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THE KAROK

THE Karok inhabited the banks of Klamath river from a few miles above Happy Camp in Siskiyou county down to Redcap creek in Humboldt county, and Salmon river up to the Forks of Salmon. The Klamath in this region flows in a southerly direction, but soon after passing out of Karok boundaries it swings rather sharply to the northwest, so that a portion of the territory of the Yurok, who occupy the river below the Karok, actually lies west of the southerly village-sites of the latter. The two areas however are separated by the divide between the southerly and the northwesterly courses of the river, and all intercourse between the two tribes was by way of the Klamath. Invariable participation by visitors of one tribe in the ceremonies of the other kept then on intimate terms. West of the northern part of Karok territory were the Athapascan Tolowa in the extreme northwestern corner of the state. Here the dividing line was the ridge between the watersheds of Klamath and Smith rivers, which was a barrier to frequent communication, but not sufficiently difficult to prevent at least one war. In the north the Karok controlled, for food and hunting, the watershed of Indian creek, which joins the Klamath at Happy Camp, and so touched the California-Oregon boundary in a narrow sinus of the high Siskiyou range. With the Takelma and the Rogue River Athapascans beyond the mountains in Oregon they had no intercourse. Eastward on Klamath river, which makes a sharp turn shortly before entering Karok territory, and on its southerly affluents, as well as on Salmon river above the Forks, were various Shastan groups, with whom the Karok constantly associated. Indeed, both Karok and the Shastan Konomihu dialect were spoken at Forks of Salmon in the village Sumnánnuk, and elsewhere intertribal marriages were common. The Karok were frequent visitors at the ceremonies of the Hupa, whose country lay southward on Trinity river.

Formerly supposed to constitute a distinct linguistic stock, which Powell named Quoratean by adaptation of the Yurok name, Kworatem, of a locality just below the mouth of Salmon river, the Karok are now known to be related to the Shasta and hence a member of Dixon and Kroeber's Hokan family. In the northern part of their territory was a dialect called Karahuka, but with this exception the language was uniform.

Karok is from the native word for "up-stream," and was first used, in the form Kahruk, by Gibbs,[1] who visited the tribe in 1851. He also called them Peh-tsik, and McKee, one of the two Indian treaty commissioners in whose party Gibbs was employed, with true American orthography gave us in the same year Patesick, both of which are forms of the Yurok name for their neighbors, Pétsikla (*pétsku*, "up-stream").

Dotting the banks of Klamath river and the lower part of Salmon river are a very large number of village-sites. Not all of these were occupied simultaneously, and few contained as many as half-a-dozen houses. The great majority consisted of two or three houses, and not a few of a single dwelling. The largest of all had not more than fifteen families, but as a family consisted of parents, unmarried daughters, sons, daughtersin-law, grandchildren, and perhaps a few orphan relations or slaves, such a village could boast a substantial population. Considering the list of villages in the Appendix with reference to the number of houses seen by the informant about the year 1860 and with reference to the records of Gibbs and McKee in 1851, it seems probable that the Karok population in that decade was about two thousand.

In the summer of 1852 there was trouble between white settlers and the Indians about Orleans. Some cattle were found dead, and the former blamed the Indians, who insisted that the cattle had eaten poisonous weeds. There was an attempt to deprive the Indians of the guns that had been sold to them at very high prices. Some gave them up, others refused, and the result was fighting in which both sides suffered losses. The white men burned most of the villages from Orleans to a point above Salmon river, and the Indians fled to the hills. After a time they returned to find that their villages were no more; the sites were occupied by white men's houses and farms. Some of the refugees were given permission to build houses in unoccupied places near the farms, and thus began their unattached existence, which in most cases has continued to the present day. No reservation has ever been established for the Karok, and the survivors live in small groups near their old homes. They numbered 775 in 1910.

Karok implements and utensils, clothing, houses, food, and methods of hunting, were little different from those of the Yurok and the

1 Schoolcraft, Indian Tribes, vol. III, p. 15, 1853.

Hupa. It is safe to say that few artifacts from this district could be confidently assigned by the collector to any particular one of the three tribes.

Practically all the fighting of the Karok was occasioned by feuds between villages of their own group; and these brawls were the result of physical injury or of damage to property. If the offender refused to pay an indemnity, the family of the injured one were certain to take revenge. In some cases they obtained aid from their friends among other tribes. The people at Panamnik sometimes enlisted allies from the Yurok and the Hupa. Several generations ago there was a war between the Karok and the Tolowa, which arose in the following way:

At a Deerskin dance in the Yurok village Wakhtek there were visitors from upper Klamath river and from Smith river. A Tolowa woman from the latter district became enamored of a Karok youth and accompanied him to his village; and some time later one of her people came to demand payment for the damage to the reputation of her family, because she had been taken away without being purchased. The Karok refused at first on the ground that she had actually followed the youth of her own volition, and had not been taken against her will. In the end, however, they paid him, and the Tolowa started home; but he had not gone far when he was waylaid and killed for the money. Then a war-party of Tolowa crossed the mountains to attack Amaikiara. They saw smoke rising from the valley, and supposed that the people were assembled there in a celebration. As a matter of fact it was the time of the Írurávahevi ceremony, and consequently nearly all the inhabitants were back in the hills, so that the warriors found only one man, the priest at his fire making medicine. They attacked him and the few old people who were in the houses, but some one ran back into the hills with the news, and the men swarmed down and drove off the Tolowa. It is said that only one man of the party reached home, all the others falling victims to grizzly-bears, rattlesnakes, lizards(!), failing trees, and disaster in various other forms.

In making peace to end a feud, both contestants paid indemnity to their opponents for the families of those whom they had killed, a high price for "good" men, and less for ordinary men.

The village was the only political, and the family the only social, division. Rich men and hereditary priests were the important individuals, but they were not chiefs in the ordinary sense. The only Karok

word that in any way corresponds to "head-man" is *ishpukát-ár*, "money person." Values were measured by dentalia of varying length. Those that ran eleven to a string were equivalent to three dollars each; twelve to a string, two dollars and a half each; thirteen to a string, two dollars each; fourteen to a string, four dollars per string; fifteen to a string, two dollars and a half per string.

Marriage was by purchase, as among the Yurok, and supplementary wives were permitted to those who could afford them. Descent was in the paternal line, and the only social restriction as to marriage was blood relationship. Clans did not exist.

A woman who became pregnant before marriage was compelled by her brothers to reveal the identity of her child's father, and him they forced either to marry her or to pay an indemnity. If he could not or would not do either, they killed him. If he paid indemnity, the act was equivalent to acknowledging the child and removing from it the stigma of illegitimate birth. If no indemnity could be collected, and the man would not marry the girl, the new-born infant was cast into the river. A woman who had given birth to an illegitimate child and then led an exemplary life, by remaining closely at home and working industriously, was held to be a very desirable match, for she had proved herself fertile. Therefore a man who desired to be sure of raising a large family might prefer to take her rather than marry a merely nominal virgin who might prove to be sterile. But the price paid for such a woman was not large. Generally she was taken by a rich man who already had one wife or more. In other words, she was quite in the position of a concubine taken solely for purposes of reproduction. All adolescent girls had sexual relations with young men, but only when they became pregnant before marriage was there any serious trouble.

The customs of burial, subsequent purification, and mourning were like those of the Yurok. A fence was erected around the grave of a rich man even in very early times. It was made by lashing upright pickets to a horizontal pole by means of grapevines, and on it were hung various articles of clothing and household utensils. The enclosure was about two by six feet. When the fence decayed and collapsed, the remnants were made into a single sheaf, and thrust upright into the ground over the grave, there to stand until it rotted away.

The dead were always buried with the head up-stream, regardless of the actual direction in which the river ran at that place. The

corpse was kept in the house lying on a board until the day following death, or, in the case of rich men, until the second day if the weather were not too hot; and the women occupied the house as usual, but kept a fire burning all night. The body was carried out on the board and prepared at the grave. Before burying a rich man they pierced the nasal septum and inserted in it two long dentalia joined at the base.

The Karok differed from the Yurok in their ceremonies more than in any other phase of their activities. For, although they performed the Deerskin and Jumping dances, the former was of only two days' duration and the latter occupied ten or eleven days; while the Yurok Deerskin dance lasted ten days and the Jumping dance two days. The Karok, like the Hupa and the Yurok, had an annual ceremony for the purpose of "cleaning off the earth" of sickness, and a so-called salmon ceremony at the beginning of the spring run.

Based on the place of performance, these religious rites fall into two divisions. At Yúhtuyirup and Tishánnik were separately performed the Deerskin dance and the "cleaning off the earth" ceremony; and the latter was observed also at Inámsufkárom and at Amaíkiyáram. The Jumping dance and the salmon ceremony occurred only at Amaíkiyáram.

Many villages took no part in the Deerskin dance. In some cases the reason was poverty, but this was not always the determining factor. Not a few villages possessed wealth, and even the valuable deerskins and other dance paraphernalia, but they never used them either in a dance of their own or at the two places where the Deerskin dance was celebrated. A rich man of such a village would rent his regalia to friends of other villages that did participate.

In the Deerskin dance at Yúhtuyirup there were four groups of dancers:

Pasíruuvara, assisted by Humváru
Homnípak, assisted by Asánnamkárak.
Havíshtim, assisted by Aftáram
Yúhtuyirup, assisted by Inútakuch.

At Tishánnik the Deerskin dancers appeared in three groups:
1. Chamíknínuch, assisted by Panámnik, Sahavúrum, Túyivuk.

