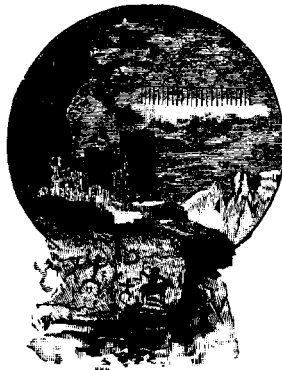


SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION
BUREAU OF AMERICAN ETHNOLOGY
BULLETIN 78

HANDBOOK
OF THE
INDIANS OF CALIFORNIA

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WASHINGTON
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE
1925

CHAPTER 7.

ATHABASCANS: THE TOLOWA.

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THE ATHABASCANS OF CALIFORNIA.

ORIGIN AND MOVEMENTS.

The peculiar conservative genius that pervades all Athabascan tongues rendered the early recognition of those on the Pacific coast easy, in spite of the great distances that separate these tongues from their congeners in the northwestern tundras and forests and in the arid highlands of New Mexico. The origin of the vastly distributed family is, however, as obscure as its coherence is obvious. This is a problem involving an understanding of all ancient North America, and the fragments of the stock in California can contribute only a minute quota to the solution. It is superficially probable, as a glance at a map of the continent will sustain, that the Pacific coast can scarcely have been the first home of the family when it was still united. The Pacific coast Athabascans were therefore immigrants of some remote period; and for those of California, their extreme southern position makes it probable that they drifted into their present seats from the north.

This movement must not be underestimated as recent; and there must have been many crowdings and rollings about, perhaps even refluxes. On the map, for instance, the Kato look as if they were invaders who had nearly split the Yuki in two and might have made the division complete if the white man had left them alone a few more generations. But such an assumption is pure speculation. It is not beyond the limits of possibility that the Kato have been in their present seats for a very long time, and that in recent centuries it has been the Yuki who gradually confined and nearly surrounded them. Any hypothesis on these points is as yet only a guess.

Two things argue against any rapid conquering march of the Athabascans southward: their assimilation to their linguistically alien neighbors in culture, and in bodily form. The Hupa are as

wholly and integrally a part of the hearth of the northwestern civilization as are the Algonkin Yurok or the Hokan Karok. The Lassik show Wintun influences. The Wailaki were similar to the Yuki. And the Kato were substantially one in customs and beliefs with the Coast Yuki. Within the short distance of less than 100 miles, therefore, there were Athabascans of entirely northwestern and of entirely central culture: a situation which could have arisen only among long sessile populations of contracted outlook.

In northwestern California, as in southwestern Oregon, a single physical type is the predominant one among the multitudinous tribes: a tallish stature with round head. These are also the traits of the Athabascans in the northwest and the southwest of the continent.

It is therefore quite possible that the prevalence of this type in the region where California and Oregon adjoin is due to a sustained and abundant infusion of Athabascan blood. But as Athabascans and non-Athabascans are indistinguishable, a considerable period must be allowed for this assimilation of the once separate and presumably different races that now are blended.

In the extreme south the result has been the reverse, but the process the same. The Wailaki have taken on the narrow-headed, stumpy-bodied type of the Yuki—a markedly localized type, by the way.

CLASSIFICATION.

The Athabascan dialects of California fall into four groups: the Tolowa, which is connected with the Oregonian tongues of Chetco and Rogue Rivers; the Hupa group; the small and undiversified Mattole, whose distinctness is not readily explainable either by the topography of their habitat or by a juxtaposition to alien neighbors, and therefore indicates the operation of an unknown historical factor—unless Mattole shall prove to be a subdivision of Hupa; and the Southern or Kineste or Kuneste or Wailaki group, the most widely spread of the four.

For the sake of exactness a fifth group might be added, that of the Rogue River people, to whom a narrow strip along the northern edge of the State, in contact with the Shasta, and another adjacent to the Tolowa, have been assigned on the map. Both these belts are only a few miles wide and high up in the mountains. They may have been visited and hunted in; they were certainly not settled. They represent a little marginal fringe which nominally laps into the present consideration only because the artificial State lines that set a boundary to this study do not coincide exactly with the barriers set by nature.

