospitals.

Fear shut down all normal life in the city. The Common Council met frequently to monitor the situation and provided Dr. Wing with the power to take any action in the line of duty. He could go anywhere he wished, order any suspected case quarantined, any suspected building or ship fumigated, and any violator of his instructions punished.[8] The epidemic wound down by late December, with the last infected home declared safe January 4, 1882.[9] However, the city had to pay expenses related to the outbreak months after it ended, in salaries for quarantine workers and reimbursements for goods purchased. The Health Officer was paid $600 for his work during the epidemic, but had little chance to spend it.[10] In January 1882 he died of heart failure. His contemporaries and later admirers believed his death resulted from the stress of his unflagging work during the outbreak.[11]

The 1881 smallpox outbreak in New Tacoma left its mark on the city's institutional structure. When Old and New Tacoma consolidated in 1884, the public health sections of the charter of New Tacoma were far more developed than that of Old Tacoma. In part this was because Old Tacoma's public health charter section was created in direct response to the smallpox outbreak, and thus did not provide a whole vision for a healthy public; it was solely concerned with preventing the spread of smallpox. The consolidated cities adopted New

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8 City of Tacoma, *New Tacoma Ordinances*, Ordinances 1 – 114, February 13, 1880 – December 19, 1883 (Tacoma, WA: n.p.) Rare Book Room, Northwest Room, Tacoma Public Library.

9 Journal of the Common Council, entry of January 4, 1882, pp. 148-149.

10 Journal of the Common Council, entry of January 11, 1882, p. 152.

11 Hunt, 1:279.

Tacoma's public health sections for its charter wholesale.[12] The Board of Health and Health Officer's powers included, among others, the right to inspect suspected buildings and people, the right to use police to enforce their policies, the right to quarantine, the right to forcibly vaccinate, the right to close schools and hold school officials accountable for student health, and the right to be informed by physicians or citizens about suspected outbreaks.[13] The importance of defining institutional powers properly was highlighted by a conflict in Seattle between the School Board and the Health Board; the lack of hierarchical priority between the boards eventually led to lawsuits, arrests of prominent citizens, and scandal.[14] Tacoma avoided the problem by its clear prioritizing of authority, public health over schools, and this clarity helped legitimize the city government.

The uncontested civic authority in the face of smallpox could not, however, avoid dealing with the touchy subject of unreliable medical authority. The city of New Tacoma thought that determining, once and for all, the question of whether the outbreak was smallpox or chickenpox was worth the hefty $120 fee they paid a Seattle doctor to visit and settle the question.[15] In what was undoubtedly an uncomfortable day in mid-November, Dr. E.L. Smith came to New Tacoma and, escorted by both Drs. Wing and Ballard, examined each of the victims. He concluded that the outbreak was "fairly typical cases of *Vericola Vera* and *Varivlaid*," supporting Dr. Wing's medical superiority. The Common Council then threw its full authority behind Dr. Wing and

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[12] City of Tacoma, *Ordinances of the City of Tacoma, Washington, 1890*, comp. Albert R. Heilig (Tacoma, WA: Tacoma Daily News Printers, 1892), Northwest Room, Tacoma Public Library, 84-86. City of Tacoma, *Tacoma City Charter, Session 1885-1886* (Tacoma, WA: The Ledger Steam Printing House, 1886), Northwest Room, Tacoma Public Library, 16-19.

[13] *New Tacoma Ordinances*, Ordinance No. 40, 51-53.

[14] Stephen Woolworth, "'The Warring Boards': Sanitary Regulation and the Control of Infectious Disease in the Seattle Public Schools, 1892-1900," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 96, no. 1 (2004/05): 14-23.

[15] The evidence in the following paragraph, including quotations, may be found in the Journal of the Common Council, entry of November 16, 1881, pp. 128 – 131.

simultaneously began to discredit Dr. Ballard. In a humiliating public letter to Dr. Ballard, delivered during the same November 16 meeting when Dr. Smith's verifying letter was recorded, the mayor accused Dr. Ballard of carelessness and neglect. "Dear Sir," the publically recorded letter read,

> Complaint has been made by numerous citizens that you have not been sufficiently cautious to guard against and prevent the spreading of small-pox…first – That you have been negligent in fumigating and cleaning yourself and changing your clothing after visiting your patients, and that you are especially careless in permitting your dog to accompany you in your professional visits and then permitting him to run at large – unrestrained….

The doctor was so discredited and humiliated by his role in the smallpox outbreak that in 1882 he moved across the country.[16]

The Common Council meeting minutes first record Dr. Smith's letter, then a verbal report by Dr. Wing about privy vaults in certain sections of town "extremely dangerous to health." Dr. Wing recommended an ordinance to be passed at once to require improved human waste facilities, perhaps foreshadowing the Council's focus on sewers as a repressive strategy against the Chinese in 1885. Finally, the minutes conclude with the damning letter to Dr. Ballard. The order of the minutes suggests yet again the importance of verifying medical authority. First, Dr. Wing's diagnosis is confirmed. Then his privy report demonstrates his personal interest and initiative in protecting public health. Finally, opposing medical authority Dr. Ballard is discredited by the city. Without indisputable medical agreement about the problem and its solution, the city authorities could not have legitimately enforced health standards restrictive to personal liberty in this western town, nor extorted taxes from the populace to pay for it; thus the importance of bolstering Dr. Wing's credibility beyond doubt.

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[16] R. F. Radebaugh, "Business Revival Follows Smallpox," *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, July 3, 1922.

Medical authority of the time was by no means uncontested. In the event of everyday epidemic diseases and common illnesses, the low efficacy of doctors to ensure patient health was well-known. In the time before penicillin and other drugs, people accepted contagious disease as a feature of life. For example, in 1892 Tacoma's Health Officer reported deaths in October and November.[17] Of the 67 deaths in those two months, 18 were of various contagious diseases, including scarlet fever, tuberculosis, meningitis, cholera, measles, typhoid, and others. In the late nineteenth century doctors could do little more than diagnose diseases. The best cures were typically rest, hygiene, and good food, though some doctors tried proscribing actively harmful "cures" such as induced vomiting and bloodletting. This fact spurred popular criticism such as that evident in a poem reprinted in the *Puget Sound Mail,* mocking the health advice of doctors.[18] The limited ability of doctors to provide effective treatments for patients or expertise beyond what the patients could do themselves created skepticism about the medical profession.

In lieu of effective treatment strategies from white medicine, westerners turned to home remedies, informed by superstition and Native American knowledge of the medicinal qualities of local plants. Lay medicine adapted or rearranged old ideas from professional medicine, supplementing them with knowledge gained by experience or word of mouth. Professional medicine also borrowed important, effective treatments from folk medicine, including such important treatments as smallpox inoculation or quinine.[19] Patent medicines, which were

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17 "Tacoma's Health During October," *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, November 4, 1892. "There were Fourty-four Births and Thirty-two Deaths During November," *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, December 4, 1892.

18 S.W. Suffield, "The Praise of Good Doctors," in *New York Independent*, reprinted in *The Puget Sound Mail*, July 15, 1882. From the Office of Washington Secretary of State, "Historic Newspapers in Washington," 2009. http://www.secstate.wa.gov.ezproxy. ups.edu/history/newspapers_detail.aspx?t=27, select July 15, 1882. Accessed October 20, 2009.

