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Title: Notes on the Indians in Upper California

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Notes on the Indians in Upper California.

P. Kostromitonov.

The Indians that dwell more or less in the vicinity of Ross, are divided into several tribes. They are distinguished by the following names: the Bodega (Olanentke) (14), the Steppe-Indians (Kainama) (15), the Northern (Chwachamaju) (16), and the Marginal. The latter in turn are subdivided into a large number of tribes, but their number and relationships are not known in the Ross colony.

The Bodega Indians do not understand the Northerners; their language as well as their pronunciation is different. The Marginal and the Steppe-Indians speak many dialects or languages, whose character and relationships are not yet known.

It is difficult to determine the number of these nomadic tribes. Formerly there were large villages in the areas of the bays of the large and the little Bodega, but since the founding of two missions on this side of the Bay of St. Francis these settlements have vanished (17). Many of the Indians were removed to the missions; the others either emigrated to Ross or were exterminated by the pestilences which raged during the years 1815-1822. In the valley plains of the Slavenka, and to the north of Ross there are large settlements, among which are known those of Kajatschimo (18), Makoma (19), and Japlan (20). In the latter there have been found more than 2000 souls; however, it seems that these names refer more to axes than settlements, for the Indians live more dispersed than clustered together. Beyond the mountain chain that bisects the valley plain of the Slavenka, there is a large lake (21), around which lie many Indian settlements. When this lake was investigated it was found that these savages do not differ very much in appearance, or in their customs, but their language is completely different from that of the Coast Indians (22).

The Indians are of medium stature, but one also finds tall individuals among them; they are rather well-proportioned, the color of their skin is brownish, but this color is caused by the sun rather than being innate; eyes and hair are black, the latter is straight. The Bodega Indians have no artificial coloration on their body; the Northerners, on the other hand, tattoo their faces, breasts and hands with various figures, and apply an herbal extract to their bodies, which gives their skin a dark blue color, which is permanent. Both sexes are of robust build; one rarely finds crippled people among them; but as a result of the climate and their mode of life they do not reach old age. The women age very rapidly, and consequently one always sees more old and aged women than young ones. The physiognomy of the Indians in general bears an expression of good nature rather than savagery, and one often encounters charming faces, among males as well as females. They are gentle and peaceful and very clever, especially in the comprehension of material objects. They give the impression of great stupidity only because of their excessive indolence and light-heartedness; but they only need to see once some not too difficult or complex task, and they are able immediately to imitate it.

These true children of nature have no idea of clothing. The men go completely naked, but the women cover the middle part of their bodies in front and in back with the hides of wild goats (23); the men bind their hair in a tuft on top of their heads, the women at the nape of the neck; sometimes they let it fall freely; the men fasten the bunches of hair by means of little pieces of wood rather artfully carved from a

red palm (24). Both sexes decorate themselves with pearls from mussels; they wear little bones made from eagles' feet in their ears, and they always go barefoot. This is the entire dress of those that are yet unacquainted with our customs. The Indians that reside closer to Ross and who on occasion work there, possess jackets, trowsers, blankets, and other objects, which, however, they regard with complete indifference. If they obtain something of this sort, they immediately gamble it away or exchange for a trifle; the differences in our articles of clothing is unknown to them, and it is a comical sight to sometimes see a savage dressed in women's clothes, with a woman's chemise on top, or with all the shirts that he owns, so that he can hardly move. Without attachment to any material thing, and being ignorant of the value of things, they sometimes demand a great deal for work performed by them, sometimes, on the other hand, very little; their only purpose is to acquire something so that they can gamble it away again.

