

Kamiakin, "Related" Chiefs, Tribes, Boundaries
and word "Yakima."

Chieftainship among tribes and bands of Shahaptian linguistic stock had only an indicated, not a definite pattern and an uncertain tradition. In some cases it was hereditary, in others it was assumed by force or shrewdness. And the fact that none of the historians of the Indian tribes could give clear accounts of chiefs before 1800 would perhaps be a clue to the actual occupancy of much of the land claimed by the people.

The descendants of families of known chiefs can tell of their fathers, something of their grandfathers but in practically all instances nothing of their great-grandfathers. Some of them (the Saluskins) tell of the descendancy of their forebears from the stars or similar legend.

This is to be expected because of the plurality of wife, one generation back and this explains why hundreds claim relationship--and no doubt have--with young Chief Joseph of the Nez Perces (although they themselves assert they are 4/4 Yakimas, Colvilles or Umatillas).

In the legends of the people, [the ancient animal people] the man with the strongest power was chief. He was Mountain Lion. Eagle, also of strong power was also chief and since he was a hunter and procured food the matter of providing food was passed down as a responsibility of chieftainship. That responsibility has caused more than one lineal descendant in recent years to reject the chieftainship when he was elected by tribal council members. He would have been obligated to assist anyone who called upon him.

Besides chief there were medicine men (and women) and religious

leaders. Sometimes a chief was also a medicine man, but a religious leader was never a chief. He, however, frequently had great power as a medicine man, and greater power sometimes than a medicine man.

Only in times of crisis did the people band together to face a common foe, mortal or epidemic, and at such times some men rose to leadership and the strongest leader could become war chief if the occasion demanded.

The son of a chief, if the son were well-liked, could become chief upon his father's death; although a higher respected, aspiring man, who wanted to become chief, could do so. At times there were more than one chief in the villages, and usually there were many head men or group spokesmen.

There is little doubt but that sub-bands were created because of disgruntled people, who refused to recognize a hereditary or elected chief and were led off to establish their own pattern of life by the man they wished to be their chief.

Such a division occurred at Wallula, downstream on the Columbia River from Pasco or Kosith, when Smowhala the Wanapum of Priest Rapids led his religious followers away from the polyglot village that Homli, the Walla Walla chief, sought to dominate. Yet Smowhala was not looked upon as a chief.

Moses of the Isle de Pierre, synonyms: Columbia, Linkinse or Sinkiuse, people of another linguistic stock, Salishan, was another rival of Smowhala for leadership along the Columbia River. Moses schemed and worked to become a chief. That his father was a chief did not gain him his eventual recognition, because only a fraction of the Indians whom Moses told the government were "his people," recognized him as chief. [Called Columbias by the people themselves, called Qual wach chin by the people in their own language and called Kawachkin by neighboring tribes].

In interviews seventy-five years ago Moses said that his father was a great chief in Central and Eastern Washington, called "Half Sun" and held control over all the people.

Then Kamiakin and his brothers Show a wai, Ko ti a ken or Ice and his brother-in-law, Owhi and Owhi's brother, Teias, came upon the scene. Teias and Owhi dominated the upper Yakima Valley, and Kamiakin, Ice and Skloom the Lower Valley. When the crisis came--the Yakima War--Kamiakin became war chief, virtually usurping that position from Owhi.

The man generally regarded as chief over the true Yakima people, those who held the Yakima Valley proper before the creation of the reservation in 1855, was said to have been We-wo-chit, who must have died shortly after the era of exploration along the Columbia River.

Kamiakin and Owhi grew rich and powerful by raising horses and cattle and both aspired to be war chief when they felt they could convince the Indians to turn against the white people.

There are stories told by the Indian historians that relate how Kamiakin tricked Owhi, until Kamiakin became recognized as chief. Now, from actual informants, there is little opportunity to gain a true picture because there are too many different tales. Besides those chiefs, there were so many other minor ones that it is practically impossible to find any reservation Indian who is not related, by blood or marriage, to one or more chiefs and the stories vary according to family preference. Some are ashamed that their ancestors caused blood to flow upon the land and will not acknowledge that they are related to any of the responsables. Others, wishing to keep their family record clean, tell stories blaming Kamiakin, Owhi and

Kamiakin's home was on Ahtanum Creek, near the old Ahtanum Catholic Mission, although he spent some of his time in Medicine Valley, north of there.

Skloom (sometimes Skoo or Sku) held the Toppenish and Satus Creeks and their watersheds, eastward to the Yakima River and northward to Ahtanum Ridge. He also held control of a part of Klickitat County, extending down near present Goldendale. He was the youngest brother, was regarded as a black sheep and had wives "all over."

Ko ti a ken held the area below Union Gap, a few miles below the present city of Yakima; up the Yakima River into the Kittitas at Ellensburg and up the Naches River from its confluence with the Yakima.

The brother-in-law, Owhi lived in the Wenas, just north of Solah ridge.

The four sisters who were wives of Kamiakin were Yakimas. Kamiakin bought Kem ee yowah, who was his second wife, and later took her sisters as he could support them. The youngest didn't want to marry him but finally gave in.

Kamiakin's oldest wife was Tei-as' daughter. Her name was Sunk hay e. Kamiakin had one daughter by her and she had no children.

Kamiakin's second wife was Sophie's grandmother, Kem ee yowah (Princess) who was the oldest of the four sisters.

