From the online library at www.worldwisdom.com

THE ACHOMAWI

THE Pit River Indians, classified by Powell as the Palaihnihan linguistic family, but shown by Dixon to be a branch of a large family that includes also the Shasta tribes, fall into two sharply differentiated divisions, the Achomawi and the Atsugewi, with languages mutually unintelligible. Powell derived his designation from the Klamath word *Palaikni,* signifying "mountain-dwellers"; and Achómawi (incorrectly accented on the penult) is their self-name, signifying "river-dwellers." The present-day Klamath are unacquainted with the appellation Palaikni, and know the Achomawi as Móatwas, "southerners."

With the exception of Hat Creek and Dixie valleys, the Achomawi occupied the drainage area of Pit river from a few miles below Round mountain up into the south end of Goose Lake valley, about twenty miles above Alturas. This territory is about one hundred and twenty-five miles in length, measuring on a straight line, or probably one hundred and seventy-five as the river flows, and lies in the counties of Shasta, Lassen, and Modoc. The Atsugewi, or Hat Creek Indians, held the watershed of Hat creek and Dixie valley in Shasta county.[1] The Achomawi bands of Modoc county eked out a precarious existence on the scanty fare obtainable in their semi-arid habitat, and as a consequence were very inferior physically to their more happily situated congeners on the lower stretches of Pit river.

The neighbors of the Achomawi were the Modoc and Klamath on the north, the Shasta to the northwest, the Wintun westward, the Yana on the southwest, the Maidu on the south, and the Paiute eastward. With all these tribes the Pit River Indians were intermittently hostile, although their encounters with the peaceable Maidu and Wintun were scarcely more important than the brawls and feuds that were constantly occurring among bands and families of the same tribe.

The earliest wars known to Achomawi tradition were with the Paiute, bands of whom came into the Pit River country every sum-

1 About 1885 a number of Hat Creek Atsugewi settled about the town of Burney, working on the ranches, and a few still remain there. This doubtless is the basis for Dixon's statement that the Atsugewi occupied Burney valley.

mer for several years in the time of the great-grandfather of an informant who was born about 1853. This could not have been much earlier than the close of the eighteenth century, because the invaders had a few horses. They took no prisoners, and were addicted to the habit of mutilating the bodies of young girls, cutting off and carrying away their breasts in order, as the Achomawi thought, to chew pieces of them. Boys they would repeatedly crush with large stones. In their last invasion they killed a very large number of people, two or three hundred, it is said, at a camp about two miles below the mouth of Fall river. Then followed negotiations between the Pit River bands and their neighbors, which resulted in a temporary confederation including the Achomawi, Atsugewi, Modoc, and Warm Springs (Oregon) Indians, who were friends of the Modoc. In the following summer these four tribes formed in Big valley a very large camp, which the Paiute scouts promptly discovered, as it was intended they should. But while the Paiute were closing in, they were surrounded by men lying in ambush, and after two days of fighting they were driven off. Then they sent a peace messenger to say that they would never again attack their western neighbors.[2]

In the next generation three Modoc living with the Big Valley band were killed by the Achomawi, one of them having appropriated a woman claimed by an Achomawi. This was the beginning of a long series of hostile acts between the Modoc and the Achomawi-Atsugewi, which ended only with the close of the Modoc war in 1873. Each tribe sent a war-party annually into the enemy's country for the purpose of killing whom they might and taking children for slaves. The Modoc attacks were made in summer or autumn, sometimes two invasions occurring in the same year. Three times the Pit River Indians attempted to make peace, sending one or two chiefs to their enemies with offers of shell money and girls to seal the treaty; but each time the truce was soon broken by irresponsible young fellows whom the chiefs could not control.

In the informant's grandfather's time began their war with the Shasta. Some Achomawi hunters pursued a wounded elk across their

2 See a future volume for the Paviotso (Paiute) account of these wars.

own boundaries and killed it in Shasta territory. The Shasta came and demanded the hide, but the hunters refused; and the Shasta began to lie in wait along the territorial boundaries and killed several hunters. Thereupon the Achomawi sent a party into Shasta valley and took revenge, and hostilities of this sort continued — until the outbreak of the Modoc war. Every year or two the Shasta would come on snowshoes to creep into a house and kill the inmates, and in the following spring the Achomawi would send a retaliatory expedition, which would surround a party of Shasta like so many deer. They generally had little difficulty in vanquishing these enemies, because the Shasta were numerically inferior. But they themselves by their own admission would have been nearly exterminated by the Modoc if Captain Jack's war had not intervened; because the Modoc were fairly numerous, while the Achomawi had been much depleted not only by war but by the removal under military guard of five hundred to Mendocino county.

The Atsugewi and the Yana were at one time so friendly that the former had the unusual privilege of gathering acorns and berries in their neighbor's territory. But about the middle of the nineteenth century trouble arose when a Yana shaman announced that he had "poisoned" certain Atsugewi men who had recently died, and of course it was not long before he was killed. There followed several encounters in which a considerable number of Yana were killed, the last fight occurring when the informant, who was born about 1853, was a very young boy. He remembers seeing three captive women forced to dance in the celebration of the victory. They were treated rather roughly and were threatened with sticks to make them dance faster. It was not long before they escaped, for they were not guarded.

The Maidu once killed an Atsugewi medicine-man, whose relatives thereupon secured the aid of the Achomawi of Warm Spring valley, Big valley, and South Fork, and administered a severe punishment, which ended the matter. The informant's father, a young man, accompanied this expedition.

The principal articles of trade possessed by the Achomawi were furs and bows. From Maidu and Wintun they obtained the clamshell wampum beads that were made by the western tribes, and dentalia from the Columbia River country by the medium of the Shasta and Modoc. In later days the Warm Springs (Oregon) Indians and the Mo-

doc would come down with droves of horses to exchange for clam-shell beads, giving one horse for a fathom of wampum. This traffic ceased only about the year 1910, when white traders began to sell to the Oregon tribes shell beads purchased from the Pomo bands of Lake and Mendocino counties, where the manufacture of wampum has recently become almost a commercial industry.

From the very beginning relations between the Pit River Indians and white settlers were marked by violence on both sides. The following is the account given by the present chief of the Fall River band, an unusually well-informed man.

About the year 1840 the first white men, a party of about forty trappers with horses and mules, came from the north and stopped among the Modoc at Tule lake. They invited the Indians to a feast. The food was spread in a long line on the ground, and the Indians sat down; but Captain Jack's[3] father and another man stood apart and would not sit down, because chiefs never ate with the common people. At one end of the line was a small cannon, the use of which the Indians of course did not understand. While they were eating, the weapon was fired, and a large number of the feasters fell dead. The others sprang up and fled, but the two chiefs were seized and bound. One of the white men began to address the others in angry tones, and after he had spoken a long time they unbound the chiefs and released them. Then the party packed up and moved southward.

In Warm Spring valley near the present Canby they came upon the two Achomawi and killed them. They, continued to Pit river, the Warm Spring people following at a distance and observing their movements. The white men finally made a camp on the north side of Pit river about two or three miles below the mouth of Fall river. When the natives of that locality saw them approaching, they fled to the lava beds, and there they were joined by those who had been following the trappers and who now told how two Achomawi had been killed. From lookout points on the bluffs at the edge of the lava beds they watched the strangers moving about along the creeks, trapping beaver. One day they were discussing the question what they should do, and had decided not to attack the white men; but just then they saw a sin-

3 Captain Jack was the leader in the Modoc war of 1872-73.

gle man with a pack of skins on a horse, coming down the river toward the trappers' camp. They proposed to kill him. They concealed themselves beside the trail, and one of their number approached the trapper with some roots in his outstretched hand. The white man looked down from his horse and extended his hand to take them. At that instant his body was filled with arrows. They killed man and horse, and rolled the bodies into the river, after which they retreated to the lava beds. They watched, and observed two men from the camp coming to look for their companion, and saw them find the place where he had been killed. They took his pack and returned to camp, and a little later the entire band moved away toward Bald mountain.

