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THE YUROK

THE Yurok inhabited a large number of villages along the banks of Klamath river from Bluff creek, a few miles above Trinity river, down to the ocean, and others along the coast from Trinidad to a point six miles north of Klamath river. As the river winds, the distance from Bluff creek to the sea is about forty-five miles, and the Yurok, although their river settlements were invariably close to the stream, claimed for hunting and food-gathering purposes the entire Klamath watershed on both sides, excepting of course the Trinity river country, which belonged to the friendly Hupa.

The Coast Yurok controlled only a narrow strip of territory. Generally the slopes of the Coast range are close to the shore, and, densely forested with huge redwoods, jungles of giant bracken, tangled shrubs, and fallen trees, they formed an effective barrier to any but the most ambitious traveller or hunter. There was indeed no necessity for penetration beyond the fringes of the forest, where edible fern-roots and materials for basketry, bows, canoes, and houses were to be had. For the rest, subsistence came from the ocean and the streams.

The Klamath River Yurok, while depending very largely on salmon and lampreys, gathered quantities of acorns and small seeds in the hills back from the river. From a short distance below Trinity river to the ocean the Klamath courses northwestward through short gorges, where the water breaks into rapids; bold hills wooded with pines, Douglas spruce, and oaks; sweeping open slopes richly browned by the summer heat, the ancient food-preserves of the villagers; occasional flats, especially at the mouths of affluent streams. The river rapidly broadens, but not until the ocean is in sight and hearing, and the effects of the tides are felt, does it leave the hills, which at this point are covered with redwood forests.

Some of the river villages are still inhabited, and include houses and sudatories of the primitive kind. On account of the inaccessibility of the region it affords the best field in northern California to observe the remnants of aboriginal life. In 1915 there was a fair wagon-road for about fifteen miles below Weitchpec, and a trail the remaining eight miles to Klamath. From there to the coast a trail climbed through the mountains, but most traffic was by canoe to Requa. The most popu-

lous settlements are Weitspus (Weitchpec post-office) opposite the mouth of Trinity river, Kepel, Shregegon, Pekwan, Wakhtek (Klamath post-office), and Rekwoi (Requa) at the mouth of the Klamath. The Indians at Requa are only a part of a somewhat polyglot population, and there are white settlers and a merchant at Weitchpec, but the other villages here named are purely Indian as to population. Many other families live on individual allotments, tilling their little farms and taking what few salmon escape the commercial fishermen at Requa. In all there were 668 Yurok on Klamath river and including a few scattered families on the coast in 1910. They were formerly numerous, being estimated in 1870 at 2700.

They have no name for themselves as a people. When it is necessary to designate themselves, they use the word *âhl*, or its unabbreviated form *âléqâhl* ("people"). To the Karok they are known as Yúruq-á*r*a*r* ("down-stream people"), which in the form Youruk was first used by George Gibbs,[1] who was one of the first white men seen by the up-stream Yurok, passing through the country in 1851 in association with Col. Redick McKee, treaty commissioner. The same observer, in the same work, called them also Weits-pek, which is properly the name of the spring at the village Weitspus; and this was the origin of Powell's priority name, Weitspekan, for the linguistic family which this group has been supposed to constitute. Sapir however has shown the Algonquian affinity of both Yurok and Wiyot.

Phonetically Yurok is characterized by the astonishing frequency of r, not trilled, or formed with the tip of the tongue, but pronounced almost exactly as the average American pronounces it, with perhaps a little more stress. In by far the majority of cases it is preceded by open u. Out of one hundred and forty-five words taken at random, but excluding known compounds, forty-six contain the letter r. In eighteen words it appears in one syllable; in twenty-one, two syllables; in seven, three syllables.

The language shows no dialectic variation from Bluff creek to the coast. South of Klamath river the language differed somewhat from the river dialect, and is said also to have included three sub-dialects, which were spoken respectively in Eshpeu, midway between Klamath

1 Schoolcraft, Indian Tribes, vol. III, p. 138, 1853.

river and Redwood creek; in Arekw, now Orick, at the mouth of Redwood creek; and in Tsurau, now Trinidad.

Yurok territory was contiguous on the north with the Athapascan Tolowa, on the east with the Karok, on the south with the Hupa, Chilula, and Wiyot. Only the Coast Yurok came in contact with the Wiyot and the Chilula, the latter of whom, though south of the main body of Yurok territory, were east of the coast villages. The inhabitants of the settlements at the mouth of Klamath river and on the coast immediately to the north had relations, mostly friendly, with the Tolowa, and those up-stream were on amicable terms with the Hupa on Trinity river and the Karok on the Klamath.

