

*gather around*

(This is the season when California Indians ~~gather around~~ simmering pots of fresh acorn mush and tell stories reaching far ~~back~~ into the past, stories so old that they have become legends.

(The mush is nature's heritage, the legends, ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> heritage of the race. Little Indians with coarse black hair, ~~who are bare~~ ~~feet with~~ ~~and~~ ~~summer~~ ~~the~~ grow fat on the almost tasteless acorn gruel ~~and~~ ~~sages~~ and sages of the tribes, now broken and scattered, find in it strength to nourish their rapidly failing bodies.

(Only a few old ~~er~~ people remember the stories handed down from father to son, from mother to daughter. The art of legend telling-- and it is an art ~~as~~ practiced by the Indian <sup>involves</sup> not only a keen wit and accurate recitation but many ~~and~~ <sup>vivid</sup> interpretative motions of the hands, head and body and delicate tonal inflections. It is difficult to translate into print the stories rapidly withering away in the drought of the white man's civilization.

(Frank F. Lette, Shafter school teacher who has studied the Indian for years, <sup>has</sup> only touched the surface, but has accomplished more to perpetuate the customs, language and stories of the San Joaquin Valley Indian, the Yokuts, than any other person. Lette's studies have resulted in the gathering of material for an unpublished dictionary of the Yokuts language--a language soon to be lost. Only one or two known members of several of the sub-tribes are living at present and in no case does the number of any tribe exceed ~~over~~ 100. In many instances the last member of the tribe died years ago.

*who sisted*

(The fact that the Yokuts, ~~subsisted~~ <sup>who sisted</sup> principally upon acorn mush ~~and~~ ~~had~~ had a comparatively fine cultural background, <sup>is</sup> shown by his legends is common to all California Indians. The word

(2)

Yokuts means ~~People~~.

The Yokuts inhabited the Great Central Valley of California, 150 miles north and south and 100 miles from east to west, pitched his camp in the hills fringing the plain and migrated from ~~camp-site~~ <sup>hills</sup> to ~~camp-site~~ <sup>the lowlands</sup> ~~as the seasons progressed~~ <sup>as the seasons progressed</sup> in search of animals, fish, weed seeds or roots and acorns. The ~~valley~~ <sup>valley</sup> oaks, sprinkled over the valley ~~and~~, provided him with his biggest share of food. The Yokuts were composed of almost 60 sub-tribes, each with a separate dialect but a Yokuts from the north could converse with ~~a Yokuts~~ <sup>one</sup> from the south. The thousands of pot-hole studded granite rocks along rivers and in the foothills were the permanent grinding mills where Indian women patiently ground out the daily ration of acorn meal. The ~~rock~~ <sup>smaller</sup> mortars found all over California ~~when the pioneers came~~ <sup>carried on their seasonal migrations</sup> were the portable mills. Sometimes they were made of granite or soapstone, sometimes of oak wood.

In the old, old days <sup>Yokuts</sup> ~~the~~ legends tell us, after creation of the world, there were only birds and animals, <sup>imbued with human</sup> ~~but these~~ <sup>attributes, and immune from death,</sup> ~~could talk, shoot bows and arrows and could not be killed.~~ They lived together and in later years gave up their camps and hunting grounds to the Indians whom their leader created from a mud image, hardened by fire and cooled by rain. The first man was Wi'-ness, and his woman-mate was made after him.

Wah-Nom'-Kot, aged <sup>Yokuts?</sup> Wuk-Chum-Nee, Indian living in the valley tells the Wuk-Chum-Nee story of creation. Wah-Nom'-Kot is known to her white neighbors as Ade I-Cho, whose eyes, <sup>worn out by</sup> ~~tortured by~~ <sup>the exacting work of basket making</sup> ~~the strain of piercing thousands of root fibers with a deer-bone~~ ~~saw while making baskets,~~ are even now paying their toll and <sup>is going blind</sup> Wah-Nom'-Kot ~~appears to be blind~~ <sup>of piercing etc</sup>. You can't tell her that the tedious work <sup>is</sup> the cause of her ailment, however. She says it is because a basket buyer took her baskets home and



nailed them to the wall.