It was many years before other white men were seen. The informant's father was then a grown man, and the informant himself, his second child, was two or three years of age. This was about 1855. These men came from the north through Warm Spring and Big valleys. They did not stop, and there was no trouble with them. Then numerous parties were seen passing through the country. Wagons began to appear. A large band with wagons passed, many of them being sick. The Indians of Dixie valley found a middle-aged woman, abandoned to die, whom they took home and cared for; but she could not eat, and soon died. They buried her.

About this time the Warm Spring band went to Yreka and stole a number of horses and mules from the miners, and the white men tracked them to their camp and killed a good many. After that the Indians, desiring revenge, occasionally went over to Yreka and waylaid a white man or woman; and the Modoc also began to commit depredations against the trains of wagons and pack animals. A band from Big valley and Fall river drove off a bunch of horses from Shasta valley near Yreka, and were followed and overtaken near Danaville (now Dana). Fifty to sixty men, women, and children were killed, and the horses were recovered. Then things were quiet for a year or two. By this time the old route from Oregon by way of Klamath lakes and Big valley had been largely abandoned, and traffic came through Shasta valley and southeastward past the present Dana, fording Fall river above the rapids about two miles from the mouth and Pit river at the present Pittville (but after one season the route avoided both fords by crossing Pit river on a ferry below the mouth of Fall river), and then proceeded southward and westward past Mount Lassen to Battle creek, and so to

the Sacramento. All summer long the road was dotted with travellers. Work was started on a wagon road from Shasta valley into Fall River valley, and a stage was operated from Yreka to Red Bluff. Many cattle and sheep were driven over the road.

Three settlers established themselves near the mouth of Fall river. One, a man named Harry Lockhart (?), employed two young Indians. One day he sent them out to drive up his horses the range, but they could not find the animals and returned without them. Lockhart and a man living with him, known as Buckskin Pants, took up their guns and drove the youths back to search for the horses. In the lava beds Lockhart shot them both. The white men then found the horses and drove them in. Buckskin Pants told the Indians that Lockhart had killed the two boys, and that very night they set fire to his house. He leaped through a window and ran to a house up the river, but another band had just killed the man who lived there and were setting fire to the house. They killed Lockhart as he came up. The third-settler in the valley was killed the same night. Buckskin Pants was not harmed, and a few days later, accompanied by a large dog, he set out for Yreka on snowshoes.

In the spring the Indians established a camp on the rim of a cañon near Dixie valley, where the women remained while the men fished in the river below. At dawn one day a party from Yreka, headed by Lockhart's brother, attacked the camp and killed ten or twelve women and children. The narrator was a little boy. His grandmother dragged him out at the first sound of shooting and crept under the edge of the bluff, where she hid in a cave, concealing the entrance with stones. Others saved themselves in the same way. At noon the men returned from the river, but the miners had gone.

That summer General Crook came into the valley, and the soldiers killed four men while the narrator watched them from a hilltop. The Indians, about two hundred in number, took refuge on an island in Mud lake near the present McArthur. The General's Indian interpreter came and urged them to surrender, promising them food for the winter, and Captain Dick and two other chiefs went ashore and met Crook, and having heard his promise brought their people off. Then Captain Dick was sent among all the Achomawi bands to ask them to come in and make a treaty of peace; and a great many responded, passing the winter near Fort Crook and receiving rations. To signify

their acceptance of the treaty they brought a great quantity of furs to the General.

The next spring some Atsugewi under Shavehead killed a man and a woman who were travelling from Red Bluff; and, in the summer, a band of white men from Red Bluff attacked the Fall River Achomawi in camp at Beaver creek and slaughtered the entire number except thirty or forty men, who escaped. The narrator was then a young man, and with an Indian companion, both of them being in the employ of a white man who was cutting hay for the Government, stood on a hill overlooking the scene. He saw the white men chop off women's heads with axes, and build up a big fire into which they threw the bodies of infants. About a hundred and sixty were killed. When the slaughter was ended, the two youths started for the house to get their breakfast, thinking that the men had gone. To their surprise they came upon the settlers lying, beside a haystack, and saw them leap up and level their guns Their employer addressed the men, and then ran back into the house and returned with a pistol and three armed men. He went up to the leader of the settlers and put a pistol to his head; then the men from Red Bluff lowered their guns and lay down again beside the haystack. The boys went into the house, but could not eat. The narrator was told by a halfblood Cherokee who had aided in the slaughter that his father had escaped, but his mother, sister, and grandparents had been killed. Three white men had been wounded, and two of them died the next day.

That fall began the work of rounding up Indians to place them on a reservation, and with the first snowfall about fifty were taken to Mendocino county. Meantime the brother of Lockhart had established himself on the north side of Pit river at the mouth of Fall river, where he maintained a toll bridge. Every Indian he saw alone he would shoot. He was always accompanied by three or four huge dogs, which would tear an Indian to pieces. It was said that he alone had killed at least twenty Indians. One night the soldiers came (probably to arrest him) and shot him. But they only wounded him in the arm, and slipping into the river he swam away downstream and so escaped. The soldiers burned his establishment.

In 1910 there were 985 Achomawi and 240 Atsugewi.

The Achomawi were fairly skilful in manufacturing weapons, implements, utensils, and ornaments of stone, wood, bone, shell, and

vegetal and animal fibre.

The arrow consisted of a shaft of service-berry or reed, with a wooden foreshaft and a point of flint or obsidian. The shaft was straightened by means of a perforated flat stone, and smoothed by working it between two grooved pieces of pumice. Arrows were carried in the entire uncut skin of a raccoon, mink, coyote, or other small animal. The very primitive knife was simply a flake of flint or obsidian. The maul, a rather unsymmetrical, mushroom-shaped stone, was used in connection with a wedge of antler for breaking up and splitting fuel. The pestle for pulverizing acorns and seeds was the usual cylindrical, round-headed stone, and the base of the mortar also was stone. Loss of flying fragments of the food to be prepared was prevented by the use of a basketry hopper made of willow warp and pine-root twining. Tobacco was smoked in tubular stone pipes.

Bows were made of yew and of juniper, and rude canoes of yellow-pine logs, which were hollowed out by burning and finished by rubbing with a stone. Canoe-paddles were of the same material. Balsas, the long, boat-shaped bundles of tules generally used throughout central and southern California for floating persons or possessions across bodies of water, were unknown to the Achomawi. Confronted with the necessity of crossing a deep stream, and no canoe being available, they built rafts of driftwood and ferried their children and goods across. Fire was kindled by means of a drill, the base of which was thoroughly dried pine and the spindle ash. Snowshoes were commonly used in winter hunting. Spoons were usually of oak, rarely of horn or shell. The only musical instrument was a flute of elder. Even drums were not used by the Achomawi.