In manufactures, clothing and ornaments, dwellings and utensils, food and methods of hunting and fishing, the River Yurok were so nearly identical with the Hupa that a description would be merely repetition. At the mouth of the river and on the coast environmental modifications were marked. Canoes, which the inland people acquired by purchase, were made of redwood logs. A Yurok canoe at Orleans (in Karok territory) gave the following measurements: length, 18.2 feet; width, 3.8 amidships, tapering to 3.1; depth, 1.5. The gunwales were undercut on the inside, giving the effect of a rail, and the stern seat was simply a part of the original log left in place. A cross-section of the hull was nearly the arc of a circle. Among these Coast Yurok fishing was more important than up the river. Shell-fish were staple, and marine mammals, the seals and sea-lions, were killed on small rocky islands. Seaweed was an abundant food, and acorns and seeds were less plentiful. Ceremonial life too was different. The Deerskin dance was not held, although the Woodpecker, or jumping, dance occurred at very infrequent intervals at Rekwoi. In short, the culture of the Coast Yurok was almost identical with that of the Wiyot, their southern neighbors.

The earliest recorded visit by Europeans in Yurok territory was that of the Spaniard Bodega,[2] who in 1775 spent several days in Trinidad bay. More than three hundred Indians from local and adjacent vil-

2 Journal of a Spanish Voyage in 1775 by Don Antonio Maurelle, trans. by Daines Barrington in *Miscellanies,* London, 1781; quoted by Loud, *Univ. Calif. Publ. Amer. Arch. Ethn.,* vol. 14, no. 3, 1918.

lages thronged the shores to behold the strange sight, and the Spaniards noted that some of them had iron implements in the form of arrow-points, knives, and adz-blades. The metal no doubt was secured from wreckage.

The Yurok recognized no chiefs. Each village had a rich man, or perhaps two or three rich men, whose wealth consisted mostly of dance costumes, such as white deerskins and woodpecker scalps, and of shell money. Without the help of these rich men there could be no religious ceremony, because they possessed all the costumes; consequently they were necessarily consulted by anyone desiring to have a dance held. But they were not regarded as head-men possessing authority. In cases of personal injury or the destruction or theft of property, it was not the rich man who was sent as mediator, but some man noted as a persuasive speaker. He received pay from both disputants.

The building of a fish-weir was in the hands of a priest who understood the prayers and myths to be recited and the use of the proper incense at the prescribed moment. He performed no labor, but while the others worked he sat at a distance looking on and supposedly repeating his prayers. In the same way the dances and numerous minor rites were in the charge of certain men or women. The rich man was not necessarily a priest of any kind, nor was the priest necessarily a man of wealth. The office was handed down from father to son.

The only fish-weir, with the exception of the one at Heyummú (Loolego), two miles above Trinity river, was built at Kepel by the combined forces of all the villages from Wá's'ái down to Wakhtek. Though the people above the former village took no part in the labor, nevertheless, because the fish were largely prevented from ascending the river to them, they had the privilege of going down to Kepel when the salmon were plentiful and taking all they wished without price.

While the only well-marked political division was the village, nevertheless the settlements along the river fell into three groups, especially in ceremonial matters. From Bluff creek down to Tule creek (Atsepar to Kenek) the Yurok looked upon Weitspus and the other settlements at the confluence of Trinity river with the Klamath as their headquarters. Similarly, Kepel was the most important village of the group extending from Merip down to and including Erner; and Rekwoi dominated the group from Turip down to the ocean.

As the village is the only political division, so the family is the only

social unit. Neither clans nor totemism exist. Descent is paternal, and only blood relationship prevents marriage.

Although the Yurok did not observe a public puberty dance, the girl herself, until recently, was subject to certain restrictions. She sat apart from the rest of the family with her own little fire, if heat were needed. During the day she frequently went for fuel as a means of winning good luck, and about sunset she ran from the house down to the river, entered the water, and ran back to the house, always pursued by young boys, who saw that she did not lag. This continued for ten days, and each day she must run to the river and jump in one more time than on the preceding day. On returning to the house at the end of each full course except the last, she stopped short at the door, raised both hands, palms forward, and then turned about and dashed back to the river. She wore a kilt of shredded maple-bark, and about her head a band of fragrant grass. The hair was braided in two plaits, and was not rearranged during the ten days. A bone scratcher hung on a string from her neck. She drank little, and three times during the entire period she received acorn mush and dried salmon. With a companion to carry the food, for the girl was apt to be rather weak with fasting, she went to some spot at the river's edge in order that no sound of bird or beast might be heard. Should such a sound nevertheless be heard, she would have to stop eating.