19 Paul Starr, *The Social Transformation of American Medicine: The Rise of a Sovereign Profession and the Making of a Vast Industry* (New York: Basic Books, 1982), 47.

widespread and quite popular in the 1880's, sometimes relied upon the credibility of "Indian medicine" to sell their slurries of random plants and drugs such as cocaine, opium, and alcohol.[20] The Kickapoo Indian Medicine Company and the Oregon Indian Medicine Company were two of the most widely circulated patent medicines.[21] White residents of the west were also aware of Chinese medicine, and when home remedies failed they sometimes turned to traditional Chinese medicine doctors.[22] This was common enough that a contemporary portrayal of a Chinese herbalist's shop appeared in *Harper's Weekly*.[23] Perhaps this image was familiar to Tacoma, since businessman Sing Lee, who had lived there since 1872, sold herb medicines in his general store. [24] Chinese medicine was also better able to treat chronic conditions than white medicine of the time.[25] Chinese doctors, who often worked as physicians in addition to their daily manual labor, were sprinkled throughout the Pacific Northwest. According to at least one scholar, no Chinese community of substantial size existed without at least one traditional medicine doctor.[26]

Despite the white community's everyday behavior, though, an epidemic situation was different. In an epidemic situation, the questioning of medical efficacy was not only foolish on a personal level, but dangerous to the entire community. The new, broad powers of the Board of Health and Health Officer were accepted as legitimate protection of the wider community, protection that came to be regarded as only the government's right to assume. Rather than being

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[20] David Dary, *Frontier Medicine: From the Atlantic to the Pacific 1492-1941* (New York: Knopf, 2009), 255.

[21] Dary, 255-258.

[22] Bruce Hallmark, "Chinese Health Hazards and Traditional Chinese Medicine in the Frontier Northwest," *Pacific Northwest Forum* 6, no. 1 (1993): 60-62.

[23] W.A. Rogers, artist, "Weighing Out Medicines in a Chinese Drug-Store, San Francisco," *Harper's Weekly*, March 18, 1899, p. 1239. Reprinted in Philip P. Choy, Lorraine Dong, and Marlon K Hom, eds., *The Coming Man: 19th Century American Perceptions of the Chinese* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994), 46.

[24] Murray Morgan, *Puget's Sound: A Narrative of Early Tacoma and the Southern Sound* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1979), 240.

[25] Dary, 193.

[26] Hallmark, 66.

seen as a hindrance to competing interests, such as businesses, government action was in this case a way for citizens to guarantee the restoration of normal economic and social life. Thus the consequences for subverting dominant governmental/medical authority were quite strong, as Dr. Ballard's self-imposed exile shows. Resistance to smallpox eradication efforts was not acceptable. The arrest and fining of Tacoman Mon Lung provides an interesting example of possible race-based resistance to white medical efforts.

> In his formal report of December 17, Dr. Wing described the deceased victims as such:
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> Of the fifty-seven cases so quarantined [since the 4th of November; Wing recorded 80 cases total] there have been 10 deaths, to wit: Six in private practice, one on board the *Alida*, one in small-pox hospital, one in private hospital and one Chinaman, who was concealed by his countrymen and received no medical treatment….[27]

This Chinese victim was the only one whose race was explicitly recorded. Here the historical record comes up against the depersonalizing force of medical language which refuses to describe the demographic qualities of the victims, except in this one case. Dr. Wing implies that the man's death was a natural consequence of rejecting (white) medicine, and his ethnocentrism does not allow him to mention the possibility that the victim received traditional Chinese medical treatment. Perhaps he did not consider that medicine at all.

The Chinese community had good reasons to be suspicious of Dr. Wing's motives. Ordering Chinese buildings inspected every day likely seemed in keeping with general racist harassments of the Chinese happening all over Washington and the west coast. For example, Chinese merchants were specifically prohibited from importing opium, though it was legal for other races (e.g. whites) to do so.[28] Port Townsend, a major entry point for recent immigrants,

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[27] Journal of the Common Council, entry of December 21, 1881, pp. 143-144.

[28] Robert Edward Wynne, *Reaction to the Chinese in the Pacific Northwest and British Columbia 1850 to 1910* (New York: Arno Press, 1978, originally printed as the author's PhD thesis, University of Washington, 1964), 312. Journal of the Common Council, entries of August 15 and September 5, 1885, pp. 435-436, 443.

tried to justify the intrusive assessment of Chinese (but not white) laundries by officials on public health grounds; Chinese launderers were charged for each visit, but raised their prices and were able to make up the difference.[29] (Incidentally, of Washington's Chinese communities, only Port Townsend's managed to survive the 1880's intact.[30]) In response to a petition by (presumably white) citizens, Old Tacoma prohibited culturally Chinese funerals and all burials within the city limits.[31] Mr. Ling Lee hired D.B. Hannak to request more time for the removal of bodies, pending the purchase of land outside the city limits.[32] The City Council minutes did not record whether the Council granted the request, but nor did it record any overt protest of the policy by Chinese citizens – perhaps the Chinese wished to acquiesce to the policy in hopes of keeping relations smooth. They were used to hearing complaints about their inherent pestilence and poor sanitary conditions of their homes and businesses, though this type of complaint was secondary to white economic concerns about their cheap labor.[33]

In this respect Chinese immigrants were caught up in a particular wave of xenophobia that was applied to immigrant groups around the turn of the century. Medicalized nativism, or associating the cultural and behavioral practices of immigrant groups with carrying infectious disease, affected the whole country.[34] Moreover, a complex relationship arose between attitudes toward public health, xenophobia, racism, economics, and the new "promiscuous" contacts

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[29] Daniel Liestman, "'The Various Celestials among Our Town': Euro-American Response to Port Townsend's Chinese Colony," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 85, no. 3 (1994): 95-96.

[30] Art Chin, *Golden Tassels: A History of the Chinese in Washington, 1857-1992* (Seattle, WA: n.p., 1992), 47.

[31] Journal of the City Council, entry of March 7, 1881, pp. 108. See resulting ordinance at: City of Tacoma, *Old Tacoma Ordinances*, Ordinances 1 – 28 June 13 1874 to January 3, 1884 (Tacoma, WA: n.p.), Rare Book Room, Northwest Room, Tacoma Public Library. Ordinance No. 15, 16.

[32] Journal of the City Council, entry of April 4, 1881, p. 109.

[33] Wynne, 477; Liestman, 98.

[34] Priscilla Wald, *Contagious: Cultures, Carriers, and the Outbreak Narrative* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 8.

between strangers that is an inherent part of living in an urban community.[35] The economic importance of trade and immigration were double-edged swords in that they increased both the city's wealth and its risk of epidemic outbreaks. Chinese bodies themselves, as an economic promise/threat, were also vulnerable to reimagining by the white labor community as economic *and* contaminated (diseased) invaders. By imagining Chinese immigrants as (on some level) complicit in the spread of disease, white racists could harness governmental bodies to regulate them on other grounds beyond mere labor issues. This fact was important because individuals in local governments may not have been sympathetic to labor concerns. The government throughout the nation at this time was in the process of expanding its scope to include public health within its interests, and the rhetorical association of disease as an invader reinforced that new right.[36] If being diseased was constantly paired with being Chinese (physically or culturally), then suppressing Chinese immigration and cultural practices also achieved the goal of protecting public health – the public, in this case, being solely white.[37] The most obvious example of this process occurred in the 1900 outbreak of bubonic plague in San Francisco, which affected Chinatown and Chinese bodies at first exclusively, and thus white San Franciscans were able to draw more of an explicit connection between disease and Chinese than in Tacoma, where smallpox did not originate from nor exclusively affect the Chinese.[38] Still, as I will demonstrate

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35 Wald, 14.

36 Wald, 17, 23.

37 Wald, 23, 56. Wald presents her argument about the relationship between governmental authority, imagined communities, immigrants and the portrayals of their bodies, and disease as an invader in a more general context than that of 1880's Tacoma. Here, I put her ideas into that context.

38 See Marilyn Chase, *The Barbary Plague: The Black Death in Victorian San Francisco* (New York: Random House, 2003), for a very detailed, yet light, read about the outbreak and its eventual suppression. See Shah, particularly 1-76 and 120-157, for scholarly analysis of smallpox and bubonic plague outbreaks with respect to race

later, such associations between the Chinese and disease, and the logical application of public authority to suppress them, did exist in the time leading up to the 1885 expulsion.

