



Nch'i-Wána, "The Big River": Mid-Columbia Indians and Their Land

Eugene S. Hunn

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The mighty Columbia River cuts a deep gash through the Miocene basalts of the Columbia Plateau, coursing as well through the lives of the Indians who live along its banks. Known to these people as Nch'i-Wana (the Big River), it forms the spine of their land, the core of their habitat.

At the turn of the century, the Sahaptin speakers of the mid-Columbia lived in an area between Celilo Falls and Priest Rapids in eastern Oregon and Washington. They were hunters and gatherers who survived by virtue of a detailed, encyclopedic knowledge of their environment. Eugene Hunn's authoritative study focuses on Sahaptin ethnobiology and the role of the natural environment in the lives and beliefs of their descendants who live on or near the Yakima, Umatilla, and Warm Springs reservations.

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