Subsequent menstruation periods throughout her life were spent in a separate, underground hut. Childbirth however took place in the family dwelling.

Like the Hupa, Yurok parents guarded carefully against the violation of their young daughters. But in spite of this the boys had their eyes open for any girl known to have experienced their first menses, and when the signal was passed they were on her trail. The girls, it is said, were no less ready for the encounter, and rarely indeed was a bride a virgin. When a girl became pregnant, the responsible youth was forced to marry her and to pay the usual price of a wife.

To be successful in hunting a man should be a celibate during the winter (which probably was one of those rules that are generally approved but little observed).[3] Therefore all men slept with the boys in

3 Weitchpec George, who no doubt knows, agreed with this suspicion.

the sweat-house.

Wives were purchased, as among the Hupa, and the feeling to the latter that the payment was not a commercial transaction, but a publicly given reward for promised conjugal fidelity, was not shared by the Yurok. Men frankly regarded their daughters as valuable assets, and exacted as high a price as possible. In effect however this resulted no differently than the Hupa practice.

The dead were disposed recumbent in graves, with the head upstream. The corpse was carried, feet foremost, in a complete circuit of the room and then out through an opening made in the wall by removing a board. As soon as the bearers had disappeared through the opening, some one who remained behind for the purpose threw a handful of ashes after the departing dead, and said, "I wish you may never return!" The custom of carrying the body through the wall may perhaps have no connection with a superstition regarding the passage of a corpse through the doorway. It may be due entirely to the fact that carrying a dead man through the small round doorway of a Yurok house would be difficult.

Shell money and other valuables, such as woodpecker scalps, obsidian blades, ceremonial costumes, and weapons, were placed in the grave for use in the next world. These objects were always broken or slit, in order, so it is said, to render them useless to the living, who might otherwise be tempted to rob the grave. Shell money is said not to have been broken, a statement that probably is to be interpreted as meaning that it was seldom buried at all. A distinctly different conception is seen in the invariable burning of food and clothing in order to release their spiritual counterparts for the use of the dead. Fire was kept burning at the grave five nights. However this custom may have originated, the modern Yurok feel that its purpose was to serve as a reminder of the departed whenever the bereaved relatives kindled a fire.

It is said that famine was by no means uncommon in ancient times, and those who perished by starvation were thrown into the river. Since food came largely from the river, it appears that this was done to appease the malign powers that were withholding the salmon.

Like the Hupa the Yurok avoid the use of words and phrases referring to death and burial. Instead of "he is dead," they say "he is decayed." For five days after burial all those who occupied the house of the dead person, as well as those who assisted in preparing the corpse

for burial, participated in a religious purification. Each morning they went into the sweat-house, where a priest, man or woman, who understood the rite, repeated the myth-formulas and then gave each one a piece of*háiwâmás* (a large plant growing in swampy places), which each pounded up and mixed with water in a small basket. With this water they washed the head, hands, feet, and body. A large bundle of dry buckbrush and a small bunch of green buckbrush were put on the fire, and after huddling close about it to inhale the smoke, they went to the river and bathed. All this occupied about two hours, and they were then at liberty to go about their ordinary duties, except the grave-digger, who went at once to the dwelling house and remained there all day. He did not use the common fire, but prepared his own food at a little one of his own on the spot where the corpse had lain. When he went out for any necessary purpose, he walked with a staff in his right hand, while his left held a couple of short boughs of Douglas spruce over his head.

Relatives of the dead cut off the ends of the hair, and widows cut it quite short. All wore braided bands of Xerophyllum grass around the neck, which remained until they fell off in the course of time. The older women still observe these rules, and the names of the dead are still taboo.

The land of spirits is called *charrikik,* but definite opinions of its locality and character appear to be wanting.

Yurok shamans were practically always women. The informant has known only three male shamans, one at Rekwoi, another at the mouth of Salmon river, and a third at the mouth of Mad river. These all were of different tribes, Yurok, Karok, and Wiyot respectively. At the present time all Yurok shamans are women.