Certainly Dr. Wing saw the Chinese part of New Tacoma to abound with epidemic potential. He inspected Chinese living spaces and shops for signs of infection daily.[39] No other establishment or group of people in the city was examined every day. If he had not thought the threat to be special, he would have only inspected Chinese buildings as often as he checked everywhere else. His perception of the constancy of the threat had to come from somewhere more than merely the facilities themselves (which were perched on the edge of the Puget Sound and relied on tides to take away garbage), for he could and did order them fumigated. That should have solved the problem. The problem must have been something about the Chinese themselves – an impression which was reinforced by the Chinese smallpox victim who escaped quarantine until his death. However, it is possible Dr. Wing might have been suspicious of the Chinese not because he thought of their bodies or behavior as inherently diseased, but because of Chinese wariness of white medicine.

The city government had to deal with the implications of a Chinese community mistrustful of white medicine and therefore of white authority in general. Dr. Wing identified a man named Mon Lung as an accomplice to the deceased Chinese smallpox victim (though he may have suspected others as complicit in hiding the victim). At the beginning of every month the Common Council reviewed the crimes of the previous month and recorded whether fines were paid. Mon Lung's fine of thirty dollars (plus fees) was one of only two epidemic-related crimes for October 1881; the other was a man who broke the quarantine. Both men paid their

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[39] Journal of the Common Council, entry of November 21, 1881, p. 134.

fines promptly, reflecting to some extent their deference to city authority.[40] However, Mon Lung's payment probably reflects the general strategy of the Chinese community in the United States at the time to work within the legal system. If the Chinese treated authority impeccably, then whites had fewer legal grounds on which to oppress them. Such a legal strategy had later implications for the expulsion of the Chinese in 1885.

Still, white Tacomans probably did not see Chinese Tacomans as totally outside the community at that point. Common Council records show the names and fees the city paid to citizens for various tasks related to the epidemic: nurses, armed guards, cooks, boatmen, and so forth claimed their salaries in one lump sum each month. The city recorded salaries granted to "Chinaman Sam," a cook on the *Alida*, and two Chinese launderers for washing the bedding of pesthouse victims; a dangerous job, for which Ah Ey(e) and Ah Tun(g) received $65.33 each over two months.[41] Their employment reflects the reality that launderers were generally Chinese, but also that white Tacomans trusted them to safely carry out essential tasks to epidemic management, and that they would pay them for that task. If Chinese bodies and practices had actually been considered diseased, like white racists made them out to be in 1885, they would not have been entitled to a government salary for services rendered during the epidemic. All that was to change in 1885.

The universally accepted reason for Tacoma's expulsion of its Chinese citizens in 1885, by both historians and contemporaries, is economic competition. White labor movements, including the Knights of Labor, spearheaded attacks on Chinese workers. The defenders of Chinese workers were often of the "moneyed" or "capitalist" class and therefore suspect, such as

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[40] Journal of the Common Council, entry of December 7, 1881, pp. 137-139.

[41] Journal of the Common Council, entries December 21, 1881, p. 144, and January 11, 1882, p. 152. The clerk spelled the men's names differently for each entry. Chinaman Sam received $89.25 for his work on the *Alida*.

W.D. Taylor of the Tacoma Hotel or E.S. "Skookum" Smith of Merchants' National Bank.[42] (One factory owner from Puyallup had his barrel factory bombed when he refused to fire his Chinese workers.[43]) Newspapers criticized Chinese immigrants for not spending money in their local economies.[44] Whites protested the water company using Chinese workers to lay pipes for the city; they created the Workingmen's Union, which was pro-white labor and anti-Chinese. The union supported anti-Chinese political candidates such as R. Jacob Weisbach, Tacoma mayor. It convinced the city to make an ordinance prohibiting the contracting of Chinese workers for any public projects.[45] Tacomans, reflecting on the rightness of the expulsion in the face of criticism from other communities, cited labor issues almost exclusively in speeches reprinted in the *Tacoma Daily Ledger*.[46] Undoubtedly economic competition was the most important element of race relations between the Chinese and their new, sometimes temporary, countrymen.

The three primary stories to tell about the expulsion are that of a case study of white racism, the economic motivation for expulsion, and the interactions between different governmental branches and agencies in the aftermath.[47] Yet justifications for the expulsion, while

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[42] Hunt, 1:370.

[43] Lorraine Barker Hildebrand, *Straw Hats, Sandals and Steel: The Chinese in Washington State* (Tacoma, WA: The Washington State American Revolution Bicentennial Commission, 1977), 42.

[44] For example, see "Coast News," *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, November 19, 1885.

[45] Jules Alexander Karlin, "The Anti-Chinese Outbreak in Tacoma, 1885," *The Pacific Northwest Historical Reivew* 23, no. 3 (1954): 271. City of Tacoma, *Ordinances 1890,* see #7 in the list of consolidated cities ordinances, passed February 7, 1884.

[46] "Glorious Welcome – Tacoma's Indicted Citizens Receive a Grand Ovation," *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, November 13, 1885.

[47] Karlin, whose study is the most complete account of the events and the aftermath, describes the development of the conflict but does not deeply inquire into the motivations of the players beyond perceived economic competition between the Chinese and white working class. Mack identifies intra-white conflict between the local working class and local conservative capitalist elites as the true cause of anti-Chinese agitation – the Chinese were attacked as symbols of capitalist oppression of white labor. Laurie focuses on the relationship between the federal government, army, and local government. Morgan's narrative emphasizes points raised by both Laurie and Karlin. Wynne's concern is to compare British Columbia's and Washington's reactions to the Chinese, but he also concludes that Tacoma was motivated by perceived economic competition. Hunt's interest lies in telling a complete history of Tacoma. His history is mostly useful as a primary source. Chin and Hildebrand are interested in

they were remembered after the fact by historians and Tacomans as economically motivated, actually contained a significant amount of conversation about the public health risks of Chinese Tacomans. White Tacomans had to make two choices in 1885: one, if they should expel the Chinese, and two, if they should do this via formal action (governmental/legal) or informal action (social pressure/"mob"). Washington Territory was actively applying for statehood at the time, and this must have influenced peoples' thinking as they wanted to reinforce Washington's image as a place institutionally advanced enough to become a state.

The choice to expel the Chinese outside the lawful, formal sphere of city government also depended upon the perception of which city actions would have been effective and which actions would have been legitimate. As the 1881 smallpox epidemic shows, protecting public health during epidemics was seen by citizens as an acceptable motive for governmental suppression of individual liberties. The next question was how much the umbrella of "public health" could be legitimately expanded. Throughout 1885 citizens and city officials saw public health as the foundation of legal suppression of the Chinese. Why they chose to informally rather than formally carry out the expulsion is directly related to Tacomans' perception of the efficacy of government acting under the accepted rationalization of public health. If the "mob"[48] had perceived the city as able to quickly achieve the mob's goals through formal methods, then perhaps the anti-Chinese citizens would have chosen the legal path to expulsion. Moreover, the perception of disease risk from Chinese Tacomans had to do with the fact that they were Chinese, as my later discussion of perceptions of Native American bodies and disease will show.

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educating about basic, previously unknown facts about the Chinese in Washington. Pfaelzer puts Washington's persecution in the greater context of nationwide anti-Chinese racism. See Bibliography for full citations.

[48] Mob was a term applied to the well-organized group of men that methodically turned out the Chinese by outsiders offended at the extra-legal proceedings. The use of the term is misleading, for it implies a sense of spontaneity, a disorderly muddle, an uncoordinated and unplanned attack. This was simply not the case.