Bone and horn were used in the manufacture of awls, fish-hooks, spear-points, wedges, and rattles. The awl, which was employed in sewing deerskin garments, was a pointed piece of deer-bone. The fish-hook was a curved piece of deer-bone, and the fish-spear consisted of a long wooden shaft, a double-pointed bone head with a socket in which the base of the shaft fitted, and a line fastened to the spear-points and ending in the hand of the spearsman. Pieces of deer-hoof (not dew-claws) clustered about the end of a short stick formed the rattle used in accompanying the songs of the puberty rites for girls.

Hemp cord was used principally in tying fish-nets and in twisting ropes for deer-snares. For heavy work requiring less nicety, as in lash-

ing the elements of a fish-weir, rawhide thongs were employed.

Five kinds of nets were made by the Achomawi, three of them being dip-nets, one a gill-net, and one a seine. The three dip-nets were of course in the shape of bags. *Taláka'yí* was suspended on the prongs of a forked pole, and was used from a canoe, from the bank, or by a wader, for taking trout, pike, or suckers. *Tamíchí* is still used, principally in fishing for suckers. The bag is four or five feet deep and equally broad when closed. The meshes at the lower edge of the opening are threaded on a strong resilient stick, to the centre of which is lashed a stout upright. The whole arrangement resembles a bow and arrow, with the resilient rod representing the bow, the upright shaft the arrow, and the upper edge of the net-opening the bow-string. The fisherman wades in the stream, holding the net open by drawing the upper edge back along the upright stick, and other waders, mostly women and children, drive the fish in toward him. When he feels a tug in the net, he releases his hold and the net closes. *Lípake* was a small bag with an oval hoop sewn into the mouth. The fisherman dived into the pool, and holding the net in one hand drove a sucker into it with the other. Then quickly flipping the net over the hoop, with the fish securely in the bottom, he came ashore to deposit his catch, and dived again for another. The gill-net,*tuwátítshi*, was forty to sixty feet long and was weighted with stone sinkers. One end was made fast to a tree, the other to a tule buoy, any unusual movement of which indicated the capture of a fish. Trout and pike, but not salmon, were thus taken. *Talámámchi,* the seine, extended across the stream in quiet water. The lower edge was held on the bottom by stone sinkers, the upper edge was buoyed by tule floats. The fisherman sat in his canoe at one bank, and the float line passed around a fixed support on the opposite shore, which served the purpose of a pulley. The net was like a very wide, shallow bag, six to eight feet deep. When the fisherman perceived a tugging in the net, he hauled in the float line and removed the catch, and then by pulling on the other end of the line drew the net back into position.

Large quantities of minnows were caught for drying by means of a basketry trap made of willow rods and pine-root weft. A cylindrical basketry trap, with its mouth set with inwardly converging splints to prevent the escape of fish, was used in connection with two types of weirs. The weir called *tatápi* was erected in shallow streams for trout,

pike, and suckers. A line of stakes was driven across the stream, and stones, logs, stumps, and earth were piled up against them, so that the water was completely dammed and poured over the top in a narrow waterfall, which carried into the trap any fish caught in its current. The weir known as *tatsítschi* was set in the main stream for catching *allís* (steelhead trout) on their return to the sea in the autumn. Two sections of fence, extending from opposite banks at a down-stream angle and almost meeting in mid-channel, were there connected by a short section of tight wall made by lashing horizontal poles close together across the gap. As this was the lowest point in the dam, the water poured over it and into the basket below.

Tule stalks were strung together on cords to form mats, which were used for seat pads and mattresses, and for covers of anything that required protection from sun or rain.

Without exception Achomawi baskets are produced by the method known as twined weaving, never by coiling. In general they have bottoms and sides slightly rounded, broad openings, and rather shallow depth. Of this class are baskets of various sizes for cooking by means of hot stones; those for the serving of liquid and semi-liquid food, and for containing water; and the basketry caps worn by women. With the exception of the caps, all these have willow rods for the warp, or upright elements, and pine-root strands for the weft, or horizontal elements. In the caps, tule fibres are the only material. Made of the same material as the food baskets, but of different shape, are the conical, tight-mesh burden-basket, carried on the back and supported by a strap passing across the head; the large, rounded storage basket with very small opening; the open-mesh tray for serving certain dry foods; and the cradle-basket. The shallow circular baskets used for parching seeds by shaking them about with live embers are made both with tule warp and weft, and with willow warp and pine-root weft. Open-mesh beaters used by women in harvesting edible seeds into their burden-baskets are made of willow and pine-roots, or entirely of willow. Usually the basket is overlaid with the straw-colored strands of Xerophyllum grass, and on this as a background designs in black are produced by the use of fibres from the stems of maidenhair fern.

Achomawi women ordinarily wore a kilt of fringed deerskin, or tules, or Xerophyllum grass, or bark. It appears that the long deerskin dress, fringed at the seams and with beads on the fringe, was some-

times worn at dances: a garment probably borrowed from the Shoshonean tribes. For protection from the weather a deer-skin, or the fur of a coyote, wolf, or bear, was thrown about the shoulders, and moccasins and knee-length leggings were used only when necessity required them. Moccasins had separate soles of bear- or elk-hide. A basketry cap was necessary to complete the feminine costume. The hair was dressed in two braids, which hung in front of the shoulders, or was coiled on the head. Girls and young women painted the face daily with a mixture of grease and scrapings of a red mineral, probably hematite, and on special occasions those who were fortunate enough to possess dentalia wore a long one in the septum of the nose and others, strung on cords, dangling from the lobes of the ears. A few girls had perpendicular lines tattooed on the chin, but the fashion was not general.

Men ordinarily went about either quite naked or wearing only a loin-cloth; but for protection they used also deerskin shirt, fur robe, moccasins, hip-length leggings, and fur cap with the hairy side next to the head. They doubled the hair in a bunch at the back of the head, and on special occasions wore nasal and ear ornaments of dentalia, and painted their faces red. Men were never tattooed.

Clam-shell beads, made by the coast tribes and passing eastward through the hands of the Yuki and the Wintun, were used by the Achomawi as the principal medium of exchange. A string about twelve inches long was the equivalent of two dollars. Contrary to the general rule, the Achomawi valued dentalium shells less than clam-shell beads, because of their fragility. Four strands of dentalia, of such length that, when the ends were held in hands extended wide apart, the middle sagged to the level of the knees, were given in exchange for a horse.

The permanent winter dwellings of the Achomawi closely resembled in general features those of the Shasta. The usual size was about fifteen feet square, though there were houses of twice that dimension, these being used not only as habitations but for ceremonial assemblies. The entire ground space having been excavated to a depth of about three feet, the workmen erected, at a point about midway between either rear corner and the centre, an eight-foot crotched post twelve to eighteen inches in diameter. From opposite sides two heavy beams, which necessarily were of unequal length, were extended to the top of the post, their lower ends resting on the top of the excavation; and

in the front were two other long timbers, each resting on one of the two lateral beams near its upper end. Poles, and slabs split from logs with the aid of antler chisels and stone hammers, extended from the ground at the rear and the sides to the peak of the roof, and most of the space between the two long front beams was covered in the same way; but an opening was left for the escape of smoke. Grass thatching was then applied, and a heavy coat of earth completed the roof. At the front between the base of the two long rafters was a narrow trench, which extended about eight feet beyond the wall, for the purpose of creating a draft for the fire. When the family retired, or when no fire was burning, a bundle of tules was stuffed tightly into the entrance of the trench. This passage was sometimes used as an entrance or exit, but generally the occupants made use of a ladder lashed to the post and passing up through the smoke-hole. The ladder was made by binding crosspieces to two poles by means of skunk-berry[4] withes. The fireplace was a square pit lined with stones, and the earthen floor was covered with tule mats. In this house the entire family, or several families, passed the winter, cooking, sleeping, working, singing, and telling stories. The inmates slept on the floor in a circle with their feet to the fire. The bed covering was skins, and the mattress several thicknesses of tule mats. Instead of the wooden head-rests found on Klamath river, the Achomawi used either a roll of tules or, in special cases, a badger-skin stuffed with duck-feathers.