When a young woman has been informed by a dream that she must become a shaman, she makes the necessary arrangements with an older shaman, who usually is a relative and gives her services without reward. If she is not a relative, she is paid for her work. The dance, which is called *wuremâhpa*, occurs in the winter. Singers, both men and women, are paid by the family of the novice, and the people assemble in the sweat-house at night. The novice and her instructor dance, standing in one place and flexing the knees, while holding their clenched hands in front of them. After a while the old shaman vomits *télugehl,* the "pain," into her hands, and the novice swallows it, tak-

ing it directly from the older woman's hands into her mouth. Then they continue their dancing, but after a while the older woman stops. The novice dances on, ceasing only when the singers pause for a brief rest, or when at length she becomes sick with the "pain" she has swallowed and sits down, thrusts a finger into her throat, and endeavors to disgorge it. The purpose of the continuous dancing is to "shake up the pain" in her stomach until it is vomited forth. This once accomplished, she will then be able at any time to cause others with a like sickness to throw it up. She will be able to treat no other kind of sickness except that which is caused by the pain she swallowed from the hand of her instructor. Sometimes she succeeds in throwing up the pain before the end of the first night of dancing, sometimes not before four or five or even ten nights. In some cases a novice has to dance for ten nights, then rest a few days, and resume again, and so continue through the entire winter.

When the candidate at last throws up the sickness, she receives it in her hands, which she raises with outstretched arms. With a loud sucking-in of the breath, she pretends to swallow it again, and, opening her hands, shows them to be empty. Then she falls in a swoon, and some powerful man takes her on his back, holding her hands in front of his shoulders, and dances. If she is very heavy, another man helps to support her from behind. Gradually she recovers her senses, and the dance is ended. She is now a shaman.

In after years she may occasionally dream of other kinds of sickness. For example, she may dream of something green in the stomach (bile), or of congested blood, or of "poison." She wakes, suffering with pain caused by that very sickness of which she dreamed. It is then necessary for a shaman's dance to be held, and she dances just as she did at her initiation, in order to shake up the sickness and vomit it. When she has succeeded in doing so, she is able to treat others for that same form of sickness.

The shaman dance was celebrated as late as 1915 at Wakhtek.

The healer must be paid before she will answer a summons. When this preliminary has been attended to, she comes to the house, smokes, mumbles her myth-formulas, and begins to suck out the sickness. She spits into a basket, and after a while exhibits in one hand a small black object, which she declares to be the sickness. She clasps her hands shut, utters an exclamation, and opens them. The object is gone. In

many cases shamans profess to be unable to capture the pain. Quite frequently the shaman, after making an examination, says: "My power is not able to take out that kind of pain. You had better call such and such a one." Men of means usually send for some distant healer, even to one of another tribe.

A healing ceremony known as *ummellâyik,* and called by the local white people the brush dance, is performed for the benefit of a sickly or feverish child. It consists essentially in holding the child in the steam of certain herbs. Another form of the same ceremony is called specifically *wârérâ* ("swinging fire"), because blazing torches of pitchy spruce with salal brush tied to them are swung back and forth over the child. The ceremony is still frequently performed, there being a woman at Weitspus and another at Wakhtek who possess the inherited right to officiate. The former is also a "sucking doctor," and the latter can perform the brush dance by either method.

For five days, beginning with the first day of the ceremony, the priestess and the mother of the sick child must observe continence. Early in the morning of the first day the priestess, who in these rites is called *mellâ*, goes to the woods to gather her medicine and repeat her formulas. She wears a vizor of yellowhammer tail-feathers, and her hair braids are spirally wrapped with strips of fur. Her face is painted with horizontal black stripes. Formerly she wore the maple-bark apron and deerskin skirt. She is accompanied by a virgin, who wears the ordinary garments without special ornaments and has her face painted like that of the priestess. In the evening they return and go into the house of the child that is to be treated.