The perception of Chinese bodies, living spaces, and cultural practices was widespread, loudly expressed, and overwhelmingly negative. Tacomans conflated Chinese economic competition, "invasion" of neighborhoods, and the spread of disease, rhetoric which was constant throughout 1885. Its purpose changed; when, in October, the *Ledger* said "They are filthy, filthy, FILTHY,"[49] it was attempting to dehumanize the Chinese to such an extent that no one would object to the coming expulsion. The early 1885 descriptions of the Chinese move from describing them as a sometimes malignant curiosity to the worst kinds of insults imaginable. January's *Ledger* reported a glove fight between Chinese fighters in San Francisco, the maltreatment of Chinese workers in Peru, and a supposed white female infant trafficking ring also in San Francisco. [50] The tone, while negative, was restrained. February 19 was the turning point. The *Ledger* published an editorial titled "Chinese Invasion of Tacoma," and two days later the public meeting was called which set the expulsion process in motion.[51] The editorial characterized them as "leprous, prosperity-sucking, progress-blasting Asiatics [who] befoul our thoroughfares, [and] degrade the city…" The Chinese living spaces

> are now the dismal, foul, reeking styes of the Mongolian opium fiend, gambler, smuggler, high binder, fan-tan boss, rotten harlot and baby farmers who kidnap and buy white infants, to raise them for the lascivious enjoyment of the rich debauches of Canton or Peking….

They invade the city like "rats," live in "stench and filth," and with "the speed of atmospheric pestilence, they spread the contagion of their filthy numbers…" The mixed metaphors of theft, moral degradation, and disease are important – the Chinese immigrants represented the threat of

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[49] Editorial, *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, October 16, 1885.

[50] "Heathen Pugilits," *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, January 27, 1885; "Chinese Laborers Maltreated," *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, January 27, 1885; "The Traffic in Babies," *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, January 30, 1885.

[51] All subsequent quotes from "Chinese Invasion of Tacoma," *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, February 19, 1885; and "Shall Tacoma be Ruined by the Chinese?" *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, February 20, 1885.

economic invasion by taking "the best business portions of Tacoma" and "extorting" landlords, and by taking low wages and not buying property they were the "condor[s]" or scavengers of the economy. But the threat did not function in mere economic terms; rather, the Chinese *infected* the economy and posed an epidemic risk. That such rhetoric veiled or misrepresented other concerns is evident from the time that the Chinese were expelled: November, when Tacomans themselves thought that October had been the best month since the recession beginning in 1883.[52] But a city did not need to be on the verge of expulsion for racist epithets to bubble forth; constant levels of tension in San Francisco produced similar rhetoric. For example, in 1886 the weekly *Wasp* newspaper printed a lamentation entitled "San Francisco. Must I Support Them All?"[53] In it, rat-like Chinese swarm toward the city or are literally booted out from other communities (including Tacoma, Olympia, and Seattle) toward a welcoming Chinese figure. Foul clouds of immorality, vice, and disease rise from his opium pipe and rice pot. The accompanying text laments the influx of Chinese (driven to San Francisco by the abuse of other communities) but then muses that, like overpopulated animals, the more of them there are in the city, the quicker they will starve to death. Here, too, the rhetoric masks deeper anxieties, the most obvious being demographic crisis and the degradation of morality.

The question of lawfulness and the legitimacy of the expulsion was a key anxiety of anti-Chinese Tacomans.[54] All accounts of the expulsion acknowledge the struggle between

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[52] Mack, 16.

[53] "San Francisco. Must I Support Them All?" *The Wasp*, February 27, 1886, p. 16. Reprinted in Choy et al., 141.

[54] The "Law and Order League" responded early to the threat they perceived in the rhetoric of the anti-Chinese. Later, a group of ministers put out a passionate public letter emphasizing the importance of lawful behavior, which was alarmingly absent among the anti-Chinese. "Sentiments of the Ministerial Union of Tacoma Respecting the Present Anti-Chinese Question…" October 26, 1885 MS, collected by Washington State Historical Society, Tacoma, archives of Tacoma Community College.

perceived "lawful" and "lawless" solutions.[55] Whites wanted to get rid of the Chinese, but Tacoma also wanted to preserve its self-perception as a law-abiding community even while believing that "no city has ever been cleansed of these pests by the enforcement of nuisance laws, no matter how stringent, continuous, or zealous its execution may have been."[56] Very early on the anti-Chinese element hit upon the fundamental problem of legal expulsion: due to the 1868 Burlingame Treaty and other international agreements, local law could not expel the Chinese for being Chinese (in this view, of course, there was no such thing as "Chinese American"). Yet it could expel them for being "nuisances and violating the laws of health."[57] Public health laws – referring to *white* health only, as it had not before – were the sole legitimate legal force local authorities could use in the face of federal laws to discriminate against an entire community. Criminal law would only net individuals. The Exclusion Act of 1882 would not get rid of the people already established (and in any case Tacomans thought the act was a great failure.)[58] Throughout the debate on what to do with the Chinese, lawful action remained important.

The presupposed failure of law made community organizing, already a feature of this western town with young city institutions, quite attractive. The vast majority of the expulsion-related events were carried out by citizen-organized, informal groups. Mayor R. Jacob Weisbach is an interesting figure here; as mayor and self-appointed chief of police, he directed official suppression efforts, but he also was extremely influential as a central citizen organizer. The fluidity of his position highlights Tacoma's attitudes toward government at the time: to a

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55 I will not recap the well-known details of the expulsion here, as it is amply documented elsewhere.

56 "Will Law Expel the Chinese?" *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, February 24, 1885.

57 "Anti-Chinese in Council. – A Vast Assemblage at the Opera House – Speeches and Resolutions," *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, February 22, 1885.

58 Wynne, 298-304.

certain extent, government officials could best get things done by acting as citizens first, not authority figures. Extra-governmental organization had at least enough legitimacy to operate alongside government action, and to actively replace/subvert it on November 3. Informal formality, as it were, won out. Weisbach's behavior had the double legitimacy of the establishment and that of the citizen. He was able to undermine the response of city authorities who saw things differently than the anti-Chinese. Tacomans were genuinely shocked that the outside world did not see the expulsion as legitimate; in their eyes, what was carried out with good organization was appropriate, though extra-legal.[59]

The tone of the debate was such that even supporters of the Chinese had to assert their racism,[60] and the primary critique of the anti-Chinese was illegality. Ezra Meeker, the most assertive defender of the Chinese, said that he favored restriction of Chinese immigration but condemned the attitude of "the Chinese Must Go" as "unlawful in intent…[and] certain to lead to bloodshed and riot."[61] Unfortunately, his authority was undermined when "a friend of the anti-Chinese movement retorted with the interrogation whether Meeker was obeying the law when he assisted in establishing a 'shotgun quarantine' against Tacoma in the course of the smallpox epidemic of 1881."[62] New and Old Tacoma had paid armed guards to implement the shotgun quarantine, as well as Puyallup and Steilacoom, but there is no record in the Common

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[59] See *Tacoma Daily Ledger* editorials for reprints of critical articles and rebuttals: "The Seattle Method," November 8, 1885; "What Does This Mean?" November 10, 1885; "Why They Distort" and "New York Press on the Anti-Chinese Movement," November 11, 1885; "The Truth Will Prevail," November 12, 1885; "An International Question," November 14, 1885.

[60] This assumes that supporters secretly harbored anti-racist sentiments, credit they almost certainly do not deserve.

[61] Morgan, 233.

[62] Hunt, 1:367. Hunt ends his discussion of Meeker's resistance with this sentence, implying "that is that" for Meeker. Hunt's unique position as a historian able to interview important participants during their lifetime, as well as drawing on his own memory, leads me to believe that this is not accidental. Either this argument really did undermine Meeker's authority with the moderates, or Hunt wanted to portray him as a dubious authority on this basis.

Council minutes of Meeker claiming payment for his services. His apparently pro bono defense against the epidemic, while probably welcomed or at least understood at the time, was turned against him as "unlawful" during the debate over Chinese expulsion. Here the government's legitimate and sole control over the public health destiny of the community reached its peak in the censure of a citizen volunteer, even though the men he argued against eventually chose to perform similar extra-legal actions against Chinese Tacomans.

Just as a base level of racist rhetoric was required for any opposition to be considered, the anti-Chinese forces also limited the content of the debate. From the very beginning, the only question to consider was "whether the white citizen or the Chinaman must go."[63] The false dichotomy framed the debate; Tacomans then considered their one lawful expulsion option. The suppression of the Chinese community via nuisance laws was suggested by several people, including Mayor Weisbach. Once they had decided upon this as a path to expulsion, evidence of Chinese disease had to be produced. This begs the question of whether the Chinese were a public health risk because they were diseased, or if they were diseased because they were a public health risk.