The summer habitation was a conical or hemispherical, rarely an oval, tipi covered with tule mats. In such huts as these, menstruating women isolated themselves in all weather.

In winter the Achomawi bands lived scattered about along the streams, in their semi-subterranean houses, one here, two or three there, rarely more than four or five in one place, each house sheltering several related families. Only occasionally did the men indulge in a sweat-bath. When a bath was desired, they built a fire in the dwelling and danced about it, and then leaped into the river. The winter was passed in comparative idleness, with occasional hunts in the neighboring hills for deer, or in deep snow for antelope. The informant's father once killed two hundred antelope near the mouth of Fall river by

4 *Rhus trilobata.*

merely walking about the helpless herd and breaking their necks. Fish were caught in nets, and ducks also in nets stretched across a stream where the fowl were in the habit of flying.

In the spring the inhabitants of each district assembled and went into camp at various root-digging grounds. All summer they travelled about in company, accumulating for the winter such stores of food as they obtained above their present necessities, and indulging in games and dances. Not rarely these natural crops failed, and the people then scattered in small bands to eke out a living as best they might.

Acorns, pulverized with pestle and mortar, leached with hot water on a bed of sand, and made into mush or bread, were one of the staple foods. Of perhaps equal importance was pinole, the fine flour of parched seeds gathered from several species of grasses, as well as from such plants as tarweed and sage. Pine-nuts, manzanita-berries, camas, bast of the yellow pine, tule roots, and various fruits such as plums, grapes, and berries, were to be had in greater or lesser abundance.

A very great variety of edible animals were native to Achomawi territory. Of prime importance were the ruminants, deer, antelope, and elk. Rabbits were numerous and captured without too much labor. The flesh of even the rarer and less palatable mammals was not disdained: badgers, gophers, mink, cougars, otters, skunks, wildcats, and woodrats were eaten whenever they could be had; and grasshoppers and yellow-jacket larvæ were tidbits. Fish and waterfowl of all kinds were staple foods.

Deer were hunted by no fewer than six distinct methods. In midsummer very large parties, sometimes as many as two or three hundred men, would form a line around a mountain, and after setting fire to the dry leaves and grass, would draw slowly together, marching with the fire. In this there was comparatively little danger, because they kept the mountains so well burned off that there was never an excess of undergrowth; but on one occasion, which the informant remembers, two or three men were caught inside the circle of flames and burned to death. The quarry, bewildered by the flames, smoke, and shouting, ran round and round, until the hunters closed in and killed the game by scores. Deer were driven also by beaters through a line of hunters stationed a bowshot apart. In winter the animals were surrounded and pursued by parties of fifteen to twenty men on snowshoes, and a dozen were not an uncommon number to be killed in this manner at

one time. Antelope also were sometimes slaughtered in the same way. On a steep hillside below a deer trail a hunter would dig a hole and build a fire in it; and at night he would sit in the warm hole and wait for passing deer, which were easily seen silhouetted against the sky. Hemp nooses were suspended in the trails in the manner employed by many other California tribes, and pitfalls were dug in the trails for deer, as well as for elk, bears, wolves, and coyotes. No bait was set, nor were sharp stakes planted in the bottom of the pits. In many places these pitfalls were so numerous as to give Pit river its name. The only method of trapping otter and mink was to place a partial obstruction in the channel of a creek in the form of a stone wall, at the opening of which was placed a basketry trap with its mouth up-stream. Once having entered the trap the animal was unable to escape past the converging splints that formed the throat of the trap. Occasionally these small animals were speared. Black bears were not only caught in pitfalls, but shot with arrows. A grizzly-bear when found on an open plain was surrounded by a number of brave, active men, and filled with arrows, and at last worn out with rushing first at one, then at another of his tormentors. "Coyote dogs" were essential in this bear-baiting. Mountain-lions were tracked and treed by dogs, and despatched with arrows.

Fish were taken in nets, which have been previously described; in basketry traps set below artificial dams; by hook and line; by spearing from canoes with the aid of torchlight. Vast quantities of suckers were captured by diverting the water from one channel to another and scooping up the helpless fish. In winter a species resembling a bass took refuge under the banks, and the Indians, after making an opening in the ice, would pound on the ground above the fish with a heavy stone, when the fish would float out and rise to the surface in large numbers, frozen stiff. The informant himself has seen this done many times. These fish are not now plentiful. Formerly they, as well as suckers, and salmon, which were taken in great numbers by net and spear, were dried for winter consumption.

The only approach to tillage of the soil by the Achomawi was in the sowing of tobacco seed on ground where a log had been burned. There was no other preparation of the soil, nor was the plot enclosed by a fence. The seed was originally obtained from the Shasta, for the plant was native in the country about Shasta butte, but not formerly on Pit river, though it is now found in the latter region. The seed was

given first to the people at the Great Bend of Pit river, who were somewhat intermarried with the Shasta, and from them it was passed on up the river. Tobacco and tobacco-seed were not sold, but freely given; for the creator Qan ordained that tobacco should be free to all. Whenever a number of men were assembled, the chief among them filled his large pipe, and after taking a puff handed it to his neighbor on the left; and so it passed around the circle, to be refilled and passed again.

Warriors of the Achomawi blackened their faces with charcoal. Their weapons were poisoned arrows, and their protective armor either a vest of perpendicular service-berry rods held together by hemp twining, or a two-ply tunic of elk-skin reaching below the knees and up around the back of the head. An indispensable article was the *pánni,* a fine-meshed net-cap with a bunch of eagle- or hawk-feathers tied by a short cord to the crown, so that they flapped about when the wearer fought or danced.

The poison for war-arrows was prepared by splitting open a certain organ[5] of a deer, placing inside it crushed spiders, black ants, and wild-parsnip roots; tightly binding the organ with cord, and placing it in the sun. When the contents were putrid, the end of the organ was cut off and a portion of the contents squeezed out on a stone. The arrow-point was dipped in it and allowed to dry. Pulverized rattlesnake "gall" — a small green organ of the reptile — was also used for this purpose. The effect of even a slight wound with such an arrow is said usually to have been fatal. An enormous swelling developed, which could not be reduced. In the slaughter of the Achomawi at Beaver creek, one of the three wounded white men was shot in the back with an arrow. He did not die, but in 1871 the narrator saw him in Los Angeles, and the same great swelling remained on his back which as a youth he had seen just after the fight.

For about a week before the departure of a war-party the war-dance was held daily in the open. The men danced about in much

5 The liver was the organ generally used for this purpose. The present informant, however, denied that the Achomawi used the liver, describing the organ as about eight inches long, two inches wide, and situated near the liver and the gall.

the same manner as the Plains Indians, leaping hither and thither as if dodging arrows, making minatory gestures toward the imagined enemy, while the women stood in a long line, singing and striking two sticks together. The women wore long deerskin dresses, and both men and women had the war head-dress, *pánni*. All the time the warriors were absent, the women daily formed in line and sang the war-songs, which were generally appeals for help addressed to various fierce, cunning, and quick animals, such as eagle, hawk, owl, crow, weasel, mountain-lion, grizzly-bear, skunk. Some songs expressed the certainty that the enemy would be defeated and the power of the Achomawi increased.

