

DANCES OF THE HUPA INDIANS.

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The dances of the Hupa Indians of California are peculiar to this people, though they probably resemble those of other tribes. There is a remarkable similarity in their dances and in the accompanying songs, if their noises can be called songs.

The most interesting dance which I had the pleasure of witnessing was the celebrated woodpecker dance or *Hi-jit-delia*. It resembles the other dances in that there is a competitive element, the dancers from one part of the valley dancing together, and followed in turn by squads from other parts, each party trying to excel the others. The head-dress is quite beautiful, and consists of buckskin, on which are sewn the red breast or neck feathers of the male woodpecker in certain designs, no two being alike. The white markings are small bits of deer-skin taken from the under side of the neck, where the hair is white. The buckskin is stiffened by small upright sticks of wood sewn on the back at such angles as to give the proper shape to the dress when tied on the forehead. The dance dresses worn by some are made of the skins of civet cats (mountain cats), having tails somewhat like the raccoon. A few men wear tanned deer-skins tied around the waist. Various shaped long baskets are held in the right hand. About twenty men in line dance at one time. At first the right hands are raised slowly and majestically, the body bent slightly forward, and on the return to the original position the bodies are thrown slightly back, the right legs lifted and brought to the ground with a resounding thud. In the mean time a tenor voice or two sing in a discordant minor key, with no tune, no words, no time—merely sounds more or less prolonged. This is repeated over and over again, the three above motions being accompanied by three prolonged sounds, which can best be represented as follows :



Hy-ee,

Ho — — —,

Hay-ee.

After this repetition has been kept up about fifteen minutes the articles in the hands are laid on the ground, hands are joined, and to the same tune the hands are first lifted, then lowered, the body being slightly bent forward and legs and thighs flexed, and then to the third note all jump slightly upwards and bring both feet to the ground with a sharp whack. This figure is then repeated for several minutes, when the dance is over, the whole thing to be enacted by the next party. During the whole dance the heads of the performers are slowly and coquettishly moved from side to side.

After each party has had its trial, the ceremonies, having lasted from about noon until 3 p. m., are over until the next day. The dance of each day is only a repetition of that of the previous day excepting the last, when all dance together in two circles, gradually separating from each other until about fifty yards apart, when the ceremonial is ended for that year. A curious part of this dance is the peculiar expression of countenance assumed by the men who sing the solos. They evidently work themselves into an hysterical condition, for their faces assume a far-away, ecstatic look, and they seem for the time being to inhabit another world. Their eyes may be riveted on some imaginary spot, and the inane smile that lights up their faces is probably the height of their art, and elicits much secret applause. The admiring glances cast by the squaws evidence the appreciation their work evokes. The most interesting feature of this dance is the sermon which is preached each day during one of the dances. One of the head men of the valley seats himself in front of the dancers, and while the singing is going on he delivers a lecture on morality, talking so that all the spectators—men, women, and children—can hear. From all I could learn, his precepts were about of the same nature as the ten commandments, though it is possible he has in late years warned them against whiskey, a besetting sin of the younger generation.

I understand that this dance is held only once in five or six years, but the accompanying memorandum mentions two years. It is always in the fall; usually October. The purpose of the dance is to stop sickness, so it is said, but it is as much a solemn ceremonial to give occasion to administer a small dose of moral instruction to the young; but, like some of the other dances, it seems to have degenerated into an occasion for mirth and sociability. At this dance, as at all the others, the gamblers come out in full force, and the games are kept up continuously day and night as long as the dance lasts or the money holds out.