But the city would have to produce lots of evidence to justify the nuisance laws. Perhaps Tacomans' lack of enthusiasm for the nuisance method comes from their knowledge that the Chinese were not as bad as their rhetoric indicated. On June 3 a citizen committee (led by Mayor Weisbach) reported on the conditions in Chinatown: People were packed into small spaces. There was

> a horrible disregard of sewer arrangements…[drying meat and fish] gave the rooms the odor of carrion. Beneath several of the Chinese buildings were stinking pools of

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[63] "Anti-Chinese in Council. – A Vast Assemblage at the Opera House – Speeches and Resolutions," *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, February 22, 1885.

> water. In the washhouses…the dainty garments of white women [were] puddled around in suds that reeked with dirt….[64]

This account, while almost certainly exaggerated, probably contains more than a grain of truth. However, it is important to note that white Americans of the time also lived in filthy conditions with little thought to clean spaces or personal hygiene. Whites, too, let pigs live under their homes and run free.[65] One news article belied the claim that only the Chinese were dirty:

> The Ledger has been requested to voice complaints that the trash is allowed to remain around new buildings too long after completion. Particularly this is the case on Pacific Avenue. It looks bad.[66]

There is a reason that cleanliness was the first priority of public health advocates during this time.[67]

For all its drawbacks, public health played an important part in Chinese repression during the first half of 1885. It was a good solution because it was lawful, but it was also a good solution because the anti-Chinese element did not have as much support as they liked to think they did.[68] Racist and pro-labor rhetoric could not convince certain citizens to be anti-Chinese, but public health had the potential to affect everyone in a community. Tacomans must have remembered how the community rallied against the smallpox epidemic, with only one man breaking quarantine; surely, then, skeptics might support Chinese expulsion if they perceived them as a health risk. Yet the arguments of the anti-Chinese in Tacoma seemed to be regarded as mere racism by skeptics. Where were the sick people, if the Chinese were so virulent? The anti-Chinese dealt with this by mixing metaphors and conflating economic invasion and moral

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64 Hunt, 1:363-364. Note the racist sexual hysteria implied by the focus on white women's dirty underclothes.
65 Morgan, 214.
66 "News Brevities," *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, February 6, 1885.
67 Starr, 135, 189-191.
68 Karlin, 275.

corruption (opium use and prostitution) with diseased Chinese bodies; they could infect moral compasses, as they do economies.[69]

The activities of the Common Council demonstrate Tacoma's transition from considering city public health as a legal suppressive strategy to informal intimidation techniques. In the first half of 1885, the Council discussed the Chinese at almost all of its meetings.[70] The discussions included the following: reports by the Committee of Health and Police[71] on the sanitary conditions of Chinese shops (February 18); "A petition from J.M. Sprague and others praying for the abatement as a nuisance of the wash houses and outhouses…on lot no. 1, in block 902," which was investigated and further suppressive action recommended (March 4 and March 18); a special session called by Weisbach for the Health and Police Committee to report on "a system of sewerage," which caught the committee by surprise, as it had no report to make (March 20)[72]; two ordinances prohibiting wash houses unconnected to sewer lines and establishing the notorious "cubic air ordinance" (April 1)[73]; Mr. E. Clough and others wishing to close down Sing Kee's Laundry (April 15); the Health Officer's report on unsanitary establishments in town (May 6); and the passing of Ordinance 80, which updated the health code relating to the spread of contagious diseases (May 6). After the June 3 health report was presented to the community, the Common Council's interest in the Chinese dropped off significantly, and citizens stopped

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69 See editorials of the *Tacoma Daily Ledger* from February 19, 1885 until the expulsion of November 3.

70 All the mentioned entries in this paragraph from: Journal of the Common Council, entries of February 18, 1885 to October 23, 1885.

71 An interesting and telling marriage of city duties.

72 This shows Weisbach in a rare moment of initiative *as mayor* to move against the Chinese.

73 The cubic air ordinance was based off a similar ordinance in San Francisco and certainly inspired other cities to adopt it. It specified that 500 feet of cubic air was the minimum allowed for each resident of a room, with the implied justification that less air would encourage disease transmission. This reflects both the observation that Chinese renters were often crammed together into small rooms and could be attacked on that basis, and the "miasma theory" of disease transmission competing with germ theory at the time. Miasma theory claims that foul smells or environmental emissions cause disease.

petitioning the city to suppress their neighbors.[74] Only on three occasions was "the Chinese problem" discussed in council, and none of these related to public health. One was the discussion of Ordinance 91, "An ordinance for the suppression of opium smoking or inhaling" (August 15), [75] one was a vote on said ordinance (September 5), and one was the special meeting on October 23 for the robbery case discussed below. At the same time the Council's activity dropped off, informal activity went up, particularly in October, with constant editorials in the daily papers, Committee of Fifteen delegations and actions, an anti-Chinese rally and parade on October 3, and of course the organization of the expulsion itself. Also in October, Weisbach rejected a proposal to expel the Chinese at taxpayer expense, saying there was no legal means to do so.[76] The Common Council's interest in the health of the Chinese community reflected the eventual primacy of extra-legal organizing.

The relationship between the Chinese community and the law further complicated a legal attack. The Chinese community across the west coast frequently entered into litigation when they were (il)legally attacked, and richer members of the community supported others. The Chinese actually won many cases despite the prejudices of white courts. When whites burned down Chinese homes after the expulsion (though Health Officer McCoy already had plans to condemn

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[74] Robert Mack (pp. 16, 18, 42-71, and 78) argues that in Tacoma and Seattle the anti-Chinese were made up of lower class white laborers fighting against the most visible form of capitalist oppression: Chinese labor. He also argues that the reason the expulsion succeeded in Tacoma but failed in Seattle is because the conservative capitalist elite which ran the city was divided in Tacoma over the railroad interests, while they were united in Seattle. However, this evidence that citizens, some of them clearly small business owners and some more prominent like J.M. Sprague indicates faith in local government to eliminate Chinese competitors. Weisbach himself was influential and well-regarded in the anti-Chinese community; though he was the "establishment," he was not in big business. Mack fails to fully reconcile with Weisbach's identity and position. I argue that his role in the movement, like the faith of the petitioners before June 1885, is more reflective of the transition between informal communities and communities with viable local government, to which the development of public health was important.

[75] At the time, opium and other addiction was seen as a moral vice, not as a health problem.

[76] Mack, 84.

the buildings)[77], the police laid a false charge of arson against Ah Chung Charley. The charge was so improbable a Tacoma jury acquitted him.[78] Throughout the expulsion Chinese businessmen sent frantic telegrams to the governor asking for his protection.[79] Even in the last days before the expulsion one man (name unknown) demonstrated his faith in the American legal system by bringing a charge of theft by a white policeman before the Common Council. Mayor Weisbach called a special meeting to hear the case but concluded that the officer's version of events was correct.[80] While the organizers of the expulsion were never convicted of any crime, the Chinese received reparations from the federal government for their financial losses, and they were defended in court as "customers and friends, not the 'immoral caricatures' despised by the city leaders and the mob."[81] The Chinese Foreign Minister Cheng Tsao Ju also helped Chinese Americans when he could. His agitation to the Secretary of State during the expulsion probably helped spur a reluctant Governor Squire to send federal troops to Tacoma.[82] This was the first time in a recent string of violent anti-Chinese attacks that the federal troops moved against whites.[83] Such faith in the legal proceedings is astounding given Weibach's and others' racism shows the extent to which legal assimilation was a strategy of the Chinese community – and that the legal system had a mixed record.

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77 Jean Pfaelzer, *Driven Out: The Forgotten War Against Chinese Americans* (New York: Random House, 2007), 222-223. The arsonists were probably members of the "Committee of Fifteen."