In the beginning, there was only water and a great tree, an oak tree, where lived Tro'-Khud, the <sup>first</sup> eagle. Tro'-Khud made the animals, birds and reptiles that swam, ~~first~~. He sent duck down into the murky water to get mud to make the earth but Duck failed and almost drowned, and turtle, after a long struggle, returned to the surface almost dead but clutching some mud <sup>in</sup> ~~beneath~~ his <sup>claws?</sup> ~~forepaws~~. Tro'-Khud took the mud and ground it in a ceremonial mortar with seeds of the shepherd's purse plant. The mixture swelled until it overflowed the mortar. Then throwing it to the south, west, north and east, he created the earth, completing his work on the evening of the seventh day. The water retreated, leaving only the mountains, lakes and rivers. He told the bird and animal people that some of them would have to stay awake while others slept or the water would return, but all the people went to sleep at one time and the water came back. Then eagle made the earth again and told Ki-Yo the coyote, to keep watch. That is why Ki-Yo howls early in the morning. He ~~didn't~~ want everyone to go to sleep at one time.

Someday when everyone goes to sleep, the water will return, ~~the~~ say the

~~Valley beliefs.~~

sages of the tribes.

(Ki'-Yo and Oo'-oi, Roadrunner, stole the first fire for the bird and animal people from Wi'-Hess, the first man, ~~whom~~

~~who had later created.~~ Ki'-Yo crept up into the mountains **FIRST MAN'S**

grabbed a firebrand and started to run to the valley. ~~To~~ **First** Man

ran after him and Ki'-Yo ran faster, fanning the coals to flames and the flames swept back and scorched his tail which is blackened to this day. First **Man** almost caught Ki'-Yo and then

Road Runner seized the fire and started on down the mountains. **First** Man called up a big rain and Road Runner <sup>TALKING</sup> ~~told~~ some of the fire under the feathers on the side of his head to keep the rain

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creation  
of world  
myths

destruction  
myths  
prophesy

First  
myth  
CAMP,

dropped exhausted when he reached the valley ~~but he saved~~ <sup>122</sup> ~~the~~ a few sparks which gave the bird and animal people their first fire. Now Road Runner has a red spot on each side of his head where the embers burned him.

<sup>a</sup> When an Indian dies he goes to an Indian heaven if he has been good. There is such a place somewhere far to the north so another legend says and the last big Indian fandango held in the valley and attended by nearly <sup>10,000</sup> ~~10,000~~ Indians was when the white man first began <sup>a</sup> to settle California. It was not a war gathering as the pioneers feared but a council called to hear the story of an Indian who ~~had~~ <sup>had</sup> visited the land of the dead. His story verified, for the Indians at least, the existence of a heaven, and a hell for that matter too, and he was not only deluged with gifts but became a hero. It took him a full day and a night to set out and tell of his adventures and an scorn mush feast followed while the few valley settlers fearfully awaited an expected Indian outbreak which of course failed to materialize. The gathering was the last ~~gathering~~ for the valley tribes ~~for~~ <sup>for</sup> ~~years~~ since then they have ~~been~~ dwindled ~~down~~ in numbers.

Wee-Hay-Sit, Lion or The Brave, lost his sweetheart by death, ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> ~~he~~ He feigned death and lay in a stupor for six days and six nights. On the seventh day he opened his eyes just as the legend says dead Indians do and walked north. He traveled through the mountains until he came to a deep gorge, spanned by a narrow rock bridge, ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> ~~slippery~~ with spray from a nearby waterfall. Three times he started across the bridge and three times he turned back, knowing that if he slipped he would fall for all eternity into the bottomless chasm, the chasm where <sup>err</sup> Indians who ~~ere~~ <sup>err</sup> in life plunge after death. But finally he mustered <sup>ie</sup> up his courage and crossed the bridge. He found a changed world of green meadows, running streams full of fish, hillsides



thick with almost tame deer and elk, antelope herds in the valleys and tule-reed houses well stocked with food and hides. He entered the tule hut of his sweetheart to find it full of ~~valuable~~ baskets.

But his sweetheart knew he was not dead and hid him in a large basket so he would not be ~~found~~ found and thrown into the

bottomless chasm. He <sup>found</sup> ~~discovered~~ that he couldn't touch his sweetheart, that he couldn't eat the acorn mush or venison stew she brought him, that his arrows failed to bring down one of the fat deer grazing on the hillsides, and, almost faint with hunger, he recrossed the bridge. He slept for six days and seven nights, awakening to return to his home where ~~he~~ told his story and where it was believed, because did it not prove the legend of life after death the Indians themselves knew so well? Maybe Wee-Hay-Sit, a small kind of medicine man, had taken one sip too <sup>many</sup> ~~much~~ of the Jimson weed root tea which medicine men partook of at the Jimson weed ceremonial dance and which gave them the power to see diseases on common Indians and brush them off with an eagle feather. ~~Every~~