In this dance young girls are occasionally allowed to participate. They do not sing, as in the fire dance, but their part consists in lowering and raising the body by bending the knees and thighs, the body remaining vertical, the motions keeping time with those of the men. The men usually have their faces smeared with a black mixture of soot and salmon oil, either in streaks across the cheeks and forehead or in large patches. The girls are not painted. Each man has a few long eagle feathers stuck in the hair at the back of the head, so arranged on a small stick that they wave or rotate freely as the head is moved. Some of the men are adorned with an article of dress tied on the forehead and hanging over the head and down the back. It has a hole worked in it, through which the eagle feathers are pushed into the hair. It resembles somewhat the head-dress pictured as being worn by the ancient Egyptian priests. It is closely woven of the long grass-like leaves of a plant (*Iris macrosiphon*), and at a glance would be taken for coarse canvas. It is about twelve inches wide by about forty inches long, and is decorated with red painted designs somewhat of the character of the figures on the hats. As it hangs down the back it materially adds to the picturesque appearance of the dancers, who have not made themselves ridiculous by retaining their white undergarments.

HUPA INDIAN DANCE TABLE.

Dance.	Indian name.	Purpose of dance.	Time of the year held.	How often held.
Woodpecker	Hi-jit-delia ..	To stop sickness.	In October..	Once every two years.
White-deerskin.	When-sil-jit'-delia.	For the kindness on account of their white deerskin.	In August...	Once every two years.
Fire.....	H o n - n o c h - where'.	Try to cure a sick.	Any time when the sick want to be cured.	Once or twice a year, if necessary.
Flower	K i n - n o c h' - tun.	To make the girl perfect and truth.	Any time when the girl had first flower.	Once or twice a year.

A word might be said about the accompanying table relative to the dances. It was written by a full-blood young man who has spent several years in various Indian schools and who is intelligent and progressive in his ideas. The quaint manner in which his words

are misused is characteristic of the general manner in which all these Indians attempt to speak English. Knowing nothing of the language, I am unable to give the significance of the names of the dances, which are evidently compound words, and probably the same in meaning as the English compound words used for the respective dances.

White-deer-skin dance or *When-sil-jit'-delia*.—The white-deer-skin dance is probably as interesting as the woodpecker dance, and takes place about as often. It is an expensive ceremony, and is not held in disastrous years. On the first day it is held on one of the flats in the upper part of the valley, and the people living there are supposed to feed all the others as guests; the next day a place lower down is the scene of the festivities, and the people living there take their turn in supplying the food; so that each band alternately entertains the others until the whole valley is danced over. The last day is spent on a particular spot on Bald Hill, at the lower end of the valley, or at a place called Witchepec, about ten miles distant, where the Trinity flows into the Klamath. It is not probable that this dance is anything more than a thanksgiving. (See table.) The present Indians are either ignorant of its signification or adverse to divulging it. It is rumored that there is a myth or legend to the effect that the Great Spirit was once seen at various parts of the valley, and at every place he was seen this dance is now held. It seems probable that they have chosen this method of thanking the Great Spirit for the abundance of food and asking for more.

The costume is essentially different from that worn at the other dances. The dress or frock is a simple dressed deer-skin, or the frock already described as made of civet skin. The upper part of the body is naked, but decorated with strings of long shells (wampum), beads, etc. In recent years the young men and some of the older ones too, are much disinclined to remove the underclothing, though they do take off their trousers, and their appearance instead of being picturesque, has become absurd to an extreme degree. The head-gear consists of tufts of hair-like fibers sewed to a band and tied to the forehead, the fibers standing vertically. I am not sure whether the fibers are grasses or the hair of wild animals. This head-dress, of course, obscures the eyes, like a terrier, and gives a lowering, diabolical aspect not at all pleasing. All the dancers carry in their hands deer-skins, the head and neck being stuffed with grass, the ears, nose, and eyes decorated with red woodpecker feathers, strings

of shells, beads, and other trinkets, and the whole being mounted on a long pole. Neither the body nor legs of the deer-skin are stuffed, but hang down loosely. From two to four of the central dancers have the white deer-skins.

The white deer are very rare, and it is not known whether they are a distinct species or whether they are merely the albinos of the common deer. These are very valuable, \$100 being the price usually set on them. They are carefully preserved in the family, and are handed down from father to son as heirlooms.