The *mellâ* carries a tall staff of Douglas spruce with a leafy tip, and the medicine in a small burden-basket. She plants the sapling in one corner of the fireplace, and on it about the middle ties a bulky packet of deerskin, which is supposed to contain the sickness. Four or five girls, accompanied by the *mellâ*, march slowly around the fire, each with her hands on the shoulders of the one in front of her. They sing repeatedly, *"Ketíneghemmuâ* ('going to take people along')," and gaze constantly at the packet. At the end of the song, they stand in a circle facing it and clap their hands, shrilly shouting, "*A a a a*!" while the priestess grasps the spruce and shakes it vigorously. Five times they do this, and then to the same song they, go five times around the spruce, holding hands. Near the end of the last circuit, it begins to rise

slowly through the smoke-hole. As the song ends, the mellâ grasps it and pretends to attempt to hold it back, while the girls as before clap their hands and shout. Slowly the spruce is drawn up through the roof by an unseen man on the housetop.

Then the priestess transfers her medicine to a basket containing water, and one of the stones that have been heating in the fire is dropped in. The mother wraps her child in a blanket, leaving only the head exposed, and holds it in the rising steam. From time to time another stone is added, and after the steaming has progressed far enough, the priestess announces, "It is done."

At this signal a group of dancers, all from some one district, or from the Hupa or the Karok, enter and dance to a "heavy," that is, a slow, song *(nâh'péwihl),* bending forward at the waist, slightly flexing the knees, and striking the ground with the right foot, the heel of which however is not raised from the ground. Slowly they move around the fire to the right. The dancers are mostly men, with a few unmarried girls. Some wear broad head-bands covered with woodpecker scalps, others have a row of sea-lion teeth encircling the band and curving outward and upward. All have bunches of brush in the hands, with which they cover their faces as they dance. The dancers themselves sing. The "heavy" song is followed by a "light" or quick one, and after three or four songs they retire, giving place to a group from another district or tribe, who endeavor to outdo their predecessors. Now and again the child is steamed while the dancing goes on. The *mellâ* herself dances from time to time with her staff in one hand and, held aloft in the other, a tray with four upright eagle-feathers at opposite points, and several pendent strings of abalone-shell beads, which rattle when she moves the tray rhythmically. She sounds a crane-bone whistle. All this continues about half the night.

The next day and night are for rest, and on the third night the steaming and dancing are repeated. As the night advances, the dancers put on their finest regalia and discard the bunches of brush for quivers of otter-or fisher-skin filled with arrows. Near the end of the ceremony some young man leaps forward and dances by himself within the circle, blowing on a bone whistle. Later a youth and a maiden step into the circle, and, each holding a basket containing medicine above the child and its mother, they dance facing each other and occasionally exchanging places.

In the fire brush dance, which is like the same ceremony of the Hupa, the child and its mother are covered with a tule mat to protect them from sparks. After the torches are burned out, they are carried out of the house by any person who happens to be there, and are thrown away. Then the mother holds the infant, both being still covered with the mat, and the *mellâ* sings while gently tapping a small stick on the mat above the child.

Like the Hupa and the Karok, the Yurok believe that before the appearance of the Indians the earth was inhabited by a race that looked and acted like humans, but possessed the powers of supernaturals. These *wâghai*[4] existed for the purpose of first performing and so establishing all customs and institutions that were to become those of the Indians. Such customs have to do with every phase of life — the acquisition, preparation, and eating of food; birth, puberty, marriage, death, the treatment of disease, the performance of public ceremonies, as well as a thousand and one taboos or preventive formulas connected with isolated acts. In order to make use of the powers bequeathed to humans, it is necessary not only to employ the "medicines" in the manner established by the *wâghai,* but at the same time to recite, *pari passu,* the mythical account of the act as performed by them. A myth so used becomes of course a sacred formula, a charm potent in itself, and all the acts so performed, no matter how trivial or commonplace, become religious acts.

Any religious observance involving the repetition of formulas requires also the use of certain roots or herbs, and the whole operation is called "making medicine." Medicine is *másqâ,* and includes not only that which is administered to cure sickness, but anything — root, herb, stick, or bark — that is used in connection with a formula. Knowledge of any particular medicine and formula is acquired by instruction, and carries with it the right to officiate as priest in the ceremony or minor practice to which they apply.

In addition to the minor ceremonies and individual practices heretofore spoken of, the Yurok have a public ceremony called Upíyewâi,

4 This name was applied to the white men who first entered the country, and nowadays, in order to distinguish it, the mythic race is called *haihlkâu-wâghai* ("back-in-themountains *wâghai*").

which includes the Deerskin and the Woodpecker, or jumping, dance. In order to specify the Deerskin dance one must say Kás-unúrwur-murts ("down-river dance-up-from"); and the Jumping dance, Wâník-wuleghâ ("jump up and down").