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<sup>y</sup>ears ago, so goes a legend of the Wuk-Chum-Nee as told by Weh-Nom'-Kot, the Yokuts basketry, among the finest in the world, was ~~made~~ <sup>by woven</sup> without designs. It was plain with bunch grass for the center core, strengthened by the split root of swamp grass. Now baskets have designs carried out in red from the red bud bark, peeled in February, and black from fern root, soaked in sulphur ~~in~~ springs. There are no dyes used in Yokuts basketry. Some of the

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**LITTLE** Back in the day of the bird and animal people, so the Indian basket design legend goes, Grey Lizard stole the ~~young~~ Tro'-Khud's sister ~~away~~ ~~when Eagle, the~~ when Eagle, the baby and Lim-Ik, the Prairie Falcon went into the hills. Mountain Lion found Grey Lizard ~~sitting~~ on a large rock with the child, but when he tried to rescue the baby, ~~lizard~~ seized the child, ran into a ~~hole~~ crack in the rock and then closed ~~the crack~~ <sup>it</sup>. Lion jumped against the rock but couldn't find a hole large enough to enter. His claw marks can still ~~be~~ be seen on the hard surface.

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*found* None of the Indians knows the meaning of any of the pictographs which are on hundreds of rocks throughout the hills all over California and the Southwest. None of them ~~are~~ <sup>is</sup> explained in the legends that have come to light so far, other than the basket design story. This indicates that some race undoubtedly preceded the Yokuts in Central California. This ~~is further~~ *mysterious race may also have ground*

borne out by the gigantic pot-holes, three to six feet deep, which are found at only a certain elevation in the High Sierra, in proximity to the Sequoia Gigantes and at less than 20 locations. ~~For~~ For what purpose did men so long ago make the huge pot-holes which required years of tedious labor? None of the old Indians knows. Their legends say the holes were there when they came, left by the bird and animal people. It is certain that no Yokuts within the past 100 years has been able to find a use for them. ~~A study of~~ *scientific* residue found at the bottom of several resulted in the ~~scientific~~ *surprising* disclosure, *hitherto unpublicized,* without publicity ~~at that time~~, that the material was volcanic ash. There appears to be a connection between the rock paintings and the giant pot-holes, both older than the ~~Yokut~~ legends ~~of the Yokuts~~. As far as the Yokuts ~~are~~ <sup>possibly</sup> concerned they were just part of the earth ~~at that time~~. It is <sup>possibly</sup> another case of a race, driven to other parts, by some act of mother earth. *perhaps a volcanic eruption long before recorded history.*

Whenever Moi-Yuk, the whirlwind, scurries through the giant valley oaks late in the summer bringing down half-ripened acorns waiting late fall frosts, old Indians turn their heads and shield their

eyes from the dust. They don't want to die as did several hundred Indians living along the Kaweah river years ago.

*so the story goes*

(A young Indian mother, ~~settled near the~~  
placed a newly born baby in a basket on top of a rock pile near  
~~the~~ Indian settlement ~~along the river~~. Sympathetic members of  
the tribe gave the child corn mush in two small baskets. Gradually

Moi-Yuk grew and whenever anyone refused to give him food, he blew,  
the dust whirled around the offender like a whirlwind and he  
sickened and died. The Indians grew frightened and all refused to  
go near the rocks and leave food, ~~and~~ all died. Then Moi-Yuk  
disappeared. Years later Indians noticed that whenever a whirlwind  
blew around the rock, it left small pot-like holes in the face  
of the rock. ~~Now~~ You can see them there now and when a whirlwind  
shakes an oak tree, it is a sign that ~~Moi-Yuk~~ Moi-Yuk is still angry  
because the Indians refused



*gather around*

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② The mush is nature's heritage, the legends, ~~the~~ the heritage of the race. Little Indians with coarse black hair, ~~who are bare~~ ~~foot with no moccasins~~ grow fat on the almost tasteless acorn gruel ~~and bread~~ and sages of the tribes, now broken and scattered, find in it strength to nourish their rapidly failing bodies.

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In the old, old days <sup>Yokuts</sup> legends tell us, after creation of the world, there were only birds and animals, <sup>imbued with human</sup> ~~but these~~ <sup>attributes, and immune from death,</sup> ~~could talk, shoot bows and arrows and could not be killed.~~ They lived together and in later years gave up their camps and hunting grounds to the Indians whom their leader created from a mud image, hardened by fire and cooled by rain. The first man was Wi'-ness, and his woman-mate was made after him. <sup>Yokuts?</sup>

Wah-Nom'-Kot, aged Wuk-Chum-Nee Indian living in the valley tells the Wuk-Chum-Nee story of creation. Wah-Nom'-Kot is known to her white neighbors as Ada I-Cho, whose eyes, <sup>worn out by</sup> ~~tortured by~~ <sup>the exacting work of basket making</sup> the strain of piercing thousands of root fibers with a deer-boneawl while making baskets, are even now paying their toll and <sup>is going blind</sup> Wah-Nom'-Kot ~~appears to be blind~~ <sup>of piercing etc</sup>. You can't tell her that the tedious work <sup>is</sup> the cause of her ailment, however. She says it is because a basket buyer took her baskets home and



nailed them to the well.