The Athabascans were a hill people, and most of them inhabited their permanent homes by the side of rivers only during a part of each year. But their territories coincide almost as exactly with stream drainages as if a systematist had planned their ditribution. This relation appears in the following tabulation:

TOLOWA GROUP.....	Smith River drainage.
HUPA GROUP.....	Trinity-Redwood-Mad drainage.
Hupa.....	Lower Trinity River.
Chilula.....	Lower Redwood Creek.
Whilkut.....	Mad River (and upper Redwood drainage.)
MATTOLE GROUP.....	Mattole and Bear River drainages (and a short stretch of Lower Eel River).
(Distinctness doubtful.)	
SOUTHERN GROUP.....	All Eel River drainage from the first forks up, except for the headwaters which were Yuki.
Nongatl.....	Yager, Van Dusen, and Larrabee Creeks (and upper Mad River).
Lassik.....	Main Eel River in the vicinity of Dobbins Creek.
Wailaki.....	Main Eel River in the vicinity of the North Fork.
Sinkyone.....	Lower reaches of the South Fork of Eel River.
Kato.....	Headwaters of the South Fork of Eel River.

LANDWARD OUTLOOK.

It is a remarkable fact that with all the immense range of the Athabaskan family as a whole—probably the greatest, in mere miles, of any stock represented on the continent—they approach the sea in an endless number of places, but actually held its shores over only three or four brief frontages. Two of these lie in California; but even here the strange impulse toward the interior is manifest. The inland range of the California Athabascans has double the length of their coastal distribution. Yurok, Wiyot, and Yukian territories lie between the ocean and an Athabaskan hinterland. Not one of the 10 Athabaskan groups just enumerated is more than 30 miles from the boom of the surf. Yet only 3 of the 10 hold a foot of beach. It may have been the play of historical accident and nothing more, but it is hard to rid the mind of the thought that in this perverse distribution we may be face to face with something basal that has persisted through the wanderings of thousands of years and the repeated reshapings of whole cultures.

THE TOLOWA.

TERRITORY.

The Tolowa, whose speech constitutes the first and most northerly Athabaskan dialect group in California, are the Indians of Del Norte County, in the northwestern corner of the State. The lowest dozen miles of the Klamath River are, it is true, in the same county,

according to one of the arbitrary delimitations to which the American is addicted, and there were and are nearly as many Yurok on this stretch of stream as the remainder of the county held Athabascans. But the connections and outlook of these Yurok were up their river or southward along the coast, toward their more numerous kinsmen in what the white man calls Humboldt County. Ethnologically, the Tolowa were the people of Smith River and the adjacent ocean frontage.

Tolowa, like so many California designations of a pseudo-tribal nature, is a name alien to the people to whom it applies. It is of Yurok origin. These people say *ni-tolowo*, "I speak Athabaskan of the Tolowa variety," but *no-mimohsigo*, "I speak Athabaskan of the Hupa-Chilula-Whilkut variety." As the two groups are separated by the Algonkin Yurok, their distinction by these people is natural, and the considerable differentiation of the two forms of speech is easily intelligible.

SETTLEMENTS.

The names and locations of the Tolowa towns as given by themselves have not been recorded. Some 8 or 10 are known under their Yurok designations, and as many under the names which the Rogue River Athabascans of Oregon applied to them. These two lists, which unfortunately can not be very definitely connected, probably include all the more important villages of the Tolowa without exhausting the total of their settlements.

The Yurok mention Nororpek, on the coast north of Smith River; Hinei, at the mouth of Smith River; Loginotl, up this stream, where it was customary to construct a salmon dam; Tolokwe, near Earl Lake or lagoon, of which Tolokwe-wonekwu, "uphill from Tolokwe," on the Pond ranch, may have been a suburb; Erertl, south of Tolokwe, but on the same body of water; Kna'awi, where the waves dash against a bluff, probably Point St. George; Kohpei, near Crescent City; and an unnamed village on the coast south of this town. There was also Espau, north of Crescent City, and with the same name as a Yurok village at Gold Bluff 40 miles south on the same coast; and Hineihir, "above Hinei," which might mean upstream from it on Smith River or "upstream" along the coast as the Yurok reckon, that is, south. Pekwutsu is a large rock a dozen miles from Crescent City where sea lions were hunted, and not a village. This is likely to be Northwest Seal Rock, where the lighthouse now stands.