A successful war-party, that is, one that had inflicted loss on the enemy without its own members having a man killed or seriously wounded, announced its return by uttering the war-cry as it neared the home camp. Then the women quickly donned their dancing dresses and *pánni*, and drew up shoulder to shoulder across the line of approach. As soon as the men came in sight, the women started to sing and to beat with their sticks, while the men executed the war-dance as they approached. In front of the women they also formed in line, facing them. Each scalp they had taken had been fastened on a pole, which the owner of the trophy held in his hand and shook up and down. They danced without moving from their places, while the women marched around them, and with bunches of grass, of which each had two, they brushed off the warriors. After each woman had thus expelled the evil influence of blood and violence and enemy hatred from each man, the warriors ran to the river and completed the purification by bathing.

When the news of their return spread through the district, the people began to assemble, and on the following day the victory-dance was celebrated. Men and women formed in a circle with the captives among them and danced to the left, those who had taken scalps holding their trophies aloft. Then they formed in a line and sang, while the prisoners in pairs were forced to endure the disgrace of dancing along the line with the scalps of their slain tribes-men. If they refused, or were unable to dance, they were likely to be killed; and even weeping might call for the same fate. The victory-dance was performed daily for about a week.

Every war-party was accompanied by several shamans, who not only prophesied as to the outcome of the expedition, but took a lead-

ing part in the fighting. In fact, they were regarded as the best warriors, because of their supposed possession of supernatural power. At each camp as they proceeded, they would dance together in a row, while the others sat about and sang the songs belonging to the different shamans. Then they inquired, each of the other, what his *támakumi,* or guardian spirit, had told him about the result of their expedition. While the shamans danced, their *támakumi* were supposed to be flitting about and talking to all the various animals, in order to learn from them what would be the result of the undertaking. One of the medicine-men might announce that he had told his *támakumi* to send the Crow to the enemy's camp, and with very little delay he would repeat what the Crow had reported about the conditions they would find there. When the shamans after dancing began to question one another as to the reports made by their *támakumi,* one after another they announced the result aloud so that the warriors could hear. They did not always predict success, nor did they always agree in their prophecies. One might say, "My*támakumi* tells me that we will kill many of the enemy without loss to ourselves." The next might declare: "My*támakumi* does not tell me that. My *támakumi* says that we will lose two men." It may well be that these discrepancies in their prophecies were deliberately made, so that whatever the result of the expedition it would necessarily tally with some one of their predictions; or perhaps each shaman tried to forecast the event accurately so as to enhance his own reputation. Sometimes a medicine-man would say, "My *támakumi* tells me that we will fight in a line." This was an announcement far from welcome, for it meant that the enemy would be aware of their approach, and therefore the camp would be alert and guarded, so that they could not creep in among the houses and kill their sleeping victims. And, too, the enemy would have sent messengers among the neighboring bands, and assistance would be coming all day long while the battle was on. In such cases the attacking party was likely to be driven off with loss. The shamans were usually reckless men, and hence were not infrequently killed in battle, but this did not diminish the popular confidence in the supernatural power of their*támakumi*.

A favorite game of the Achomawi is called*tokolé*. It is a guessing contest between two parties who sit in rows facing each other, and involves the use of four service-berry sticks, two of them about ten inches long and two half as long. The captain of the side that has the

first inning covers his set of sticks with a flat basket and arranges them in one of four ways, thus:

His opponent then indicates what arrangement he thinks has been made. In order to understand the method of paying losses, it must be remembered that the sticks are regarded as pairs, a long and a short (probably "man" and "woman" in the usual Indian way) constituting a pair; and the combination in which both shorts are together and both longs together, in other words, in which the components of one pair are separated, is never used. The object, then, is to guess in what way the *pairs* are arranged, not the individuals. If the arrangement of neither pair is correctly indicated, the guesser's opponent takes two tally-sticks; if one is correctly indicated, one tally-stick; if both are named, the deal passes to the successful guesser. The gestures and their application to the different arrangements are as follow:

For the first arrangement a gesture to the right with forefinger or thumb wins; while the opposite gesture, which wins for number two, is here a double loss, because neither pair is arranged as in number two. But a movement downward with all the fingers outspread (which indicates number three), or a downward sweep of the forefinger (number four), would result in the loss of only one counter if the actual arrangement is number one or number two, because in either the first or the second arrangement one of the pairs will be found to be arranged as in either number three or number four; consequently the guesser is wrong as to only one pair, and loses but a single tally-stick. There is only one possible gesture that wins the deal; one possible gesture that loses two tally-sticks; and there are always two gestures that lose a single tally-stick.

At the beginning of the play twelve tally-sticks lie between the two rows of contestants, and when all these have passed into the hands of the players an unsuccessful guess must be paid for out of the losing side's store. The game continues until one or the other has all the tally-sticks. The wagers are piled between the lines. Bets are made between individuals, not between the contesting parties collectively, and when the game is over each member of the winning side claims whatever

wagers he has matched.

Tapétuki, the so-called grass game, is another guessing contest, played in the same manner as by many other tribes in California. The counters are thick, cylindrical pieces of wood, one having a black stripe about the middle. Some players are clever enough to cheat at the game by having a black mark halfway about each counter, and when the guess is made they turn the two counters so that either of them appears to be plain or marked, as they will. Recently this deception has been discovered, and the Achomawi no longer play the grass game, having substituted the hand-game, in which two small bones are concealed in the hands.[6]

Tatúpnayi was played by women. Two small mussel-shells were tossed into the air. If both lay with the inside up, two sticks were won; if only one, the reward was one stick; if neither, the opponent took the play. Women no longer play this game, but sometimes participate in the hand-game.

Tiskáke was generally played by two old men. About fourteen sticks the size of a match were made into two packets, which were wrapped with grass and laid on the ground. The opponent then sat for a long time and carefully considered the question which packet contained the single marked stick. Sometimes, unable to make up his mind, he would roll a stick between his palms and toss it into the air, and "let it do the guessing." The tally-sticks were ten.

Tíchipaktémiuch was a game of football played by five men on each side over a course about a hundred yards in length. The goal was indicated by two stakes driven into the ground so as to form the sides of an isosceles triangle just large enough to permit the passage of the ball, which was about five inches in diameter and consisted of hair or grass stuffed into a deerskin bag. No tactics on the part of the players were barred, short of attack with a weapon. Sometimes the course

6 In 1915 a young fellow had a white man in Redding make for him a pair of bones in two sections with a screw at the middle, so that by unscrewing them a little he could show a black mark on either one, and vice versa. The deception was discovered at the Fourth of July game, and a fight was prevented by the sheriff, who happened to be present when the opponents of the dishonest gamester seized the hundred-and-sixty-dollar wager.

extended about a quarter of a mile, and this gave a great advantage to the swift runners over their brawny opponents.

Tilíswáli was played by opposing groups of four or five women, who by means of sticks tossed toward their opponents' goal, which was a pair of crossed stakes in the ground, a roll of deerskin about eighteen inches long.

Foot-races, wrestling, shooting arrows for distance and at targets, were popular pastimes.

Children's games were apparently very rare. They played at modeling mud and paddling in the water. String games were known to the adults.