The men in this dance, as in all the others, are arranged according to size and age. The old men are in the center and the younger ones next, and on the flanks are the boys. It is customary to have two or three little boys, three or four years of age, in every kind of dance, and the strenuous efforts made by these little tots to imitate their seniors are extremely comical. Two or three men, usually chiefs or head men of bands, do not dance in the line, but strut up and down in front, blowing whistles and holding in the right hand a long, flat piece of obsidian, *i. e.*, the sacred stone. The latter, like the deer-skins, are also heirlooms, and are regarded with great veneration, not at all unlike the feeling the Christian entertains toward the cross, and though they are heirlooms and kept in the family, the whole tribe is interested in their welfare. Indeed, it seems probable that the stones are symbolic of some fact in their ancient mythology, but that the symbolism has been lost, leaving a veneration for the article itself. One man had the temerity to sell one of these stones last summer, and the tumult that was raised in the valley was quite startling. Old women wept and bewailed the bad luck that was sure to overtake them, and the gossip that followed far excelled that of a country village.

To return to the dance: The main line of dancers hold aloft the poles on which are the deer-skins, at the same time bending the body forward. To a disagreeable song, they pat the ground with the right feet rhythmically and in "quick time." The sounds are mere grunts or guttural "whoops," and are without meaning, as far as I can learn. After six or eight minutes a rest is taken, the chiefs squatting on the ground until the next figure, which is merely a repetition. After five or six such figures the dancers are replaced by a squad from another band, who try to outdo the others in the excellence of their dancing. The faces of the men are streaked with black, as in the woodpecker dance.

The feast which follows this dance consists of acorn soup, salmon, venison, and berries in season; it is served to the dancers, who are seated in a circle. While the men are dancing, the squaws, who never take part in this dance, are preparing the feast, if such a scanty menu can be dignified by this name.

A part of this dance partakes of the nature of incense-burning, for a small fire is started directly in front of the line of dancers, and attended to by one of the chief men of the tribe. As the fire is made to smoke it gives the impression that it is actually intended to be incense.

One part of this dance remains to be described. On the afternoon of one of the latter days of the dance, during the change of stations, the dancers entered canoes and floated down stream, performing the "boat dance." They were naked, with the exception of a small cloth or handkerchief around the hips. As they float down, the canoes being secured together in line, the dancers stand erect, eight or ten in a canoe, and each placing his hands on the shoulders of the man in front of him, they make slight jumping motions, though not allowing the feet to leave the canoes. By this means the canoes rise and fall slightly and rhythmically, giving a rather pleasing effect to this figure. They sing also; but not having witnessed this part of the dance, I cannot describe it more fully.

Fire dance or *Hon-noch-where'*.—The Fire dance was originally an incantation to facilitate the recovery of a sick child, but at present it is as much an occasion for sociability as the former. It is danced at night, in the cellar of a native hut, from which the roof and sides have been removed to permit a good view by the spectators. The sick child is wrapped in a blanket and laid by the side of the fire, built in the center of the cellar. The doctress or medicine woman sits by the fire and seems to have a general supervision of affairs. In this dance young unmarried girls take part with the men, who also are usually, but not invariably, unmarried; but the latter rule is uncertain. At any rate, the male dancers are mostly mere boys, but very few men being noticed among them. At about 9 p. m. the dance begins, and it ends at sunrise. During the whole night it continues, intervals of about an hour elapsing between the figures. The squaws and children during all this time remain in their places as spectators.

The men have eagle feathers stuck in their hats, very few wearing any other head-dress. The girls wear on the head the native basket-