The Oregon Athabascans know Huwunkut (compare the Hupa village of the same name) at the mouth of Smith River, and Hosa or Hwasa at one of the forks of the stream. The former is almost certainly Hinei, the latter may be Loginotl. South of Smith River, that is probably on Lake Earl, were Atakut, whence perhaps the American "Yontocketts;" Chestlish; and Echulit or Cheshanme. "Above Crescent City" was Tahinga, perhaps Yurok Kna'awi. Crescent City was Tatin, while to the south, on the coast, lay Mestetl, Tata or Tatla, and Tlusme or Tlitsusme.

The Yurok word Tolowo is apparently connected with the town name Tolokwe. "Henaggi" and "Tataten," sometimes cited as Tolowa subtribes, are only Hinei and "Tata people."¹

A paternal gentile system that has been alleged for the Tolowa is a misconception derived from imputing to them a social organization that was proper to certain tribes in the central United States, and of which the Tolowa, and their Oregonian neighbors, did not possess a trace. The supposed clans are villages of the kind that form the basis of native society throughout California. In fact, far from being gentile subdivisions of a Tolowa "tribe," the villages were the ultimate and only political units in the Indians' consciousness; and "Tolowa," for which the bearers of the name appear to have had no specific word of their own, was nothing more than a term denoting a certain speech and implying perhaps certain customs—as nonpolitical in significance as "Anglo-Saxon."

LIMITS AND NUMBERS.

On the coast to the north, the Tolowa boundary must have been close to the Oregon line. On the south it is not exactly known. The Yurok had settlements at the mouth of Wilson Creek, 6 miles north of the mouth of the Klamath, and claimed whales that stranded on the shore as much as 3 miles beyond. It is likely that this is where Yurok and Tolowa territorial rights met; but it seems to have been 6 or 8 miles more to the first village of the latter. Inland, Tolowa suzerainty was probably coextensive with the drainage of their principal stream, a high range of the Siskiyou shutting them off from the Karok of the middle Klamath. Most of this interior tract was, however, little used except for hunting, it appears, and the habits of the group were essentially those of a coastal people.

The census of 1910 gave the Tolowa 120 souls, one-third of whom were reckoned as part white. The number at the time of settlement may be guessed at well under 1,000.

¹ The Tolowa towns have recently been determined by T. T. Waterman. Nororpok appears to be in Oregon and was not counted as their own by the Tolowa. On the north side of the mouth of Smith River, at Siesta Peak, was Hawinwet (cf. Huwunkut, above), "on the mountain side," Yurok Hinei. On Smith River, at the mouth of Bucket Creek, was Hatsahoto^otne, "receptacle below," probably Yurok Loginotl. Farther upstream, where Bear Creek comes in, lay Melishenten, "close to hill." South from the mouth of Smith River, somewhat inland, at Yontucket, toward Lake Earl, was Yo^otakit, "east high," Yurok Tolakwe. In order southward there followed Echulet, Yurok Ertl, on a point projecting northward into Lake Earl; Tagla^ote, "pointing seaward," Yurok Kna^oawl, at Point St. George; Tati^oti^o, a little beyond; Metetlting, "covered," Yurok Sasoi, at Pebble Beach; Seninghat, "flat rock," Yurok Kohpei, at Crescent City; and Shinyatlehi, "summer fishing," Yurok Neketl with reference to the ending of the beach, at Nickel Creek. Assuming the number to be complete, 10 towns, at the Yurok rate, would make the Tolowa population 450.

FEUDS.

