

A GHOST-DANCE IN CALIFORNIA.

DURING ethnological researches conducted on behalf of the Department of Anthropology of the University of California, among the Yurok and Karok Indians of the lower Klamath river, the writer learned of the existence of a ghost-dance in this region about thirty years ago.

The information obtained from the Karok, who live along the Klamath river from Happy Camp down to Orleans, is as follows: The dance was made in order that the dead might return. It originated in the east. The Karok obtained it from the Shasta. In Karok territory it was first held at Happy Camp. Then the lower Karok went up to Happy Camp, learned the dance, and brought it back with them. Thus it was made at Katimin and Amaikyara, two villages near the mouth of the Salmon river. The dance was not prescribed to any particular spot, as are the native dances, but could be made anywhere. The participants danced in a circle. They painted red. They wore various regalia regularly used in the native dances. It was a woman who going to Happy Camp and seeing the dance there, learned it and instituted it at Amaikyara. She was in the centre; the people danced around her in a ring. She told them to look down, not up. Before long a number of the participants would lose their senses. After the dance had been made for some time, people began to dream of the dead. Many Yurok came up from the lower river, some from as far as the mouth. They brought their woodpecker-head regalia and other ceremonial paraphernalia. They were, however, told that when the dead came back these valuables would disappear. After a time the Yurok grew tired and went home. Of the neighboring tribes besides the Yurok, the Athabascan Tolowa of Smith river took up the dance, but the Athabascan Hupa of Trinity river did not.

The Yurok, who live on the Klamath from Weitchpec down to the mouth, gave the following information: The dance came from the Shasta of Scott river. Then it was made by the Karok at Happy Camp. From there it was brought both down the river to Amaikyara, and across the mountains to the Tolowa on the coast. From the Tolowa it came to the Yurok in the following way: An old Tolowa living at a place called Burnt Ranch, between Crescent City and Smith river, started the movement. From him his nephew, a Yurok living at Staawin, ten miles up the Klamath from the mouth, learned to dream. At first the ceremony among the Yurok was directed by the old Tolowa; after he went back, by his Yurok

nephew. The dance was made at Kootep, a village near Klamath. The site was then uninhabited, the houses having been destroyed by a flood some years before. The dance was brought to this place the summer after the Karok began to make it. There was talk of making the dance also at Weitchpec, the Yurok settlement farthest up the river, and nearest the Hupa. The two prophets said that the dead of Weitchpec would not return if the dance were not held there. The dance was, however, not made at Weitchpec.

The dancers stood in concentric circles, which revolved alternately in opposite directions. There are said sometimes to have been ten such circles. On one occasion the dance was held indoors, and there were two circles. The old prophet, and later his nephew, made medicine in a separate house. [This is a feature found in many ceremonies of the Yurok and Karok.] Men, women, and children took part in the dances. Sometimes they danced in the morning. Then they would eat their first meal when it was nearly noon, for it was forbidden to eat before dancing. [Similar regulations are common Yurok ceremonial observances.] Later in the day the dancing would begin again, and continue into the night. Sometimes they danced all night.

The prophets dreamed of the dead, and then told their dreams to the people. They announced that the dead would return if the dance were made. They said that the world would turn over and end. As to the fate of the living, the doctrine varied. Once it was said that all would perish, again that all would live, and at other times that only those who made the dance and obeyed its regulations would live. Valuables kept secreted would be lost: obsidian would turn into common stone, dentalium shells into sticks. But if valuables were exposed during the dance, they would remain unaltered. Therefore the dancers held trays on which lay their dentalia, and one man who possessed a very large obsidian implement put it into a baby-basket and carried it in the dance. The people also pretended to gamble for woodpecker-head ornaments and other valuables; but when they had played, each took his own again. All dogs were killed.

Those who disbelieved were told that they would turn to rock. Men and women were ordered to bathe together without shame, and did so. Sexual intercourse was forbidden. Those who disobeyed would find their genitalia turned to sticks or stone. Once one of the prophets said that all the acorns that had been stored in the house in which he made medicine had disappeared, the dead having come and eaten them; again that the dead had announced that they would come the next day. On another occasion the prophet directed all the wood on the graves of the dead, and the inclosures

surrounding the graves, to be taken away, tied in bundles, and carried into the hills. This was done. Such is the account given by the Yurok.

Indians who now have adult children declare that at the time of the dance they were not yet married. Others, who are above forty, say that they saw it as children. This would point to a period about thirty years ago. A white informant states that the dance took place not long before the Modoc war of 1872-73; in the successful resistance of the Modocs to the whites, the Indians of the lower Klamath saw proof of their new beliefs. Stephen Powers¹ mentions the excitement as raging "all over Northern California, especially among the Yurok, Karok, and Shasta," in 1871 and 1872, "until the Modoc war broke out, in November, 1872, when it gradually subsided." He describes some of the characteristic features of the movement, such as the belief that the dead would return, that dancing would bring them back, and the dancing in a circle. He states further that the Indians believed that their dead would sweep the whites from the earth, and that at Scott's Bar the dancing took place about two upright poles painted spirally red and black, with handkerchiefs at the top, the dancers' bodies being "painted in like manner." Powers, however, attributes the entire movement to the legal execution of a Karok at Orleans in 1871, of which event he gives a circumstantial story. There is no reason for this belief of origin of the movement. It seems almost certain that the dance spread to the Shasta, and thence to the tribes of the lower Klamath, from the Paiutes of Nevada, among whom, according to Mooney,² there existed, somewhere between 1869 and 1872 a belief and a dance very similar to those established among the same tribe nearly twenty years later by Wovoka, from whom the well-known ghost-dance movement of a dozen years ago took its origin. Of this later much more widely-spread movement the Karok and Yurok seem to be ignorant.

The exact territorial limits of this early ghost-dance in California are uncertain. The Shasta, Karok, Tolowa, and Yurok practised the dance. According to the white informant quoted before, the Yurok of Big Lagoon, on the coast thirty miles south of the mouth of the Klamath, held the dance in that neighborhood. The Hupa are said not to have made it, and it seems probable that among none of the tribes farther south did the movement obtain a foothold.

The fundamental feature of this movement was the belief in the return of the dead. In this, as in many of its other characteristics, both of doctrine and of observance, it agrees closely with the later

¹ "Tribes of California," *Contr. N. A. Ethn.*, vol. iii. p. 42.

² "The Ghost-Dance Religion," *Ann. Rep. Bur. Ethn.*, vol. xiv. p. 701.

ghost-dance. Several peculiarities are due to the specialized Karok-Yurok-Hupa culture. It is somewhat remarkable that none of the information, except that obtained from whites, contains reference to any difference or opposition between Indians and whites or the old life and the new, since such a contrasting is mentioned as part of the doctrines of the Paiute movement of 1870, and is at the root of the beliefs underlying the ghost-dance.

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