The men live in complete idleness; their greatest gratification is to eat their fill and to do nothing. It is up to the women to prepare the food and to do the other household work; as they are almost continually following their nomadic pursuits, the women, on their travels, carry the children as well as the remaining baggage, while the men go on the way with their bows and arrows and only very rarely carry any burden. Their residences can be classified into summer and winter quarters. During the summer they find shelter in bushes, which are thinned below, and tied together above; in winter, however, they construct barabaras. A pit is dug, some vertical fixed poles are driven into the ground with their pointed ends first, and covered with wood bark, twigs, and grass; an opening is left on top and on the side, the former to let the smoke escape, the latter to serve as entrance into the barabara (25). Grass and a few goat hides serve as clothing and as bedding. A bow, arrows, a large pot, and sometimes fishnets constitute the only household goods. The bathhouses are constructed almost the same as the barabaras. A pit is dug, a few poles are placed around it and the whole is covered first with bark, then with earth; on the side a small air vent is made to allow the smoke to escape, and at the bottom of the wall an opening is made to allow entrance, but it is so small that it can be entered only by crawling.

The season dictates the place where they have to find their sustenance. In spring they live in the vicinity of the rivers and in locations that abound in water, so that they may catch fish and collect roots and herbs, while they spend the summer in woods or plains, where they collect berries and seeds of wild plants; in autumn they lay in store of acorns, wild chestnuts, and sometimes nuts, hunt bison (26) and goats with their arrows. The menu of the Indians encompasses anything they can acquire, large and small land and marine animals, fish, crayfish, roots, herbs, berries and other products of the soil, even insects and worms. Meat and fish are eaten slightly roasted on coals, all the rest mostly raw. Acorns, collected in large quantity, constitute their main staple food. They prepare them as follows: after the acorns have been picked from the tree, they are dried in the sun, then cleaned and pounded in baskets with stones trimmed for the purpose; then a pit is dug in the sand or some in loose earth, the acorns are put into it, and covered with water, which is constantly absorbed by the soil. This flushing is repeated until the acorns have lost all their characteristic bitterness; having been removed from the pit, they are then boiled in pots (27), into which glowing hot stones are thrown. If, however, it is desired to make pancakes or a kind of bread from them, the acorns are pounded a little more coarsely, and after their bitterness has been removed, they are allowed to remain in the pit for a while. A kind of dough is produced in this manner, which is then made into flat cakes or cut into pieces, wrapped in broad leaves, and baked on coals. This bread always looks black. Wild chestnuts are prepared in the same manner, but no bread

is made from them, and they are eaten as a pulp. / The beginning of July is convenient for collecting acorns and seeds of wild plants.

When this is finished, they lose no time before they start collecting the seeds of a plant that grows in great quantity on the plain. Its appearance is as follows: it reaches a height of 1½ to 2 feet, several sprouts start from the roots, the leaves are narrow-oblong and covered with a delicate down, have a peculiar aroma, and stick to the fingers, the flowers are yellow and grow in pointed tufts, and the small black seeds resemble Latuk (?). These seeds are also collected by the Indians in great quantity by shaking them off the plant by means of a spade (28) especially made for the purpose; thereupon they are dried, ground to meal and eaten dry. Their taste has some resemblance to toasted, dried oat meal. Wild rye, wild oats and other grains are collected and, having been suitably prepared, are eaten dry or as a slightly sour mash. The only drink the Indians use is water. They have no knowledge of strong drink. Sometimes, as they watch the distribution of rum to the garrison in the Ross colony, they ask for some. Some of them rather like it, others not at all; but even the former do not give themselves to drink. Rum and spirits in general they call Omy-Liva (29), i. e. bad water. They do, however, enjoy smoking tobacco very much, as do all savages; they smoke it by means of specially drilled wooden tubes having a pipe-bowl carved from the same piece. At the thick end or in the pipe bowl an opening is hollowed out, into which they stuff the tobacco; but since the pipe stem as well as the pipe bowl is made in a straight line, they smoke with their heads tilted back in order not to spill the tobacco. They also have a special herb resembling tobacco, which largely grows near the rivers in sandy locations, but the smoke of this herb has a most offensive smell. The Indians that dwell near the settlement are beginning to abandon use of this herb, since they do not lack the opportunity to obtain tobacco by working; those living further away, however, still remain faithful to their own tobacco.