What may be called wars were indulged in between Tolowa towns as readily as between them and alien villages, though it is likely that in the former case each side was likely to be limited to kinsmen, while an expedition for revenge against a Yurok or Karok settlement might unite inhabitants of a number of towns.

In the seventies there was a feud between the Crescent City village and one or more of those on Earl Lake.

Apparently before this was a war between Hinei and Rekwoi, the Tolowa and Yurok villages at the entrance to Smith and Klamath Rivers. Blood relatives of the inhabitants, in other towns, no doubt took part; but it is significant that the other Tolowa villages, though in intermediate position, remained neutral as towns. In one encounter, each party lost three men; in another, five were killed on one side, probably the Yurok one. The occasion of this war was an old woman at Rekwoi, who by her magic stopped the salmon from going up Smith River. Now that the quarrel is long since over, the Yurok appear to take the truth of the Hinei charge for granted—the old lady must have done so, or the Tolowa would not have become angry. Moreover, she had lost relatives in former fighting against Hinei, and though this had been formally ended by money settlements for every one slain or injured, she was believed to cherish continued resentment in secret.

Rekwoi, and the still more northerly Yurok settlement of O'men, were, however, infiltrated with Tolowa blood, and reciprocally there were not a few Tolowa with Yurok wives, mothers, or grandmothers. In the war between Rekwoi and Takimitliding village in Hupa, about 1830 or 1840, the greatest war of which the Yurok have recollection, allies from the lagoon and Smith River, that is, probably, Tolokwe and Hinei, sided with the Yurok against the Athabascan Hupa and Chilula.

The Karok about the mouth of Salmon River also have recollections of a war carried on between them and the Tolowa by surprise attacks across the Siskiyou, but hostile as well as friendly intercourse between these two peoples was infrequent.

CULTURAL POSITION.

From all that is on record in print, as well as from many statements of the Yurok, it is plain that the customs, institutions, and implements of the Tolowa were similar to those of the better known Yurok and Hupa except in minor points. The Tolowa must have served as the principal purveyors to these Indians of the dentalium shells that formed the standard currency of the region and which, in Tolowa hands, must have been near the end of their slow and fluctuating drift from the source of supply in the vicinity of Vancouver Island to their final resting place in northwestern California. The Yurok regard the Tolowa as rich, a distinction they accord to few others of the people known to them.

A Tolowa redwood canoe of the type prevailing in the region, but 42 feet long and 8 feet wide—that is, twice the ordinary size—has been described as made on Smith River and used for traffic on Hum-

boldt Bay. If this account is unexaggerated, the boat must have been made for the transport of American freight by hired Indians. For native purposes, which involved beaching, crossing dangerous bars, shooting around rocks in rapids, and dragging loads upstream, a vessel of this size would have been not only useless but impracticable; besides which it is doubtful if the Tolowa ever visited the Wiyot.

The Tolowa held the Deerskin dance that was made by the wealthier and more populous tribes of the region; and a reference to a "salmon dance" on Smith River is probably to be interpreted as evidence of one of the highly sacred and esoteric "new year" ceremonies that underlie the major dances of the Yurok, Hupa, and Karok. The doctor-making dance is like that of the Yurok; the war dance probably the same; but in the girl's adolescence ceremony and dance, in which a deer-hoof rattle is shaken, the Tolowa possess a ritual that is wanting or obsolescent among the Yurok but which they share with the remoter Karok and Hupa.

The most specific features of the northwestern California culture in its intensive form, such as the Deerskin dance, no doubt reached only to the Tolowa, perhaps in part faded out among them as among the Wiyot to the south; but the general basis of this civilization, its houses, typical canoes, basketry, tools, and social attitudes, extended with but little change beyond them into Oregon, at least along the coast. It is unfortunate that the early and rapid disintegration of the old life of the Oregon Indians makes it impossible to trace, without laborious technical studies, and then only imperfectly, the interesting connections that must have existed between the specialized little civilization that flourished around the junction of the Klamath and the Trinity, and the remarkable culture of the long North Pacific coast, of which at bottom that of northwest California is but the southernmost extension and a modification.