The Deerskin dance is performed at Kepel and Wakhtek following the biennial building of a fish-weir at the former place. They dance one day and night at Kepel, and then appoint a certain day about a week later for the continuance of the dance at Wakhtek. There all the people of the lower part of the river, from Merip to Erner, assemble and dance for about ten days, although the maximum number of people do not congregate until about the fifth day. Eight days after the end of the Deerskin dance, the people move from Wakhtek to Merip, where on a hill above the river they hold the jumping dance. Yurok from the upper reaches of the river, as well as Hupa and Karok, join the dancers in considerable numbers.

There never was a Deerskin dance at Rekwoi, but at very infrequent intervals they held the jumping dance in a house. The informant said it has been held there only twice in his lifetime. In the years when the ceremony is not held at Kepel and Wakhtek, it is observed at Weitspus, where the procedure is as follows:

The ceremony occurs in September, but before it begins the head of every family that has experienced "bad luck" during the year, that is, the death of a member of the family, must be paid two dollars and a half in order to indemnify him for the insult of making merry in the face of his grief. The leading men take a collection among all the Atsepar-Kenek people, each of whom contributes what he can. Other groups that intend to participate collect funds among their own people and pay their own bereaved.

The same rule applies in many other circumstances. Thus, if a Weitspus man visiting the Hupa finds a dance in progress and knows that at home there is a family that has not been compensated for its misfortune, it is necessary for him to leave at once and go back home. Then, after the bereaved family has been paid, he and any others may return to the dance and participate in it. Nobody may engage in a game of any kind, so long as there are families within the group of villages whose "bad luck" has not been requited. If a party attending a dance in another village receives news that one of their people has died, they at once take up a collection among themselves, amounting

at the present time to five or six dollars, which is laid aside. Then they attend the dance, and on their return home pay the family for the disrespect they have shown. If they have lent any regalia to those in charge of the ceremony, they go to the leader and say: "Now, we cannot see this dance, for which we have given these things. Perhaps you can help us." And the dance leader contributes to the fund. But if a visitor is alone, he is unable to raise the necessary amount and hence must go home and canvass the community. Rich men are always paid first for their bereavement, so that their help may be had in paying others. Thus, having paid the rich man, those in charge of the collection return and say, "We must pay for the bad luck of this other man." He would then give fifty cents, and they, having made up the necessary amount, pay it to the man for whom it is intended. To him they say, "We must pay for the bad luck of so and so," naming another bereaved family, and he contributes fifty cents. So it goes until, when the head of the last family to be solaced has been reached, his pay amounts to fifty cents less than that of the others, because there will be no call upon him to contribute to a bad-luck fund. But frequent visits are paid to the rich man who has been first satisfied, so that usually his entire pension is disbursed. This work is undertaken in each village by some man who, having heard that his friend of another village or tribe is going to have a dance, feels obliged to see that nothing prevents his own people from attending.

During the year preceding the celebration the people from Atsepar to Kenek make provision for entertaining their numerous guests by gathering large stores of acorns, seeds, and salmon, and by making a large number of baskets in which to serve the food. Some rich man who wishes to sponsor the ceremony calls on several of his friends and requests their aid in obtaining sufficient dancing regalia, and in feeding the people. When he has made these necessary arrangements, they go to see the proper priest, who is called *méwâlép* ("clear out"), referring to the clearing of the dance-ground. There is, and was, only one man possessing the right to fill this position. But the priest needs a little urging. He objects that he has no acorns. One of the men answers, "I will give you some of mine." Also, he requires salmon. Another promises salmon. When at length the old man is satisfied, he names the day for the dance. Then the sponsor and his associates visit the various villages up and down the river, as well as the Hupa and the Karok, to obtain

what dancing regalia they can. The less valuable articles they bring back with them, but the deerskins and the ceremonial obsidian blades are brought later by their owners.

The ceremony is supposed to last ten nights. The dancing begins soon after sunset, and before that time the priest has made a small fire on the terrace in front of a temporary wall of boards, which represents a house that was washed away by a freshet many years ago.[5] Carrying a firebrand, a basketry dipper containing incense roots, and a pipe, he follows a certain path that winds down the terrace to a level about twenty feet lower than the wall and just above the river bed. There he kindles a small fire, clears away all stones, and cuts off the brush from the dance-place. At this spot there are three stones in a row, on which the singers sit between the songs, and in front of them is a flat stone on which the priest himself sits behind a little fire, while the dancers perform. After clearing the ground, the priest goes back and sits in front of the wall of boards until the dancers appear.