Under such rude conditions one would not presume that these people would have any idea of a social life or culture. As they live together at times in great numbers, but usually in small compounds, they do not know any kind of submissiveness. He who is endowed with the most relatives is recognized as chieftain or toyon (30); in larger settlements there are several such toyons, but their authority is negligible. They have neither the right to command nor to punish disobedience. Therefore any respect for the senior members of the family is insignificant; sometimes the experience of old age is consulted on the occasion of some undertaking and that is all. According to their view the bulk of the work is the duty of the older men and the women; the younger people are saved for emergencies; in other words, the toyons or elders in the tribe do not enjoy the authority as for example with the Kolosh, Alcuts, and similar peoples.

Their religious ideas and customs are as simple as their habits. When giving birth, the women do so without any outside help; only in cases of difficult parturition, which incidentally are of rare occurrence, they take resort to (the help of) an aged woman. The newborn child is washed, wrapped in a goat skin and placed in a basket; the babies are nursed as long as the mother has milk. Owing to a curious superstition, the father of the newborn child is not allowed out of the hut for four days and remains in complete idleness (31). The child gets its name from some plant, tree or other visible object; when it is grown, the earlier name is changed to some other similar one, but one that fits his character. The attachment to their children is great, but as soon as they have matured, or when they can take care of themselves without their parents, they abandon all practice of obedience, and as a result the fathers become

indifferent toward them. Marriage is carried out without formality whatever. When a young couple is attracted to one another, the young man enters the barabara, so times without even obtaining permission of father and mother and starts to live with the young woman. If there is a fight between husband and wife, they immediately separate; if the dispute is only one of words, it is sometimes possible to bring about reconciliation; but if the stage of violence has been reached, settlement is very rarely achieved. Children resulting from the marriage remain with the mother, but the father need not to lose his attachment to them. Since the men do not love their wives wholeheartedly, they do not harbor feelings of jealousy; even if the woman becomes attached to another man, the husband, although apprised of the situation, does not attempt to put a stop to it; however, it must occur at the same residence or tribe; not allowable with an outsider, otherwise this leads to disputes and wars. Their dogs also degenerate into bestiality, and one encounters men, who offer themselves in exchange of women. It is not permitted to have more than one wife, although in earlier times the toyons used to have two wives, but even then they exposed themselves to ridicule on that account; nowadays this custom has vanished completely. Blood relationship is heeded strictly, and it is not permitted to marry within the first or second degree of relationship; even in case of divorce the relative next in line may not marry the woman, but there are exceptions to that. The deceased are cremated; all the relatives gather around the pyre and show their grief by lamentations and wailing; the nearest relatives cut off their hair and throw it into the fire, and strike their breasts with stones, throw themselves on the ground, and even, out of special attachment to the deceased, pound themselves bloody, or even to death; but such cases are rare. The most valuable of his possessions are cremated with the corpse of the deceased (32). There are annual commemorative ceremonies; it has been noticed that they almost always are held in the month of February. These rituals consist in the following: ten or more men are selected for presentation, according to the size of the settlement they first must undergo purification by fasting, and for several days they really eat very little, and above all no meat. After such preparation the chosen persons dress up on the eve of the designated day, in a barabara especially reserved for them, and smear themselves with soot and various colors, ornament themselves with feathers, grasses, and then they sing and dance until darkness settles on them. Then they go into the woods and run around, with firebrands in their hands, singing all the while; then they return to the barabara and spend the night singing, dancing, and with contortions. The following day is spent similarly into the morning; on the third day, however, they betake themselves to the relatives of the deceased, who await them at their barabaras and, after a suitable welcome, commence lamentations all together; the old women scratch their faces and strike their chests with stones. The relatives of the deceased positively believe that they are seeing their deceased friends in the actors. During this presentation the entire settlement exercises great abstinence in matters of nourishment, and meat is not eaten, sometimes for a long time (33).