There were two forms of dancing for social pleasure. In *tiniwáti* the performers took their places in a circle, holding hands, males on one side and females on the other, while four song-leaders stood. at equidistant points within the circle. All sang and moved slowly to the left with short, shuffling, sidewise steps. With brief interruptions for rest, this continued until about midnight, and sometimes was repeated on a second night. It occurred in the open and only in summer.

Teneschí'mi was a dance in which men and women in equal numbers, from one to five, performed for the entertainment of spectators. The men danced forward and the women came toward them, passing one another in the middle of the dance-ground and at the end turning and repassing until the song ended. There was only one singer, and because of the intricate rhythm the dancing was too difficult for the crowd.

The social organization of the Achomawi is characterized by the simplicity prevailing in a large part of California — a total lack of clans and the complex laws that accompany the clan system. Within the band, the family remains the only unit of division.

The several bands of Achomawi occupied their own well-defined territories, but there seems to have existed rather more of a sense of tribal unity than is common in the California area, a feeling due largely no doubt to the fact that all these bands resided in parts of one long watershed, in which intercommunication was not too difficult.

Each division had two or more head-men, who in the winter inhabited different parts of the district and were the active leaders of their respective bands; and in summer, when the people were all together, they remained the spokesmen for their own particular fol-

lowers. Chiefship was loosely hereditary, the office descending to the nearest male relative whom the people as a whole endorsed. A chief's business, briefly, was to keep down trouble of every description. When any injury was committed against one of his people, he took a number of his followers and called on the offender, demanding payment under penalty of violent reprisal. Payment for injury was made in shell money, or horses, or in the person of a young girl, and the injured family generally offered the chief a part of the amount received. In some cases a good chief would himself pay the sum demanded in order to preserve peace. The informant had such an experience about the year 1885.

The Atuami chief, Captain Dick (Chustámi), died after a long illness, and an Atsugewi medicine-man boasted that he had killed him. Therefore three of that tribe were killed by the Atuami. Then came a party of about seventy well-armed Atsugewi to demand payment of fifteen horses and fifteen guns. The informant, a cousin of Captain Dick, was the new chief of the Atuami. He tried to reduce the demands of the Atsugewi, but failed, and some of his men began to make proposals that they kill the Atsugewi; but he would not listen to them. In secret these young men sent messengers by night to the Hewisaituwi, the Ilmawi, and the Humawhi bands of Achomawi. There were already on the ground two to three hundred Atuami and Fall River people. An equal number set out from the other bands, sending messengers ahead; and not until the first messenger entered the camp did the chief become aware what was going on. He then sent secretly to the Atsugewi chief, Buckskin Jack (Alupwámi-wahélu[7]), warning him, that a fight was imminent in which both sides would lose heavily, and offering to pay a horse and a gun if Buckskin Jack would immediately depart with his men. The Atsugewi chief accepted the offer and withdrew; and a messenger met the approaching Achomawi, who, learning what had been done, turned their faces homeward.

On occasions of great moment, especially when there was any grievance to be discussed, the chief called a council of all the men.

The birth of an Achomawi child occurred either in the common dwelling-house, or, if that were old and drafty, in a tightly constructed

7 *Alupwámi*, the name of a pond in the Hat Creek country; *wahélu*, chief.

hut. An old midwife attended the mother, and the treatment consisted principally in massaging the abdomen. The body of the newly born infant was dried with the fur of a squirrel, a wildcat, or other soft-haired animal, and then wrapped up in another skin, and several hours later, or even the next day, it was bathed. Great care was taken to prevent the mother and the child from catching a cold. The navel-cord was cut off at once and rolled up in fine grass and deerskin, and the little packet was tied to the cradle-basket, where it remained as long as the child occupied the basket. On the stump of the navel-cord the midwife placed a poultice made by crushing small fresh-water snails, in order to "rot" it, and after it sloughed off she applied deer tallow to heal the scar.

Until that occurred, the parents ate no meat, and as the time approached they maintained a careful watch. When the cord sloughed off, and someone announced, "It is off!" they went quickly out of the house and up a hill. In a short time the mother returned, but the father travelled on, always up into the hills, for two or three hours, and here and there piled up stones. This doubtless was to make the child active and industrious. For every firstborn child, no matter what the station of its parents, a dance was held on several successive nights, the men, assisted by a few boys or girls, but not by women, standing in a line shoulder to shoulder and dancing forward and back.

Sometimes the husband of a pregnant woman had the symptoms of the woman herself, such as vomiting, but the couvade does not seem to have been practised.

Children generally received the name of some long-dead ancestor, boys being named for a member of the father's family and girls for a maternal relative.

When her first menstruation occurred, a girl put on old garments of the ordinary kind, and as a symbol of her condition she wore the*pahtíu,* which was made by braiding two long, thick ropes of greasewood bark and sewing them along opposite sides of a thick, unbraided roll of the bark. This resulted in a long strip of bark about three inches wide, which hung down the back from neck to heels. From time to time during the day, she brought a little fuel to each house in the community, and the remainder of her time she passed in the menstrual hut, observing the usual restrictions as to food and water, and scratching the body with the fingers. All night she danced in the house while

the assembled people sang, this part of the ceremony being just like that of the Shasta, and on the morning after the fifth night of dancing she washed her body with warm water and donned clean garments. All this was repeated four or five times at her succeeding menstrual periods.

Every boy at the age of puberty was sent to the mountains to observe a vigil of two or three or four nights in quest of dreams, by which he would obtain good luck in that particular line of activity in which he himself desired to be proficient. Before doing this, he was not permitted to smoke nor to cohabit with women; but after his vigil, whether or not he had a dream, he was regarded and treated as a man. This act is called *tinnihúi*. In the country about Fall river are three or more places that were visited for this, purpose, and each is at a lake or pond. A favorite place was Medicine, or Crystal, lake (*Sat!*), about fifteen miles south of Lower Klamath lake, which was visited by all the Pit River bands, by the Wintun of the upper Sacramento river, and by the Modoc and the Shasta.

The youth left the camp very early, before breakfast, clad only in a loin-cloth and carrying only bow and arrows and fire-drill. Arriving at the lake late in the afternoon, he dived into the water and swam about for a few minutes, and then sat on the bank; and after repeating this two or three times he gathered wood and carried it to the top of a neighboring hill, and then, returning for more wood, he swam again. This he continued to do until he had enough fuel to burn all night. On the peak were several small spaces surrounded by circular stone walls, in one of which the youth took his place and built a small fire. These low walls were for protection from severe winds. At intervals throughout the night he moved about, climbing up and down the mountain, occasionally returning to the lake to swim and to carry up more fuel. Now and again he went to the stone enclosure to build up his fire and warm himself; for he was quite naked. At daylight he lay down to sleep, and it was then that the dreams came. Even if he were fortunate enough to have a dream the first day, he did not go home at once, but remained for the full number of nights upon which he had set his mind; for the more dreams, the better. After sleeping, he resumed his wandering through the mountains and swimming in the lake, and at night he built up his fire again.

After completing his vigil he turned homeward, but, arriving in

the vicinity of the camp at evening, he stopped and spent the night there. Then at dawn he came home. The people of his household gave him a little warm water and a small quantity of vegetal food, but for two or three days he ate no meat. The nature of his dreams, and even the fact that he had or had not dreamed, were carefully concealed from his relatives.