like hat. Their best clothing is worn, and no attempt is made at native decoration. All the dancers have their faces painted red, the girls usually the cheeks only, but the men paint the whole face. One or two of the men stripped to the waist and painted their breasts also. The men hold bunches of bows and arrows in their hands, between the knees, the body being bent forward. A few held whole quivers of arrows, the quivers consisting of the dressed skin of the beaver or "fisher." To a weird grunt they keep time by beating the ground with the right foot, all acting together. This part of the dance is exactly similar to the white-deer-skin dance. The girls, keeping time with the men, merely move the body up and down, the body being kept strictly vertical. At the same time the girls sing a not unpleasant tune in a weird minor key. I believe this tune is a fixed quantity, somewhat on the order of a national hymn, for the various bands of singers seemed to follow the same tune. On the occasion I witnessed, the sick child had been deserted by its mother, who was at a distant place. and the girls sang words which a young squaw translated to me somewhat as follows: "Why did you leave your child? You should be ashamed of yourself. Shame on you!" During the figure one man usually prances up and down in front of the others, at the same time singing a tune of his own, shaking his head to make the feathers wave or rotate and performing antics similar in most respects to the artistic soloists of the woodpecker dance. The figure is repeated six or eight times by one set of dancers, who then file out and are replaced in about an hour by a set from another band, who go through the same monotonous figure, competing for the honor of being considered the best dancers.

Flower dance or *Kin-nock'-tun*.—From all reports the flower dance is not unlike the others. As soon as menstruation makes its appearance in a young girl this dance is held, and the word "flower," therefore, is not at all used in a horticultural sense. The head-dress in this dance consists of the tusks of the sea-lion glued to a buckskin band. The purpose of the dance is to assure the girl health, happiness, and truthfulness (although the latter must be pure irony), and at the same time give the young people an occasion for sociability. The girl was formerly expected to fast for a prolonged period at the time of the dance, but this rigorous fasting is no longer insisted upon. It is understood that this dance resembles the others in the

general style of the figures, decorations, songs or grunts, and the competitive element which enters into all of them.

There is a local dance in Hupa Valley which, as far as known, is not practiced by related tribes. It is an invocation to a deity, praying for a change of weather. If it is too hot to harvest, they pray for cooler weather; if too rainy, they pray for dry weather; and on the occasion of the late floods, they prayed for the subsidence of the waters. In a cañon above Hupa Valley, in another but much smaller valley, called the Sugar Bowl, is a large rock, where these ceremonies always take place. Large quantities of food are taken there, and after the dance the feast takes place.

One peculiarity in reference to this dance must be referred to. A person who has touched a corpse is considered unclean, and must go to this rock and participate in a dance and anoint the body with a greasy salve supplied by a medicine woman. Unless all this is done the person is liable to bring disaster to the tribe.

It is a belief that no corpse can remain in the valley in peace if the person has died outside of the valley. If the body is brought in and buried it is confidently believed that floods will recur again and again until the waters rise to the grave, wash out the corpse, and carry it to the sea. As the floods are quite infrequent, the last interval being about thirty years, it is almost a certainty that a body will have been brought in during the interval; hence the persistence of the belief in the purpose of the floods. During the summer of 1889 a body was brought in and buried, and the young man who superintended the affair was held strictly accountable for the floods of the next winter. Indeed, he was actually menaced, and the frightened aspect of his face for several days was quite startling.

In conversation with the younger men they invariably give the impression, probably for the sake of avoiding ridicule, that they do not believe in any of the old customs and superstitions; yet occasionally signs will crop out that prove that they are surely and safely wedded to almost all of the old superstitions, notwithstanding the example of the whites and the care that has been bestowed upon the teaching of some of the younger people.

It is not surprising to see the old men clinging to superstitions, but it is astonishing to see the more intelligent younger men, some of whom a few years ago may have been prominent in a Christian church or prayer meeting, now taking part in the dance to stop bad weather. Still more remarkable is it to find young men who believe that bad Indians can kill their distant enemies by simply poisoning

the air. A few men formerly made and sold at enormous prices the powder which was supposed to be efficacious in killing people. It is said to be composed of the powdered finger-bones of a dead man, collected in a certain way at a certain phase of the moon.

It is also rumored that they kill each other, or at least attempt to kill each other, with a poison obtained from the rattlesnake. A piece of decayed meat is tied to a string secured to the end of a long stick. A rattlesnake is then found and made to strike the meat and charge it with poison. The meat is then dried and powdered, and the powder, being sprinkled on the bed, is absorbed by the skin, and causes a slow poisoning or possibly death. It is impossible to say whether or not this is anything more than idle gossip.