They only grudgingly answered questions we asked them concerning these rituals and for this reason it was impossible to learn further details.

Their weapons consist in bow and arrow and a spear; all this is made mainly of young fir. The points of arrows and spears consist of sharp, artfully shaped stones; and their bow strings come from sinews of wild goats; in time of war they use, in addition, a kind of sling, by means of which they throw stones for long distances. Peacefully disposed by nature, the Indians wage war against each other only rarely and at this time one does not hear of any major raids near Ross. On the plains of the river Slavenka some years ago there did arise a dispute between the Makomow and

the Kajatchin Indians. The cause for this was that the Makomow Indians had invited a toyon to be their guest, and had suffocated him in the bathhouse; the conflict lasted almost a whole year, and about 200 men were killed on both sides at different times, until finally they tired of warfare, reached an amicable settlement, and presented each other with various gifts. An enemy made prisoner is immediately slain and hung from a tree; but they rarely take many prisoners, usually just one or two men; for they always set out in great numbers and, although daring men may approach the hostile settlement, they are satisfied with shooting off a few arrows, whereupon they immediately make off. Sentries are posted by both parties on nearby hills or mountains, who signal their tribesmen by shouting as soon as they locate someone not belonging to their settlement. Women, children, and old people are concealed in some secure location during the war. He who surpasses all others in bravery is held in high honor equal to a toyon.

Here is a war song of the Bodega (Coast Miwok) Indians, with translation.

At the beginning, or as they make ready for war, they sing:

<u>Temoi hoibu</u>	Leaders, let us
<u>Onigi tschinami</u>	Go out to war!
<u>Temai ilawak</u>	Let us go and capture
<u>Temai o tomai</u>	A pretty girl!

Upon approaching the enemy settlement:

<u>Indi mi schujugu</u>	When do we cross the mountain?
<u>Pari o londo</u>	Who do we see first?

Upon beginning to shoot:

<u>Buteki landa</u>	Sharp are our missiles
<u>Junawschi landa</u>	Keep putting forth yours.

Then the toyon sings to give his warriors courage:

<u>Otilek - otilek ileni</u>	Forward, forward,
<u>Lile oje lippe</u>	Now to the battle,
<u>Lile oje ili lippi</u>	Stouthearted, follow me!
<u>Nawu elendu</u>	Fear nothing, enemy arrows.
<u>Indi kotscht ma iwid elendu.</u>	Do you no harm.

Each of these couplets is repeated several times on the occasions indicated.

The recovery of a sick person usually gives rise to festivities. The recovered person notifies all those living in the vicinity, inviting them as his guests, and the rich people and the toyon even invite Indians living at a greater distance, as long as they are not engaged in dispute with them. Upon arrival of the guests the host presents them with everything he possesses. Supplies acquired with difficulty, sufficient to nourish the family of the host for several months, are consumed within a few hours. When they are all satisfied, they start giving each other good advice, to live in peace and harmony and not to quarrel with each other, and this is followed by song and dance; some sing, some dance and play tricks; sometimes a woman stands up in the

center and sings, while the men take one another by the hands, turn about, or h around her; some of the men have eagle's bones in their mouths and whistle a ga tune. When a song is over, they all call out 'hoi' and then continue their song. entire song usually consists of some few words as, for instance, "you love me, : so I love you too"; this is repeated again and again during the dance, the tune pleasant, but almost always melancholy.