It appears that the dreams of different youths were much alike; that is, there were certain conventional dreams which came to them and imparted good luck of the same kind; which proves that the injunction to secrecy was not a permanent one. A dream of frequent occurrence showed a man skinning a deer. His wrists and forearms were spirally wrapped with sinew from the neck of a deer. He lifted the skin and held it, all dripping with blood, stretched out before him. This meant that the dreamer would be a lucky deer hunter. It was a common custom to wrap sinew about the forearms after killing a deer, and to hold up the dripping skin for good luck. Another common dream was one in which a strong man pursued a deer, and another showed a man hauling in a net full of fish. Sometimes the dreamer would see himself winning huge wagers at the gambling games, or in a great battle against numerous enemies successfully dodging their clouds of arrows. Or he might see Coyote, with certain peculiar red feathers on his head, in a rocky cave; which meant that he would become a shaman. At some future time he would hear a voice singing on a distant hilltop, a voice inaudible to all others, but to him so real that he would feel irresistibly impelled toward it. On top of the hill he would find a bunch of red feathers, such as his dream had showed on the head of Coyote, and in the quills would be poison. These he would take and guard carefully. Such feathers seemed to be alive, for they never wore out.

As showing what faith is placed in the efficacy of dreams to assure good luck and long life, the informant related how his father, as a youth, had a dream in which he saw a large, long basket, from the mouth of which extended strips of rabbit-skin. The basket was old and crushed. It said: "You will not die; you will live long. See how old I am; yet I do not die." Years afterward he lay desperately ill in midwinter. They expected him to die soon. Then he had the same dream again. The old basket said: "You will not die. Jump up and bathe in the river!" Not conscious of what he did, he climbed the ladder, ran down the roof, sped to the bank of Pit river, and jumped into the icy

water. His father ran after him and tried to catch him, but another detained the old man, saying, "Maybe something has told him to do it." The sick man dived and swam across the river. Something threw him out upon the bank, where he lay naked on the snow. Again he saw the old basket, and also Coyote, and they told him he would recover. Then he became conscious and returned to the house. Many years afterward he and another man were building a fish-weir below the mouth of Hat creek. Something told him to dodge. He leaped aside, just as two guns were fired, and his companion fell dead, but he himself dashed away and leaped into a pond. A number of General Crook's soldiers surrounded the pond and kept firing at him, but they inflicted only two surface wounds. He thought he had better surrender, so he ran to a soldier who was motioning him to come. Then something suddenly told him to drop. He leaped down into a small watercourse, just as the soldier fired. The secret voice told him to hide behind a big rock. He did so. Then it impelled him to show himself. He thought this meant that he was to draw the soldiers' fire, so he raised his head. They fired, but missed, and he leaped across the creek and escaped. When he got home, a medicine-man happened to be in the house. "Lie down, and I will cure you," said the shaman. He held an arrow in his left hand, drew the right down over its point, and placed that hand in a vessel of water. Then he opened it, and showed them a bullet. He said: "That is the bullet. Now you will get well."

Marriage among the Achomawi was far less a matter of formal purchase than among the Shasta, a condition to be expected in view of their greater distance from the Northwest coast, which was the focal point, in California, of the cult of wealth. In most cases there was at least a tacit understanding between the two persons most concerned, but not rarely girls were compelled to marry against their wishes.

Having secured the consent of the girl he desired to marry, a young man talked the matter over with his family, and if they agreed to the marriage, he went to her people and asked their approval. They raised no question as to the amount he would pay for their daughter, but if they were satisfied with him as a prospective son-in-law they acquiesced without ado, and the day was set by mutual agreement. It might be either the very next day or a month later. At the appointed time all the people, duly notified, assembled at the girl's house and awaited the arrival of the bridegroom and his family, who brought whatever

they intended to pay for the bride. This in some cases amounted to the equivalent of a considerable sum. The informant gave ten ponies, two draft horses, a wagon, a quantity of clothing, and some money, for his wife. Whatever was given was divided among the girl's male relatives, and they later united to make up a gift for their new relations, but of less value. Finally, the chief delivered a speech, exhorting the young man to be a good husband and son-in-law, and a feast concluded the day's events.

After a few weeks or a few months in the home of his father-in-law, during which time he was expected to be very diligent in providing meat and fish, the young husband led his bride to his father's home.

The commonest cause of separation was adultery. If a woman were found at fault, her husband would either abandon her, if he were living in her parents' house, or would provide her with new clothing and send her home, if they were living in his father's or his own house. If the price paid for her had not been requited by her people, he would despatch a friend to recover his property; but if anything had been given him in return, he could say nothing. When her husband proved inconstant, a woman had the privilege of returning to her parents; and if he came to take her back, they might reprimand him and turn him away. A man who seduced another's wife might be killed for his act; but more commonly a friend of the wronged husband offered the seducer the opportunity of paying for the damage done, a horse, perhaps, or two. If the death penalty was imposed and the dead man left powerful friends, they might with perfect right insist on payment for his life. But this custom of compounding the crime of seduction and murder was not nearly so general here as it was nearer the coast.

A man had the first right to his brother's widow, even though he were already married. Himself not desiring her, he could bestow her on any of his relations; and if she married contrary to his wishes, he had the right to kill her.

A man was not permitted to look too closely at his mother-in-law, nor could the one accept anything directly from the hand of the other; but they were permitted to converse casually together, and they might even be in the house alone together without transgressing any law. The same rules applied to a woman and her father-in-law.

It was the general practice of the Achomawi to bury the dead in graves; but warriors killed in battle were commonly cremated. This

custom doubtless originated as the solution of the problem what to do with a corpse far from home; nevertheless, cremation was sometimes employed, by analogy, when a man was slain by enemies at home.

As soon as death occurred, the inmates of the house began to wail, and the entire village, and the inhabitants of other villages within hearing, took up the wailing, and gathered about the house. Some persons of the same sex as the deceased, whether relations or not, prepared the body for burial by quickly washing and dressing it. The rule was that nearly all of an individual's valuables be buried with him; and if he had a long string of shell money, the relatives cut off a small portion for a keepsake and parted with the remainder. Probably they saw to it that when death threatened, the bulk of their expiring relative's valuable trinkets was distributed among them. Property of other kinds was appropriated by such relatives as had the power to deprive the others of it. In many cases a man's brothers left his children and widow without means of support.

The corpse, wrapped in a skin, but with the face exposed so that friends might see it, was always kept over night in the house, and a number of men and women watched beside it with a constantly burning fire. The grave-digger began his work early on the following morning; for it was not permitted to prepare a grave and let it remain empty over night. When it was ready, several men raised the body on a narrow slab or on a pair of poles with cross-pieces, and carried it out head-foremost, through the door of a summer hut, but through the ventilating tunnel of a winter house. The crowd followed. Just behind the bearers walked a woman with a bowl of water, which she sprinkled on the ground they passed over. Two of the bearers descended into the grave to receive the corpse and set it on a block of wood, with its back against the western wall. If one were buried with his face to the west, he would be "lost"; that is, his spirit would be unable to find the trail to the spirit world. They placed a basket of water in the grave, and clothing, robes, baskets, beads, and other valuables were cast into it by relatives and friends. As the earth was filled in, any woman who felt so impelled jumped into the grave and trampled the loose earth down about the corpse, and finally heavy stones were piled up to prevent the depredations of wild animals.

The house in which a very prominent man died, whether a summer or a winter house, was burned, and in some other cases the fami-

lies moved out of the house and did not return to it for a long time. Those who handled the corpse purified themselves by a steam bath and a plunge into the river, the men first and the women after them, and this was the sole purification. Close relatives of the deceased person cut the hair short and smeared pitch over the head and face for as long as two or three years, and some women renewed the pitch and kept the hair short for many years. To pass in front of a mourner was an insult to be effaced only by the payment of money or life.