*creation + strength flood*

In the beginning, there was only water and a great tree, an oak tree, where lived Tro'-Khud, the eagle. Tro'-Khud <sup>first</sup> made the animals, birds and reptiles that swam ~~first~~. He sent duck down into the murky water to get mud to make the earth but Duck failed and almost drowned, and turtle, after a long struggle, returned to the surface almost dead but clutching some mud <sup>in</sup> ~~beneath~~ his <sup>claws?</sup> ~~forepaws~~. Tro'-Khud took the mud and ground it in a ceremonial mortar with seeds of the shepherd's purse plant. The mixture swelled until it overflowed the mortar. Then throwing it to the south, west, north and east, he created the earth, completing his work on the evening of the seventh day. The water retreated, leaving only the mountains, lakes and rivers. He told the bird and animal people that some of them would have to stay awake while others slept or the water would return, but all the people went to sleep at one time and the water came back. Then eagle made the earth again and told Ki'-Yo the coyote, to keep watch. That is why Ki'-Yo howls early in the morning. He doesn't want everyone to go to sleep at one time.

*destruction prophecy*

Someday when everyone goes to sleep, the water will return, ~~the~~ *say the* ~~valley below~~ *sages of the tribes*.

*fire myth CAMP,*

Ki'-Yo and Oo'-oi, Roadrunner, stole the first fire for the bird and animal people from Wi'-Ness, the first man, ~~who~~ ~~was~~ ~~later~~ ~~created~~. Ki'-Yo crept up into the mountains, ~~and~~ **FIRST MAN?** grabbed a firebrand and started to run to the valley. ~~Then~~ **First** Man ran after him and Ki'-Yo ran faster, fanning the coals to flames and the flames swept back and scorched his tail which is blackened to this day. First **Man** almost caught Ki'-Yo and then Road Runner seized the fire and started on down the mountains. **First** **TALKING** Man called up a big rain and Road Runner ~~tried~~ some of the fire under the feathers on the side of his head to keep the rain from putting <sup>IT</sup> ~~out~~ ~~the~~ ~~fire~~, ran on down the mountains and

dropped exhausted when he reached the valley ~~but~~ <sup>2</sup> he saved ~~the~~ a few sparks which gave the bird and animal people their first fire. Now Road Runner has a red spot on each side of his head where the embers burned him.

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thick with almost tame deer and elk, antelope herds in the valleys and tule-reed houses well stocked with food and hides. He entered the tule hut of his sweetheart to find it full of ~~empty~~ baskets.

But his sweetheart knew he was not dead and hid him in a large basket so he would not be ~~found~~ found and thrown into the

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*LITTLE* Back in the day of the bird and animal people, so the Indian basket design legend goes, Grey Lizard stole ~~the~~ Tro'-Khud's sister ~~by~~ ~~when Eagle, the~~ when Eagle, the baby and Lim-Ik, the Prairie Falcon went into the hills. Mountain Lion found Grey Lizard ~~sitting~~ on a large rock with the child, but when he tried to rescue the baby, ~~lizard~~ seized the child, ran into a ~~large~~ crack in the rock and then closed ~~the~~ <sup>27</sup> ~~crack~~. Lion jumped against the rock but couldn't find a hole large enough to enter. His claw marks can still *be* seen on the hard surface.

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eyes from the dust. They don't want to die as did several hundred Indians living along the Kewash river years ago.

*so the story goes*

A young Indian mother, ~~and her husband~~, placed a newly born baby in a basket on top of a rock pile near ~~the~~ Indian settlement ~~along the river~~. Sympathetic members of the tribe gave the child corn mush in two small baskets. Gradually **Moi-Yuk** grew and whenever anyone refused to give him food, he blew, the dust whirled around the offender like a whirlwind and he sickened and died. The Indians grew frightened and all refused to go near the rocks and leave food, ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> all died. Then **Moi-Yuk** disappeared. Years later Indians noticed that whenever a whirlwind blew around the rock, it left small pot-like holes in the face of the rock. ~~and~~ You can see them there now and when a whirlwind shakes an oak tree, it is a sign that ~~Moi-Yuk~~ **Moi-Yuk** is still angry because the Indians refused