78 Morgan, 245.

79 Pfaelzer, 219, 221.

80 Journal of the Common Council, entry of October 23, 1885, p. 472.

81 Pfaelzer, 223-224, 226.

82 U.S. Department of State, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of State, 1885), pp. 193 – 198. Pfaelzer, 223.

83 Laurie, 22. Other attacks included the Rock Springs, Wyoming massacre, which Laurie and others argue was especially important for drawing Tacomans to the conclusion that the federal government would not interfere with extra-legal action against the Chinese.

The white public health method of legal Chinese suppression lost out. In the end, Tacomans were unable to convince themselves that city authorities could totally expel the Chinese. The city's initial investigations into the matter seemed promising, and citizens actively petitioned the Common Council for race-based suppression. Eventually the virtues of extra-legal expulsion became more attractive. Government action was slow, and the Chinese were not "diseased" enough to effectively legally target them, while violent intimidation had instant results. A good faith effort at the government method and a subsequent orderly expulsion preserved the anti-Chinese self-conception as law-abiding citizens. Plus, Tacomans observed that the federal government seemed unlikely to interfere, based on previous experiences in Eureka, CA, Rock Springs, WY, Squak Valley (Issaquah), and other places. In the end, Chinese Tacomans were expelled for the same reasons they had always been suppressed: as culturally alien economic competition. But the new emphasis on public health rhetoric and action during 1885 reveals the unique ways racist whites struggled to solve a "problem" in a manner that reinforced their own identities, proved Washington's readiness for statehood, and legitimized government control over some aspects of public life.

The case of tamahnous repression on the Skokomish reservation in 1885 starkly contrasts the way racial identity for the Chinese and Native Americans (specifically, here, the Twana) influenced white perceptions of their relationship to disease and public health.[84] In 1885, Tenas Charley, traditional medicine doctor, committed the crime of healing a patient on the Skokomish reservation, as he had always done.[85] Indian Agent Edwin Eells, in attempting to mandate the

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[84] Most of the members of the Skokomish tribe are ethnically Twana. Like most of the tribes around the Puget Sound, their language falls into the language family Coast Salish.

[85] Myron Eells, *The Indians of Puget Sound: The Notebooks of Myron Eells,* ed. George Pierre Castile (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1985), 424. Eells notes new pressure on Agent Edwin Eells, his brother, to suppress the practice in 1883, though it had been banned since the 1870's.

healing practices on Skokomish, was not prepared for the force of Tenas Charley's personality. The result was a confrontation that escalated into resignations by local leaders from appointed positions, threats of mutual violence, and the declaration that Charley was a rebel against the United States government, all because a woman asked for attention from her doctor. Tamahnous, one of the healing methods she chose (along with medicine from the white reservation doctor), was clearly more than mere traditional medicine. It came to represent mutiny against white medicine, white authority, and the United States itself.[86]

Tamahnous is quite a rich and complex cultural concept referring to human interactions with the spiritual or immaterial world. While it does not encompass all traditional medicine practices, nor is it solely related to healthcare, I must limit my discussion here to the medical aspects of tamahnous.[87] The causes of sickness which required tamahnous as a cure were imbalances in spiritual power.[88] Sicknesses in the body or mind could appear when a person did not acknowledge, accept, or properly engage with their spiritual powers, which were mediated by

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[86] Alexandra Harmon, *Indians in the Making: Ethnic Relations and Indian Identities around Puget Sound* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 116-117, 127. Agent Eells had a history of identifying and attacking "deviant" individuals as both a method to establish his authority and draw a line in the sand with the people in his charge. In 1877 he accused Billy Clams of Skokomish of drinking, disorderliness, and spousal abuse. As in the case of Tenas Charley, Eells subdued Clams by holding his "allies" hostage and severely punishing him as an example to others. Clams was attacked in part because the Eells "identified him as leader of a Catholic faction." Clams' conflict with Eells did not apparently cause the Skokomish community to rally around him as they did for Charley, perhaps because they did not see the benefit of resisting such a power over either Clams' personal freedom or the Catholic institution he supposedly represented.

[87] See William W. Elmendorf, ed., *Twana Narratives: Native Historical Accounts of a Coast Salish Culture* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1993), the chapter on spirit power 165-199; shaman power 199-220; and conceptions of souls, magic, and ritual 221-257.

[88] See Marian W. Smith, *The Puyallup-Nisqually* (New York: AMS Press, 1969), 56-120, for discussions of the nature of spiritual power, first-person accounts of disease caused by power imbalances, methods of curing sickness, herbal medicines, soul recovery, and ceremonies. Although she focuses on Puyallup and Nisqually beliefs, many of the same principles underlie and inform Twana and other Coast Salish beliefs. The great amount of exchange and intermarriage between different ethnic groups in the region ensure that the Twana had family members who were (or practiced) Puyallup/Nisqually religious beliefs. Harmon, 138, reports that Myron Eells' 1880 census of the Twana revealed only 20 of 242 with only Twana grandparents; that is, the vast majority of Twana had ethnically different grandparents, including Puyallup and Nisqually.

animals or landscape features. A traditional doctor's role in cases such as these would be to define the patient's power and help them to properly relate to it. Yet tamahnous could be a curse as well as a cure. The Twana envisioned powerful doctors as capable of shooting stones into someone's body to make him or her sick, even from a great distance. Tamahnous then became a power battle between two doctors, the healer and the curser, and if the healer was not strong enough the patient would die. Tamahnous was totally intertwined with traditional cultural values and ideas, and dealt with the invasion of white ideas and diseases in an innovative way. Native Americans theorized that "a white man's heart is like a stone, so that the invisible stone which they [doctors] shoot cannot affect it, while the Indian's heart is soft like mud, and thus easily affected. They also say…the white man's customs are different, and so his heart is different."[89] It was possible to accept that foreign diseases, being fundamentally different, would require white medicine while tamahnous was still effective against indigenous diseases, thus both adopting the positive aspects of the new competing culture while preserving traditional healing institutions. Mary Adams' use of both white and traditional medicine to heal her sickness reflects this adaptive cultural attitude. She hedged her bets by regarding both methods as potentially helpful. The resiliency of cultural/spiritual ideas preserved in tamahnous naturally made it extremely threatening to Myron and Edwin Eells, who wanted to promote the sole supremacy of white culture.

A few examples from Tenas Charley's life as a tamahnous doctor reveal the extent to which tamahnous encourages the dissemination of traditional spiritual ideas. Tenas Charley, whose brothers and other male relatives were also doctors, acquired the first of his spiritual

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[89] Eells, 420-421.

powers by trapping two spirits, who gave him property. Once people heard of his achievement, he was called for to prove his power by curing the sickness of a Squaxon woman. He demonstrated his mastery over the sickness by pulling "little pieces of [moving] slime" out of her and showing them to observers. As a reward, his father gave her to him.[90] Healing practices and evidence of success were displayed to audiences, for "a doctor is no good without…audience help. His power will refuse to work."[91] With the Twana, a doctor had to constantly prove with physical evidence his triumph over sickness (or, at least, produce acceptable justifications for his failure). Healing that took place in a communal context forced doctors to call upon the spiritual/cultural support of the entire community, reinforcing "objective" cultural beliefs and holding doctors accountable.

By the time missionary Myron Eells was present to record his observations of Coast Salish cultures, they had been much changed by legal, social, and demographic upheaval, not the least of which was epidemic white diseases. The history of Native American population decline due to foreign disease has been well-documented, and was readily observed by Native Americans themselves, by white explorers, traders, missionaries, government officials, social observers, politicians, and others.[92] Whites generally saw epidemic diseases as a great tragedy,

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[90] Elmendorf, *Twana Narratives*, 207-208.

[91] Elmendorf, *Twana Narratives*, 221.