For the first few days there are rarely more than nine dancers, but there must be at least that many. In the middle are the three singers. These and all the others are dressed alike, with deerskin skirt and wolf-skin headband in which eagle-feathers or sticks are thrust. Each carries a white or an almost black deerskin with stuffed head, into which a staff is inserted. With them are two men who, besides the deerskin skirt, wear head-bands consisting of a number of sea-lion teeth set into a skin band and curving upward. Under the left arm is a quiver containing a bunch of grass instead of arrows, and each carries a ceremonial obsidian blade. Led by the priest, they all march down the path to the dance-ground and there stand in line facing the village. The priest himself sits behind his fire, into which he occasionally throws powdered incense while repeating the pertinent myths. At each end of the line and somewhat in front of it stands one of the two obsidian-bearers. The singers begin a song, and the dancers rhythmically thrust forward the staffs on which the deerskins hang, while at the same time the blade-bearers march in a long ellipse in front of them, back and forth, passing each other at the middle of the line, blowing on bone

5 An illustration of the manner in which many inexplicable customs originate.

whistles and holding the blades before them in the right hand. At the end of each song the singers sit down on their stones, while the others remain standing. After the third song the obsidian-bearers march around behind the line and stand in the row just outside the ones next to the singers, and when the singing is resumed they dance there, holding the blades in both hands close to the waist. After three or four songs more, they all march back to the spot in front of the board wall and remove their costumes.

But the priest remains seated at the dance-ground, and from their camp down on the sandbar come the dancers of the neighboring village Wakhshek (Martins Ferry), or those of Pekwuteu and Ertlerger, the two villages across the river from Weitspus at the mouth of the Trinity. They dance in just the same manner, and are followed after an interval by the dancers from the other community.

As soon as a set of dancers have removed their costumes they run down to the river and bathe, even while the next group is performing; unless, indeed, performers are so scarce that while they are undressing a man from another group is waiting right on the spot to ask some of them to dance for him. Sometimes the entire group go down to one of the visiting camps on the river and dress in the costumes there offered them. Each of the three groups performs twice, and in conclusion each camp has a feast, the dancers eating in the camp for which they last performed. But the priest goes directly to his house.

Two of the old-fashioned houses still stand close to the dance-ground. One is that in which the priest lives during the ceremony, and it is kept in repair only for this use. These houses contain no modern material, except the doors, and the timbers are held in place by withes. The use of nails would be sacrilegious.

The priest spends the remainder of the night in his sweat-house, and early in the morning he builds a small fire in front of the board wall. When he hears sounds that indicate that the dancers are nearly ready, he takes a firebrand, a basket dipper with incense, and his pipe, and goes down to the dance-ground. It is generally about two hours before the performers make their appearance, and there he must sit until the morning dance is done, without food and drink. In the first few days each group dances only once, as described above, but toward the end each one repeats its dance after the others have appeared; so that they continue sometimes far into the afternoon, during which

time the priest and the dancers neither eat nor drink. (This rule is no longer observed by the dancers. They eat breakfast before the dance begins.) About sunset the priest returns again to the dance-ground and the performance is repeated.

The people from other villages do not generally arrive in time for the beginning of the dance, and meanwhile the Weitspus people dance by themselves. When the Pekwuteu people are ready to come, they cross to the left bank of the Trinity and join the people of Ertlerger, and after their dancers have there dressed, all embark. In the bow of the canoe with the dancers are two men wearing sea-lion-tooth head-bands with a single feather in the back. They carry no obsidian blades nor quivers. Behind them stand the dancers, holding deerskins on staffs, and in the stern is a single man with a paddle. The dancers sing and strike the right foot on the bottom of the canoe, while the two men in the bow constantly blow bone whistles and kneel with hands on the gunwale and sway their bodies to and fro, shaking their heads from side to side, in imitation of sea-lions. They land on the bar between Trinity and Klamath rivers, cross it on foot, walk a few yards up Klamath river, and get into another canoe, in which they approach the shore below Weitspus.[6] Here are gathered a great crowd of people watching them. As the canoe comes close, some one with a long pole repeatedly pushes it back into the stream, so that the spectacle may be the longer enjoyed. When at length they land, they walk down to the camp which their people have already set up.

