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THE KLICKITAT

AT the beginning of their historical period the Klickitat, who were first noted by Lewis and Clark, lived in southern Washington in the valleys of Klickitat river and its tributaries. This most westerly of the Shahaptian tribes, according to the ethnologist George Gibbs, who observed them in 1854 and later, had been forced out of the eastern Columbia valley by the Cayuse. In these early years what may be regarded as the centre of their territory was the vicinity of the falls of Klickitat creek near its junction with the larger stream of that name. This place they called Hwáhlhwai, and themselves Hwáhlhwaipum, signifying "those at Hwáhlhwai," *-pum* being the locative suffix. The word has been said to refer to their occupancy of Camas prairie, but their name for this place (southwest of Glenwood, Washington) was *Tak* (Prairie). The name by which we know the tribe is commonly said to be a corruption of the Upper Chinook *Ihlkádat,* that is, beyond the mountains)," with reference to the Lower Chinook, by whom the term was originated; but it is more probably from the Chinookan *Hládahut,* the falls of the Klickitat near the mouth of the stream, and the village of Chinookans and Klickitat at that place. Another variation is "Wah-how-pum," by which term Lewis and Clark, in the spring of 1806, designated the tribe as well as one of their villages of "12 temporary mat lodges near the Rock rapids."

The Klickitat soon possessed themselves of Chinookan territory, overspreading the uplands and mountain slopes from Klickitat creek westward to Lewis river, and northward to Mount St. Helens and Mount Adams, which latter became known to the Yakima bands as the Mountain of the Klickitat. They made their winter camps principally in the valleys of Klickitat, White Salmon, Little White Salmon, Wind, and Lewis rivers. At the head of the last-named stream were the Taítnapum, a small, cognate, but distinct tribe. The Klickitat developed into hardy mountaineers, daring warriors, and excellent hunters. They never became firmly established on the Columbia to the exclusion of others, but they mingled freely with the Chinookan villagers already there, and fished in the great river. But they were not the most skilful fishermen, and for the greater part they confined their efforts to the smaller streams named.

The Klickitat made war not only against their tribal enemies but

for hire. An aged informant relates that in the youth of his father (in the early years of the nineteenth century) the Washúhwal, a Chinookan band at Washougal river, Washington, came against their kinsmen at the Cascades and killed many. Seeking the aid of the Klickitat, the Cascade chief Papuskáhl sent his son Slôtia to lead a party of forty hired warriors to avenge him. Again, when men from Alashíkash (the site of Vancouver, Washington) inflicted loss upon the Cascade people, an appeal was made to the Klickitat, forty of whom, led by Slôtia, found some of the enemy in the mountains digging roots. They killed all except a woman, who clung to the knees of the narrator's grandfather and begged for her life, promising that she would lead them to those who had killed the people of the Cascades. Her life being spared, she led them to the houses of the guilty ones, all of whom they killed. The Klickitat were paid in women and beads. Parties of the Klickitat sometimes crossed the Columbia to aid the River Dwellers (as they called the Chinookan villagers) in their warfare against the Shoshoni.

They began to recognize among themselves two divisions: those on Klickitat and White Salmon rivers, and those on Lewis river, the former numbering (according to an informant[14] born about 1815 on Lewis river) about two hundred, and the latter seven hundred. The western division about the third decade of the eighteenth century began a movement across the Columbia at the mouth of the Willamette, in Oregon, and they soon dispossessed the weak tribes in the lower portion of that valley. But in 1854 General Joel Palmer, Indian agent for Oregon Territory, called a council of their chief men and ordered them to leave this land, which they had forcibly taken from the Kalapuya, the Klackamas, and the Yamhill, and to return to Washington. The order was obeyed, but the expulsion of the Klickitat caused much discontent among them, for they had fairly won the Willamette valley by conquest. In the following year they were parties to the treaty which Governor Stevens made with the Yakima, and there can be no doubt that the report of their (to them) unjust expulsion and of the

[14] John Lumley, whose name is a corruption of the native *Mlámlu*. Skúthun, a man of about the same age, born near the site of Vancouver, Washington, says that of the Klickitat there were three hundred heads of families; while Lewis and Clark credit the Wah-how-pum with a population of seven hundred.

Government's failure to carry out its treaty obligations to the tribes of western Oregon played an important part in shaping the minds of the Indians and in determining their hostile stand. Their old men relate the following incidents of their connection with the war that ensued:

"We were in camp at Tak [Camas prairie], south of Mount Adams, digging roots. To that place came Kamaíakin, who said: 'I will double up my legs and let the soldiers pass to Kítitash, and let Owhi fight them.'[15] Five nights he remained there in council with the old men, and saying, that his people (he claimed authority as far as Cowlitz river) should not fight.Then he returned to Átanum, and almost immediately the news came to us that Michelle, Shtáhun, and some others had killed a white man, the Indian agent, on Wáhsham [the highest point on the trail from the Yakima valley to The Dalles]. At the same time word came from Kamaíakin that the Klickitat should come to help fight the soldiers' and the two messengers brought five horses and five ropes, which they distributed among the headmen. They promised that each man who would come to their help should receive five horses and five rawhide ropes. Sixty men with their families joined the Indians at Thápnish [the place where Toppenish creek leaves the hills], and took part in the fight at that place. Nearly all of them were men who had been driven out of the Klackamas country. They remained in the Yakima country until the following year, when, dissatisfied because the promises made to them had not been kept, they surrendered to Colonel Wright."

Notwithstanding the reputation of the Klickitat as a warlike people, Lewis and Clark were received hospitably by them, and traded pewter buttons, strips of metal, twisted wire, and like treasures, for dogs, firewood, and "shap-pe-lell" (Chinook tsá-po-lil), a kind of sun-dried bread made from roots. At another Klickitat (Wah-how-pum) village the explorers were entertained with a dance in which the participants stood shoulder to shoulder, with their robes drawn tightly about them, and danced in a line from side to side, several parties of four to seven persons performing within the circle at the same time,

[15] It was Kamaíakin's plan to involve Owhi to such an extent that neutrality on his part would be out of the question. His first move was to induce Owhi's son Qáhlchun to kill a party of miners.

and concluding the ceremony by "passing promiscuisly throu & between each other."

As in language, so in material culture and religious practices, the Klickitat did not differ appreciably from the bands of the Yakima valley. The women were expert basket-makers; indeed the best of the old baskets now to be found among the Shahaptians are of Klickitat origin, although the tribal name has been applied promiscuously to basketry of other than Klickitat manufacture.

On the Yakima reservation, and scattered here and there in the valleys of their old home, a few aged Klickitat are to be found; but the identity of the tribe has been lost, merged as it is with the Yakima bands.

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