[92] See Robert Thomas Boyd, *The Introduction of Infectious Disease Among the Indians of the Pacific Northwest* (Seattle: University of Washingon, 1985, PhD thesis); Alfred Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (Westport, CN: Greenwood Publication Company, 1972); Alfred Crosby, "Virgin Soil Epidemics as a Factor in the Aboriginal Depopulation in America," in *The American Indian: Past and Present*, ed. Roger L. Nichols (New York: Knopf, 1986); Michael Pietrusewsky and Michele T. Douglas, "An Osteological Assessment of Health and Disease in Precontact and Historic (1778) Hawai'i," in *In the Wake of Contact: Biological Responses to Conquest*, ed. Clark Spencer Larsen and George R. Milner (New York: Wiley-Liss, 1994). The empirical evidence that disease was actually the sole cause of catastrophic population decline was only established through more recent scholarly research such as the above which attempts to control for outside variables. Pietrusewsky and Douglas point out that native Hawai'ians actually were seen as diseased and visibly suffered many more chronic infectious diseases than their contemporary white neighbors. I argue elsewhere that Native Americans were not seen as especially diseased; this would be an important exception to note.

but also as a validation of white superiority and as a divinely endorsed claim to western lands. This is an interesting perspective when viewed in light of the question of how whites envisioned the health risks of associating with Native American bodies. Despite the fact that Native Americans clearly suffered and died from disease in great numbers, their bodies themselves were not vilified as diseased in at all the same ways that Chinese bodies were at the same time. If disease on the frontier is viewed as a proxy for competing cultural groups, then Native Americans were really the victims of whites and not the other way around.[93] In contrast, all European diseases were also endemic to China, so sick Chinese bodies were not clearly the victims of white disease, but had the potential to victimize white bodies. It is interesting that in 1885, the same year the Chinese were attacked for the crime of potentially causing illness, the crime of Twana Tenas Charley was healing the sick. Both crimes undermined white medical and governmental authority.

Myron Eells, the recorder of Tenas Charley's scandal and arrest, was a harsh critic of tamahnous. As a missionary, he was required to criticize any activity on Skokomish that competed with his spiritual and moral Christian message; as a foot soldier in the paternalistic Indian reform movement, he was "committed to the assimilation of the Indian peoples into the mainstream of American life. [He and his brother Edwin] had no ambitions toward preserving the traditional ways of the Indian peoples whom they…saw as barbaric."[94] However, Eells was an amateur anthropologist, deeply interested in recording his observations of Indian ways even if

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[93] Dary, 79-80. Though, of course, whites did sicken and die as a result of close contact with infected Native Americans; Meriwether Lewis, who contracted syphilis from the Shoshone, is one such.

[94] George Pierre Castile, "Introduction," in *The Notebooks of Myron Eells,* xvi.

he misrepresented or misunderstood the cultural and spiritual aspects of much of it.[95] He was uniquely positioned to interview and capture information about practices almost lost in the trauma of change during the second half of the nineteenth century. He was not well liked. His vision of Christianity was not culturally sensitive to the Twana and extremely harsh besides; Henry Allen, a Twana man born in 1865, remembered "I used to have to read the Bible with that awful man, used to have to go to his church….The durn white man spoiled my belief."[96] Eells never bothered to learn any local languages other than a few words in Chinook Jargon, the pidgin language of commerce in the region, which inhibited his ability to understand complex cultural ideas. Henry Allen said that he would pester people to tell him words for everyday objects in Twana, but that people would tell him "dirty, nasty words" which he would then use, to their amusement.[97] Despite not enjoying his company, many Twana nevertheless had a close relationship with Eells due to his long standing in their community and his authority on Christian principles. For example, he tells the story of a Twana woman who "declared to me that she had given up all tamahnous and intended to live as a Christian." But she had tuberculosis, and in her fear and pain asked Eells' counsel as to whether she should employ a tamahnous doctor. Eells told her that he would not be angry if she did, and upon doing so she lived for another year and a half, which Eells accounted to the fact that "[f]ear of a bad tamahnous was quickly killing her, and the removal of that fear by the tamahnousing of a doctor relieved her."[98] Though leaving a

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95 William W. Elmendorf, "Myron Eells as Ethnographer: An Appraisal," in *The Notebooks of Myron Eells*, 449-454. Elmendorf, who studied the Twana later, has judged that despite Eells' "missionary-reformer spectacles," his observations were quite accurate even if the motivations he ascribed to what he saw was not.

96 Elmendorf, *Twana Narratives*, 5-6.

97 Elmendorf, *Twana Narratives*, 5.

98 Eells, 417.

mixed legacy among the Twana, there is little reason to doubt the reliability of Eells' account of Tenas Charley's healing and arrest, as least as far as the basic facts go.

Eells did not understand tamahnous and lumped many ceremonial activities under the term, though he did grasp that it was a threat to his goal of cultural obliteration.[99] In his mind, tamahnous worked for four reasons. First, the patient would have recovered anyway. Second, "[t]here may be a kind of mesmeric [hypnotic] power in the medicine man," which he regarded as helpful on the word of Dr. W.F. Tolmie, who had seen mesmerism practiced in London. Third, traditional doctors sometimes sucked blood from patients. Fourth, the psychological belief in the cure from patients caused physical healing.[100] With the privilege of hindsight it is easy to see how cultural preconceptions affected perception of disease and healing. Modern medicine has shown that bleeding a patient is extremely harmful, but Eells was so convinced of its efficacy as a treatment that he attributed it to the "accidental" healing caused by tamahnous. Yet his faith in white medicine may not be mere ethnocentrism, but an expression of the same anxiety that the Common Council faced in 1881: making government interest in public health seem legitimate and unquestionable. It was simply not possible for Eells to simultaneously maintain that Tenas Charley was a criminal and admit that white medicine was not capable of healing all ills. Thus, if white medicine encompassed everything, then there is no place for Twana medicine, and to try to practice Twana medicine was the same as clinging to bad customs, which the federal government (in its paternalistic wisdom) could not condone. Therefore traditional medicine was equivalent to breaking federal (white) law. Admitting that white medicine was ineffective would undermine the assumption that white culture was superior.

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[99] Castile, "Introduction," xv.

[100] Eells, 416-421.

Eells' account begins with background on Agent Eells' effort to stop tamahnous. Federal authorities had ordered a stop to it decades before, but Agent Eells could not stop the practice as "[t]he Indians would hide away, or leave the reservation, or doctor at night" to avoid suppression.[101] The conversion of "a respectable minority" of Twana to Christianity who had publically rescinded tamahnous led Agent Eells to believe that the community would support his suppressive efforts, or at least snitch. He officially ordered the practice stopped, and soon after that Mary Adams became sick. She contracted two traditional doctors, including Tenas Charley, and the reservation physician; both of the latter took credit for her recovery. Eells describes the social sway Charley held over the Twana: "He had never been a chief, but he had ruled the chiefs. If he told them to do anything, they were afraid to do differently for fear that he would kill them or their children by his tamahnous….he could and often did keep the witnesses [to a crime] from testifying in court, and so he had at times managed the Agent." Eells establishes here both Charley's informal political power and his threat to the smooth operation of white government through that influence. His willingness to use his influence to stop court proceedings suggests his rebellious potential; Eells uses this to establish Charley's reputation as inherently and repeatedly rebellious, forestalling the objection that this may have been an isolated incident.

Agent Eells made his way to the Skokomish reservation and, newly empowered by his perception of community support, declared that "for fourteen years he had talked to them about the foolishness of this practice and tried to reason with them, but that he should do this no longer." He then tried to deflect criticism by claiming that he and the Twana had to merely obey edicts of the government, no matter how arbitrary the laws seemed. As a final gesture of the

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[101] This and all other subsequent quotes and anecdotes from Eells, 424-426.

superiority of white authority, he orders Charley to give up his doctor fee (a horse) to the police force. What was payment for a subversive healing practice would be transformed into a symbol of white authority.