Both sexes are extraordinarily devoted to gambling, and that may be the rea that their dances are not particularly varied, or much practiced. Once their hun stilled, the remaining time is devoted to the game. The most highly regarded a popular is a guessing game. The individuals that wish to play with each other di into two groups, sitting opposite each other. Between them they spread a goat hi on which each of the parties has deposited some little sticks. One among the par takes some grass or something similar into his hand. While holding both hands i his back, he places the object from one hand into the other, while executing all k of gestures. His opponent now must note in which hand the grass is located. Wi thinks he knows where it is, he taps the hand in which he believes it to be. If hi is correct, he receives a few sticks, if not, he has to forfeit some of his. The pair then continues the game in a similar manner. Once all sticks have passed t side, that party has won the game, and the objects that were lying about are dist among the community. The onlookers of whom there usually are many, pass the by singing all the while, and spur the players on with all kinds of teasing and joki. It can be considered a sign of their gentleness that disputes never arise among th players. The Indians are so given to the game that those among them who work i Ross, sometimes, in spite of being tired after the day's work, enjoy the games u four o'clock in the morning, and then go back to work without having had suffici sleep.

The Indians derive their origin from the wolves. According to an old myth a whose tribe is now extinct, stuck two staffs into the ground and decreed that one become a man, the other a woman. Then he made a bow, shot a blunt arrow stru to the middle of one rod and so produced a man. The man shot at the other staff brought forth the woman. They have such absurd ideas about the origin of manka in general.

As for the supreme being, the Indians have but a hazy conception of Him, the believe that after having created heaven, earth and all remaining visible things, i involved in nothing more, and having turned over the power to other spirits, is in of doing either good or evil. They probably have borrowed these ideas, with so: distortions, from the baptised Indians in California. The Good and Evil Spirit dif only by the fact that one does only good, the other only evil; but since the evil spir or the Devil, always works evil, he is to be more feared and honored. There are religious customs at all.

The wizards or shamans^{5/} of these Indians do not excel in their adroitness an cleverness, as in the case of other savages. When they are about to practice the: magic, they go deep into the forest and, after their return do their soothsaying to those that had come to obtain their advice. In order to appease the evil spirit if it

^{5/} Thus there exists a kind of priest or wizard after all--consequently we may lo for a cult in some form or other.

is desired to prevent a misfortune, the shaman takes into the forest with him some glass beads or some other thing, which he maintains he gave the demon. After some lapse of time he brings those things back, passes them off as his own, and loses them by gambling. The main art of the shamans consists in healing the sick.

To judge from the mode of life of these savages one should think that they would be less subject to illness than others, but there exist among them several diseases, primarily high fever, colic, and syphilitic maladies. The frequent and sudden changes of temperature of the air from hot to cold and vice versa are the causes for the first two infirmities; the last comes from the same cause as everywhere else. In the process of curing the shamans use herbs and roots, but mostly they suck the blood from the diseased spot with their mouth; in doing so, they put stones or little snakes in their mouth, and then declare that they had sucked them out of the wound. Frequent use of the baths also serves to cure the venereal disease.

Simplicity and good nature are the main traits in their character. Thievery and homicide are practically nonexistent with them, and if one does not provoke or offend them, one can be quite safe as far as they are concerned. But this comes more from their great faintheartedness. Thus, for example, a cannon shot terrifies them every time, which even manifests in causing trembling of the limbs. Suicide is completely unknown among them, and if one asks them about it they cannot even understand how such a thing would be possible (34).

One could tell more about these savages; but since they are completely taken with the delusion that they must necessarily die if they tell about their customs to a stranger, they answer every question posed to them by saying: "I do not know." I once asked them if they divided the year into twelve months. The answer was: "I do not know!" "Who, then would know?" "Oh, there are wise people who know everything." "Where do they live?" "Far on the plains!" They usually give such evasive answers to similar questions.

Their inattention and indifference to everything goes to extremes. They look at our watches, burning-glasses, and mirrors, or listen to our music without attention and do not ask to know how and why all this is produced. Only such objects as might frighten them make some impression, but that probably more because of their timidity than thirst for knowledge.

The Indians of the missions of California were equally simple in their habits and customs. Now they have acquired some crude arts and crafts, but at the same time all the vices of their teachers. Thievery, drunkenness and murder are now quite common among them. They observe the customs of the Catholic religion more from fear of punishment than from loyalty to the faith. The change from the most abject subservience under the former regime to complete freedom under the present one will undermine their morality even more.