A SUN-MYTH AND THE TREE OF LANGUAGE OF THE IROQUOIS.—Chief John Buck of the Canadian Iroquois, in relating this version of this story to the writer, spoke as follows:

“The people of the olden time were wont to repeat the ensuing legend: When it was decided that the sun should pass on his daily course for the benefit of the nations of men speaking multifarious tongues who were to dwell on the earth, it was also decided that the sun of the daylight should rule the earth.

“In addition to that, it was resolved that times should change alternately; that there should be winter months, and that there should be summer months; the first should be called *tco-tho-we-hä'* ('again it is somewhat cold'); the second, *tco-tho-we-gó-nä* ('again it is greatly cold'); the third, *āis-ā'* ('short days'); the fourth, *āis-gó-nä* ('days great or longer'); the fifth, *ka-nāq-to-hā* ('somewhat immersing the leaves'); the sixth, *ka-nāq-to-gó-nä* ('thoroughly immersing the leaves'). These are the winter months when it is cold: the seventh, and spring month, is *heq-sat-ā'* ('slight freezing; but its meaning is dubious); the eighth, *hya-i-hä'* ('fruits partly ripe'—fruits begin to ripen); the ninth, *hya-i-gó-nä* ('fruits are greatly ripe'—fruits are ripe in plenty); the tenth, *sīs-ke-hā* (i. e., —?); the eleventh, *sīs-ke-gó-nä* (i. e., —?); the twelfth, *kē-tē'-ā'* (i. e., —?); the thirteenth, *kē-tē'-gó-nä* (i. e., —?). In this manner was it completed for all time.

“In this manner will he, the Sun of the daytime, rule the earth so that he will be pleased when he sees another day dawning.

“There is a tree, composed of the languages of the nations of

men who dwell on the earth, standing where the Sun of the daylight emerges. This decree or resolve is now in force. The Sun of the daylight rises immediately beyond the place where the tree stands.

“When he, the Sun of the daylight, is flying along where the tree stands, he dances, saying, ‘I will attend to the nations living toward the west—the sunsetting; they will be rejoiced, they will laugh; I will be pleased to have cared for them as my duty points out.’ Then he climbs the sky. When in mid-sky he rests himself for a short time, and repeats what he said in the morning, while dancing. In the evening, when the sun is setting, he says, ‘I am glad to have done my duty.’

“On this tree there is sitting a small bird, and it usually is speaking while sitting; it uses the voice and the languages of all the nations of men and of all the kinds of beasts. It is called *tcya-wěñ-tē-ha-wiq-ti* (‘the bringer of the day’), and also, *te-wěñ-tches* (—?), it is said.

“This thing will endure in the future so long as the world stands. This tree is of a white color. It is limbed, and all its branches are diverse and different from one another, and they are the tongues of men living upon the earth. About and among these branches the small bird, *te-wěñ-tches*, lives and passes.”

This beautiful legend appears to be made up from parts of a sun-myth and a dawn-myth. A mythopœic Iroquois of some past and forgotten age, looking out from some forest-bound clearing, and the surrounding trees standing perspectively thirty degrees above the horizon, to watch the birth of a new day, may, perhaps, have been moved to frame this myth by many striking considerations. Among these may have been the following: (1) The fitful coruscations of auroral light playing over the eastern firmament, whitening and illuminating it until all objects between it and the beholder seemingly are draped in this white glow of the coming dawn; (2) the early polyphonous chattering and singing of the feathered tribes and the many voices and ululations of the beast world filling the yet dark lower air with a confused and many-tongued music, while the makers of these sounds are yet invisible to the listener; and (3) the fact that only a single species of bird was known to begin this early morning chorus, not an improbable circumstance for inferring that this bird spoke, all the languages common to all animated creation. At the present day the Tuscaroras call a person noted for early rising *nāk-tci-rēñ-rēñ*, after the name of a bird which is the first to be heard in the morning.

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