To Agent Eells' surprise, his declaration earned him harsh criticism from the appointed chiefs, several of whom resigned, even one who claimed not to believe in tamahnous. Charley declared to Agent Eells "I do not care anything for you," which Myron interpreted as a clear challenge as to "who was to rule." Myron attributes the resignations to lingering superstitious fear of tamahnous, downplaying the unsettling rebellious interpretation of the resignations. But the agent-appointed chiefs were making a clear declaration that they would not cooperate with the white authorities. Myron does not explore their motivations, but it is possible that they saw Agent Eells' declaration as unacceptable meddling in daily life. They also may have believed in the positive effect of tamahnous for their community even if they had avowed it themselves. Finally, they had to live on the reservation and face the censure of the community if they did not represent community interests.

The early next morning a crowd gathered to witness Charley's arrest, but no one agreed to help or support the police. As they entered Charley's bedroom, he jumped up with a knife, got to his guns on the other side of the room, and threatened the police with them. They withdrew and reported to Agent Eells, who "was a little non-plussed. In nearly fourteen years' experience with them, he had never had an Indian act so…" He declared "that Tenas Charley was in open rebellion against the United States" and threatened to bring federal troops onto the reservation.

This so frightened the Twana that they convinced Charley to give himself up. Myron dismisses their fear as concern over getting a bad reputation if soldiers came onto the reservation,

but Agent Eells also frequently mentioned "punishment" against the Skokomish reservation, a term left undefined by his brother. It is not difficult to imagine that violence was threatened, especially given Charley's fierce declaration of resistance: "[I]f the soldiers should come, he and his friends would burn all the houses, and kill all the whites they could in the region…" Eells cannot admit the threat of violence against the Twana for anything less than a retaliatory attack, for that would undermine his self-conception as a paternalistic, protective yet stern white authority. Thus he skates over the actual threat delivered, emphasizing the danger of Charley's rebellion, which was really just a natural consequence of his disobeying the tamahnous ban. Thus Eells reinforces the slippery slope argument against Native American cultural integrity: if whites did not pursue cultural genocide, then they would have to deal with the consequences of a violent, rebellious racial minority. Charley went to jail for ten days and paid ten dollars (but apparently got to keep his horse); Eells concludes that "[i]t did him good, for he learned not to oppose the government, and became in many ways a better Indian." Here is a statement encapsulating the white attitude toward Native Americans at the time: by being punished for the crime of indigenous cultural expression, the Indian learns his place in the world (under white authority), and becomes, if not a better *person*, then at least a better *Indian*. To use the term "person" or "man" would imply an equal right to control over his own affairs, or even an equal right to authority over whites.

As an afterthought Eells records the following:

> I am not aware that on any other reservation there was any special opposition to the enforcement of the law. They quietly submitted or left the reservation when they wished the services of an Indian doctor, for no attempt was made to enforce it off of the reservations. Since the Indians have become citizens [the Dawes Act of 1887 allowed Indians to become U.S. citizens if they acquired private lands[102]], especially during the

[102] Harmon, 134-138. The real motivation for doing this was to allow whites to acquire reservation land, specifically Puyallup tribal land, which bordered Tacoma and was therefore extremely valuable. Moreover, Agent

> past two years, a good share of those on the Puyallup reservations have returned to tamahnous over their sick.

This paragraph is simply astounding. It suggests a great deal, including how much Tenas Charley's personality influenced the outcome of this particular tamahnous suppression. Either everyone else found off-reservation sites to practice it, or they were discreet enough to avoid detection, or this was a very special case of tamahnous suppression that was atypical of Agent Eells' ruling style. Myron Eells' comment at the beginning of his account that Agent Eells believed 1885 was the time to actively suppress tamahnous suggests the last explanation. Given Charley's audacity in resisting arrest, though, he may have flagrantly violated Eells' order to make a point; that possibility apparently did not occur to Myron. The paragraph also suggests the extent to which Native Americans resisted assimilating white cultural ideas, for the authorities knew that they were continuing tamahnous outside of the Agent's jurisdiction. And as soon as the Puyallup gained citizenship (and therefore reservation residents were no longer under the Agent's power), they openly continued to practice the forbidden. This is not an unimportant detail. It signifies the utter failure of the Eells brothers to persuade or threaten anyone into accepting white authority.[103] However, to acknowledge that fact would ruin the otherwise good story of white men subduing the rebellious Indian, so Eells adds this observation as an afterthought. Finally, the paragraph admits the difficulty of enforcing cultural policy when jurisdiction is limited to reservation lands – lands that most Native Americans did not live on.[104] Eells had limited authority to use soldiers off-reservation, and his on-reservation power depended

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Eells believed that individual land ownership was a sign of Indian assimilation and thus promoted this policy, to the great detriment of the Puyallup.

[103] Miserable failure at converting Native Americans was a family tradition for the Eells, whose father was an ineffective missionary, and whose friends included the other great missionary failures of Washington, the Whitmans. Castile, ix-xi.

[104] Harmon, 120-122.

greatly upon the acquiescence and partnership of Native American leaders.[105] The resignation of tribal leaders over tamahnous becomes even more important if we remember the extent to which Eells relied on them. Thus this instance of tamahnous suppression highlights a key relationship between white federal authorities and their Twana subjects, one which is not really about effective healing techniques (as health ordinances about the Chinese were not really about public health), but rather a clash over governing authority.

In the social practice and pursuit of health in 1880's Washington Territory, race mattered. How it mattered differed depending upon the bodies that were sick and the underlying implications of that sickness. As victims of white diseases, sick Native Americans were acceptable and not necessarily considered threatening to white communities. As *not* obviously victims of white diseases, sick Chinese were not acceptable; they were imagined as victims of their own perceived unwillingness to assimilate (to act like whites), but they were also potential sources of affliction to white bodies as well. As bastions of traditional culture, Native American traditional medicine doctors undermined efforts to erase Native American culture, and whites declared that they must change or be eliminated. However, people of all races considered their medical options in times of need and found white medicine and medical authority wanting. They turned to alternative sources of healing, even culturally foreign ones.

In times of racial conflict, however, the authority of white medicine was established by government agencies, which pretended that white medicine did not stand on such shaky ground. Public health as envisioned by governments was as much about establishing legitimacy as it was about the issue of preventing or curing disease. While the actors I have discussed may not have

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[105] Harmon, 117.

been fully cognizant of the implications of connecting medical, cultural, and governmental authority, they began to creatively use the influence of one authority to reinforce another. This process took place in a context of institutional transition and great gaps of knowledge about what causes disease. How they dealt with those knowledge gaps was closely related to race and culture.

The process of exploring the relationships between public health, government, medical authority, minority agency, race, and many other aspects of life revealed certain given attitudes people held in 1880's Washington, some of which seem unrelated to the above issues. White Tacomans were anxious about being perceived as lawful to such an extent that they tried to sell "mob" behavior as such. The Twana strongly defended their cultural institutions from arbitrary white suppression, even individuals who claimed they did not take part in traditional institutions. The Chinese overcame white racism by, paradoxically, investing heavily in the white legal system and winning some victories (though Tacoma, on the balance, was not one of them). These surprising insights into the interactions of individuals and groups all under stress reveal their struggles in a transforming world.

Teetering on the precipice of statehood, citizens sought legitimization of their new (and old) institutions. Tacomans began to see the value of them even with the trade-offs of reduced personal liberty during the 1881 smallpox outbreak. This epidemic "dramatize[d] the need for regulation…[for epidemics] paint the pathways of interdependence with the brush of morality and can help to overturn or reinforce governing authority."[106] With this incident in mind, Tacomans began to see certain possibilities for using public health justifications in arenas not

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[106] Wald, 17.

strictly medical – like suppression of unwanted minorities. While they did not end up fully endorsing the use of city public health policies in such a way in 1885, they still began to see the multiple, creative options for government policy use. Finally, the relationship between government authority and medical practice was highlighted with Tenas Charley's resistance to suppression of tamahnous for cultural reasons. The federal government reasserted its right to dictate the finer points of life to the Twana, but it also asserted the primacy of white medical authority in the face of competition. The way the government engaged with medical authority, the way groups behaved, the way government and subjects or citizens sparred or cooperated for control – all of these draw attention to the importance of public health to Washington communities in the 1880's.

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