On the last few days there are four men who dance with blades. If at the end the people are not satisfied, because perhaps the majority of the spectators and dancers did not come early enough, the dance may be prolonged under the pretense that the first five days, when they danced without visitors, were merely for practice. They then dance five days longer. Sometimes either the dance must be prolonged, or after its inauguration there must be an interruption, because the people down the river are having difficulty in making a settlement with their bereaved members. Again, word may come to the people in one of the camps on the river bars that a man of their village has died. It

6 The transfer to a second canoe has no ceremonial significance. This is the regular and easiest method of crossing to Weitchpec.

is then impossible to continue the dance until money for the necessary payment to his family has been raised, because these people could not avoid seeing the dance, inasmuch as the dance-ground lies right before their eyes. So there is a day's delay while the assembled people help them raise the necessary sum.

Formerly the priest was accompanied in all his official acts by a maiden, who wore only the primitive apron, skirt, and deerskin robe over the shoulders. She observed the same restrictions as the priest himself, refraining from food until the day's dancing was done, bathing in the river with the priest, and at no time drinking any water except what was contained in the acorn soup she ate. In recent years it has been impossible to persuade girls to undertake this arduous duty, especially as they do not like to expose their bodies to the public. The maiden's part has not been filled in the last thirty years.

At the end of the Deerskin dance there are two days for rest, and at dawn on the third day the priest (formerly accompanied by the maiden) goes to various places just behind the village, and there, sitting on certain stones and facing certain directions, he repeats formulas and blows a pinch of tobacco to the *wâghai* addressed in the formulas. In his right hand he carries a basketry cup with incense root, and in his left a small deerskin containing tobacco and pipe. Slowly he works his way from the village up the hill and along a ridge to a place about three miles back in the hills. On the way he clears the ground at the six places where the dancers will stop to perform. Soon after the departure of the priest the dancers of Weitspus, and those of the two villages across the river, start out, accompanied by two or three young men who help to carry the loads. The first dance-place is on a high point just above the village, and as soon as they arrive there, the men throw down their packs of costumes, and dress. The Weitspus dancers perform first in exactly the same manner and with the same kind of costumes as the Hupa use in their jumping dance. The Pekwuteu and Ertlerger dancers follow, then they all move on and dance successively at the next four stations. Finally they come to the last and principal place, where they find the priest sitting at his incense fire, and all the people from the village and from the river camps, who have gone up by another and shorter trail and established themselves, family by family, in spots rigidly prescribed by ancient usage. The inhabitants of Wakhshek, having gone home after the Deerskin dance, have arrived here

by a direct route from their village, and have danced along the way at places of their own. Here after the usual dances they have their first meal of the day. It is midafternoon. In the evening each group dances again, Weitspus first, Pekwuteu and Ertlerger second, and Wakhshek third, and the evening meal is eaten after dark. The priest remains awake all night, smoking and frequently walking about in order to do so. (The assisting virgin of other times bathed at intervals in a spring prohibited to all others.)

Early in the morning the leader of the Weitspus dancers begins his preparations for the day's performance, but in spite of all his efforts it is usually well into the morning before a start is made. There are long intervals of waiting between dances, due to the difficulty of securing performers and dressing them, and as each group repeats its dance, the end does not come until mid-afternoon. The priest (and formerly the virgin) immediately starts back to the village, and the others move about a quarter of a mile before they eat. Then after the meal all the visitors hurry away to Weitspus for the night. The others come in a more leisurely fashion, because they, the hosts, have heavy loads of household utensils to carry, and after covering part of the distance they stop for the night in the hills.

The purpose of the ceremony is to ward off bad luck of every kind, such as sickness and famine. Fish and game are expected to be more plentiful thereafter, and health better.

In Yurok mythology there are three important characters, corresponding to similarly named Hupa and Wiyot personages. Wâhpékumau ("oceanward widower") is the equivalent of Hupa Yimántuwínyai ("across-ocean he-went-away"), who improved the natural features of the river country as a reward to those who gave him their prettiest virgins. Pulúkuhl-qerréq ("far-down-stream pointed-buttock") is the same as Hupa Yinúka-tuwínyai ("south he-went-away"), the transformer who contended with the evil beings along the river and either destroyed them or made them harmless. Coyote is the usual trickster, working for his own ends, sometimes successfully outwitting his opponents, sometimes ludicrously defeated.

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