2. Tahá-súfkara, assisted by Vunháruk and Tishirámáachip.
3. Vúpum, assisted by Asámmam.

The Deerskin dance, Vohuvúha, occurred about the first of September and lasted two nights and two days. For several days preceding the dance the priest in charge went into the hills, each day to a different place, and kindled a fire, beside which he sat burning incense, while the men of the villages gathered near and engaged in the common gambling contest of shooting arrows at stakes set in the ground. They shouted continually in order to encourage the priest, who by reason of eating only one meal every two days was becoming weaker and weaker. Deep trenches were worn at these places by the feet of the archers. At Yúhtuyirup the first evening was spent in dancing on the sandbar, one set by each division, and in the morning this was repeated. After an early supper they moved to the dance-ground on the hill, where they danced until late in the night, and the next day nearly until sunset. A feast was then served, and the people scattered to their homes. In the ceremony at Tishánnik the first evening and morning were spent in dancing on a bar at the left bank of the river at Chamíknínuch, and the next night and day at the dance-ground of Tishánnik. The last performance of this ceremony was about 1912.

The Jumping dance, Vohuvúha-ka'm ("deerskin-dance big"), occurred annually at Amaíkiyáram about the last of August or the first of September. There were three groups of dancers:

1. Chamíknínuch, assisted by Panámnik, Sahavúrum, and Túyivuk.
2. Vón-víruk, assisted by Amaíkiyáram.
3. Vúpum, assisted by Asámmam.

The first and third groups participated also in the Tishánnik Deerskin dance.

The Jumping dance lasted either ten or eleven days and nights. It began in the evening, and the first nine days and nights were spent at the dance-ground of Amaíkiyáram. For the first few days only one set was danced each day and each evening, and later two or three sets each time. On the ninth day after an early meal in the evening they moved down to a gravel bar and danced nearly all night and all the following

day. That evening — the tenth day — they crossed the river to a spot a short distance south of Salmon river and danced two sets, and on the eleventh day they performed until sunset, ate a meal, and dispersed. The last observance of this ceremony occurred about 1895.

The ceremony Írahivi, or Ikhárіyára,' for the purpose of "cleaning off the earth"[2] and freeing it of the sickness that had accumulated during the year, was in the charge of a priest called*fatavénum*. It was observed about the last of August at Inám-sufkárom, shortly thereafter at Tishánnik, and immediately after that, at Yúhtuyirup. It was last held about 1918at Amaíkiyáram. The sole surviving priest has since died.

The priest spent the day in the hills, making fires for incense here and there, gathering medicine, and praying. In the evening he returned to a certain place on the sandbar and built a fire, and the people assembled there and passed the night in a performance that included dancing by men in a canoe while holding bunches of brush in their hands. Then in the morning the people went back to the village for their usual secular pursuits, while the priest went again into the hills to make medicine. In the evening he returned and all gathered at the dance-ground, where the men danced for a short time with bunches of brush in the hand in the manner of the Deerskin dance, and sang Deerskin dance songs. Then the priest went to bathe in the river, and the people feasted.

At Amaíkiyáram, Inám-sufkárom, Tishánnik, and Yúhtuyirup in the fifth moon after the beginning of autumn (probably about the first of April),occurred Írurá-vahevi ("run-away hide").[3] The priest spent a number of days in the sweat-house, eating only a little each evening, and on a certain day all the people retired into the hills to a place from which they could not see the priest at the ceremonial place by the river. He built a fire and half roasted a salmon, and placed certain roots and herbs in its flesh. The people must not see the smoke, lest disaster befall them, particularly in the form of rattlesnake-bites. He

2 The ceremony has been called "making the world." The name Ikhárіyára' is said to signify "ameliorating the world," and apparently is connected with the name of the creator, Ikharéyau.

3 One informant maintains that this rite was simply a portion of the ceremony of "cleaning off the earth."

ate what he could of the half-cooked salmon and placed the remnants on the fire, which he covered with a tall heap of stones. He then went to the village and tossed a stone on the roof of the sweat-house, and a man in waiting there proceeded halfway up the hill to call the people, who returned to the village. As in the ceremony of "cleaning off the earth," the priest prayed for good supplies of food, and health for all. It is said that a visiting party of Shasta from the region of Etna Mills were warned not to disturb the officiating priest at Amaíkiyáram, but they were heedless, and only one reached home. Thereafter the medicine-making at that village was regarded as more potent than any other.

The so-called brush dance, a shamanistic healing ceremony for sickly children, is still held in the manner described for the Yurok.

Karok mythology centers about the character Ikharéyau, who appeared at Kátimi'n. He created the world and its present features, and with a female whom he found he begot the race of Indians. Coyote, the buffoon, appears in many tales, but he was not, as in some mythologies of northern California, the foil of the creator.

"The Karok"
From
The North American Indian: Volume 13
by Edwards S. Curtis
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