The abode of the dead is not named nor localized, but it is believed that the spirits live somewhere.

The religion of the Achomawi is very simple. It consists simply in following the precepts of right conduct laid down by Qan, the benevolent creator. Jémul, who was more or less a mischief-maker, instituted all the customs that were to be observed, such as methods of hunting and fishing, cooking, gathering food, marrying, burying, making war, paying for murder, killing shamans. Some of his institutions are good, some are bad. The rules promulgated by Qan are few, and relate entirely to moral conduct. They are such as these: to have no sexual relations with relatives; not to kill without just cause; to be kind and generous, especially in providing food for the hungry; as to theft, if anyone steals from you, to await a favorable opportunity and steal from him a like amount, but no more.

The Achomawi hold no strictly religious performance and offer no prayers to any deity. The nearest they come to prayer is the expression of hope that the animals will aid them with their supernatural power in hunting or in war. No explanation of the natural phenomena is attempted. They say simply that the creators Qan and Jémul arranged all things as they are, and that is the end of it.

The practices of medicine-men and the popular belief in them are pseudo-religious, inasmuch as these men are supposed to have been predestined to their profession by some supernatural and irresistible power. The fact of an individual's predestination is indicated to him in his youth by the experience of a dream in which he beholds Coyote sitting in a cave, with red feathers on his head. This dream he keeps secret. At some time in later life he hears on a far-away hilltop a singing voice, which drags him to it against his will. There he finds a bunch of red feathers, in the midst of which is a cylindrical piece of polished wood containing many small feathers and the *támakumi*. This is a very

small black object, which the shaman ordinarily keeps in a deerskin bag under his right arm, and by his magic throws into the body of anyone whom he wishes to afflict with a fatal sickness. It is this so-called "poison" (though the word does not mean that) which a medicine-man professes to extract from the body of his patient. The *támakumi* is supposed to be a living thing, and is in fact the shaman's guardian spirit. It calls him its father, and its language of course is understood only by its possessor. It understands the language of all animals, and the shaman holds conversation with them only by its aid.

When a foreordained medicine-man finds this bunch of red feathers, the symbol of shamanism, it rises at once from the ground to meet his outstretched hand; and at night he comes back to the camp and shows it as evidence that he is called to be a shaman. That night the men and women assemble, in the underground house, if the season is winter, or in a tule wigwam in summer; and the new shaman dances up and down, holding the bunch of feathers and the bit of wood tightly in his hand. His *támakumi* is supposed to sing songs, describing its power; but these songs only the novice himself can hear, and as he repeats them, the people, especially the other shamans, catching the air and the words, take up the song and sing while he continues to dance. He may sing the songs of various other *támakumi* which are contained in the wooden case; for there is a special *támakumi* for each kind of death, such as death by drowning while fording a river, by falling down a precipice from the back of a stampeding horse, by rattlesnake bite, by an enemy's bullet. At some time during the ceremony the novice pretends to take the *támakumi* out of its wooden case and throw it into the air. It then travels swiftly about the world, and in a moment he receives it again in his hand, reeling back as if overpowered by the contact. Several men hasten to support him, and he restores it to its case. The dancing continues until about midnight, sometimes until daylight, and may be repeated nearly every night during the entire winter, at which season it usually occurs.

All sickness not readily assignable by the primitive mind to natural causes is held to be the work of a malevolent medicine-man, who has sent his *támakumi* into the body of his victim. A cure can be effected only by another shaman whose *támakumi* is still more powerful. This belief in the evil power of medicine-men has resulted in the death of so many professors of the cult that in former times few of them died

natural deaths. And the murder of medicine-men still continues. In the spring of 1915 a shaman was killed near Alturas, and the present chief is constantly being urged by various young men to consent to the death of a certain man who is suspected of causing sickness among the people. Asked why shamans insist on boasting of their illegitimate exploits when they know it means almost certain death, the Achomawi explain that in any case the dead man's friends will ascertain the truth through their own medicine-men, who, after taking out the *támakumi* from the sick individual, question it, and are informed by it regarding the identity of its "father."

The chief of the Fall River Achomawi, a thoughtful, intelligent man, aged about sixty-two at the time of. the conversation, but a genuine Indian in training and feeling, said that he cannot believe the power of the medicine-men is true. He thinks they claim supernatural power for the purpose of deceiving the people, thereby acquiring property and a position of awe. But all the others, he said, believe firmly that the medicine-men can kill by magic, and many are advocating that the Government segregate them on some distant reservation. A local medicine-man has been shot at two or three times, and undoubtedly will be killed; but it would be useless for him to declare that he had discarded his power, in order to save his life, for the people would not believe him: the power cannot be dismissed. Why any man will announce himself as a shaman, when he knows that almost certainly he will some time meet a violent death, is a thing no white man can fully understand. The explanation offered, that when they hear the distant singing on a hilltop they are forced to go and take up the bunch of red feathers, satisfies an Indian, but not a white man. It may be that they actually do think they hear this magic singing. Whether or not that part of the matter is popular deception or only self-deception, no one can be sure except the medicine-man himself, and him we find it difficult to believe.

When the services of a medicine-man are required, a relative of the sick person goes to him and offers the equivalent of five, ten, fifteen, or twenty dollars. The last-named sum is the highest regular fee, but in rare instances as much as fifty dollars or even a hundred has been paid. The smallest fee is usually refused. After the shaman has consented to accept a specified sum, the messenger shows him that amount in shell money, and the medicine-man smells the beads in order to ascertain if

the "smell of death" is on them. If it is, he says: "It will be hard, but I will try. Perhaps he will die anyway." If the smell of death is absent' he says: "I will cure him. He will recover." He then makes his preparations. His *támakumi* in its wooden receptacle surrounded by feathers hangs on a cord from his neck. If the case is desperate, he comes naked, with stripes of charcoal across his chest and face. On his head is a *pánni,* a feather head-dress. In the house of the sick person are six to ten men and women to sing for him, and after his arrival none is permitted to enter. He sits down beside the patient, holding the sides of his head in his hands and humming his songs, while studying the sick person to find out where the disease is seated, and what its nature is. The men and women join in his songs. When he has determined the location and nature of the sickness, he rises and dances, and then with various contortions drops to his knees and sucks at the patient's body. After a time he spits blood, and if he has been successful in drawing out the "poison" he shows a small black object, the *támakumi* of some malevolent shaman who has been trying to kill the patient. He holds it up between thumb and forefinger and asks, "Who is your father?" He pretends to receive an answer, and then names the man who has inflicted the disease. This means that if the patient should not recover, his relatives will try to kill that supposedly guilty medicine-man; but if he recovers, they will do nothing. Nevertheless, that shaman will be regarded thereafter with suspicion and dread. In some instances a medicine-man shows a frog or a snake, which he declares he has sucked out of the patient's body. In very serious illness he remains as long as three days in the sick man's house without going home at all, and performs his incantation and sucking each day and each night. If at the end of that time he has not accomplished his purpose, he says: "I cannot cure him. You will have to try someone else." In such a case they pay him a small part of the stipulated price; similarly, if the patient dies soon after a supposed cure, the shaman must give up his fee.

There is no fraternity of medicine-men among the Achomawi.

"The Achomawi"
From
The North American Indian: Volume 13
by Edwards S. Curtis
All Rights Reserved. For Personal Usage Only
www.worldwisdom.com