His sons by his second wife were Junior Kamiakin, Tesh Palouse (a family name) and a baby that died. Sophie said that Junior Kamiakin, the first son, signed the treaty of Walla Walla. This she said was a secret, never told before. It was told to Sophie by her grandmother, "Junior's" mother at Nespelem, who died when Sophie was about twelve.

Kamiakin's sons by his third wife were Scolomkus or Slolumkee [Snake River] and one other. He also had a daughter by her.

There were four children by his fourth wife, two sons, including Cleveland Kamiakin and two daughters. Cleveland is the only one of any of the children of Kamiakin living now (September, 1953).

The sons by Kamiakin's fifth wife were Tomio ~~and Kamiakin~~ and Tomomolow, who died when he was six years old.

Kamiakin died at Rock Lake, [Tahk-lite] , 1877.

Comment: That would mean that Cleveland, according to Agency records, was only seven years old .

At Rock Lake Kamiakin became sick after July and was sick until April. The family kept him in a log cabin. They didn't want the children to come and see him. One day he said, "I always have dreamed and see things and could read people's minds. Now I know there is a haven. I see it. I am scared and afraid to die. I can see. I can dream." He asked them to get a priest and they sent to DeSmet, Idaho, and a priest came and baptized him. He died the next day. Kamiakin told them all to believe in God and be Catholics. (The informant, Mrs. WakWak, was a catholic). The priest she said, gave him the name of "Matthew."

Kamiakin told his family never to marry whites or other races but to stay Indians.

Two or three years after Kamiakin was buried secretly at Rock Lake, no on the ground but on a rocky ledge, the family went to lay new clothes in his grave. They found his head had been cut off at the breast bone and stolen. So they put Kamiakin and his wives in the same grave. They got^a a medicine man from the Yakima Reservation to do that, and laid the clothes there.

Comment: this would not have been the customary disposal - inhumation - for Shahaptians .

[Comment: Junior Kamiakin's age might even be six at time of his father's death, since the month of his death has been placed. And, there is evidence that the children were kept isolated from him].

Cleveland Kamiakin's residence is Nespelem. He was born at Rock Lake. His Indian name is Peo peo kah ow not [Bird Talking All Night]. He had two sons and a daughter, Alfred Cleveland, who served in the Army. This man was in an automobile accident on the Colville Reservation or near there in early August, 1953, and his body was found several weeks later in a lake.

[Comment: A superstitious old father could attach this as a penalty for misdeeds of his own].

Another son is named Ned Cleveland.

His daughter is Annie (Mrs. Frank George.) She is an employ of the Colville Agency office (telephone) and the husband of Frank George, executive secretary of the Congress of American Indians.

Junior Kamiakin was named Wee at kwal Tsick ken [Talking Hunter or When Hunters Go Through the Woods Talking]. Tsick ken is Nez Perce for "talk." He was born in the Yakima Valley, as was Sophie's mother, and lived in the Ahtanum as did she. [Comment: Names should follow true blood lines].

Tesh Palouse was Sophie's full uncle. Her mother was his sister.

Kamiakin gave "the power" to his youngest wife. She wore a red felt dress. She could cure people. She made beads from huckleberries and turned bitter root [piahe] into shells. She was killed for being a medicine woman. His youngest wife went into battle with him, carrying

extra ammunition.

[Comment: This is a well-known custom among the Nez Perce, they were called "warrior women." The last of the warrior women died on the Umatilla reservation about eight years ago].

Slolumkee or Scolomkus must have died about four years ago. He was an old man then, rather unbalanced. He and his wife, (they were called Mr. and Mrs. Snake River by the whites) came over every year to Selah to pick hops, as long as the white people there can remember. I have a picture of his wife, who told me she was a "Snake River woman." She tried to talk her husband into a picture but he was almost violent in denial.

Harry Owhi, a grandson of Owhi, reportedly, was Sophie's first cousin. His mother, Mrs. Lucy Hayes, died about four years ago.

Teias, father of Kamiakin's oldest wife, lived in the Kittitas valley. Teias was chief there.

Cecelia's grandfather was Mosheil or Mecheil and she descended from Kamiakin's full brother.

There is a documentary record left of a contact with Kamiakin at Rock Lake in 1870. It was written by W. P. Winans and is in the Winans Account in the Eastern Washington College of Education Library at Cheney. Excerpts are quoted:

"During the time I was Indian agent I was instructed by Colonel Samuel Ross, superintendent, in November, 1870, to find Kamiakin, the ex-chief of the Yakimas and endeavor to have him accept 20 bales or 600 blankets, his due under the Treaty...

"...I went with my interpreter to Rock Lake where Kamiakin and his immediate family then lived.

"I was invited into his lodge and there stated the wishes of the

United States government to make good its promise and live up to the treaty made by General Stevens and as evidence of it I had at his door a four horse load of blankets that I wished to deliver to him.

"He listened silently to all I had to say and when he saw I had completed my statement he arose, standing erect with his left arm extended, pointing with his right hand to the ragged sleeve of his gray woolen shirt, said:

'See, I am a poor man, but too rich to receive anything from the United States.' No persuasion on my part to influence him to change his mind had any effect.

"Kamiakin felt and believed that he had been deceived and wronged by the United States, deserted by his own people and wished no favors of either. About two years after this the settlers crowded around his camp and although he had resided at Rock Lake for years the filings on the land by the white men finally deprived him even of a camping place.

[Comment: one of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs reports about that time, I believe, made a reference to ordering the whites from the land and saving it for Kamiakin].

"The blankets that were intended for him were hauled to Colville and during the following winter were distributed to destitute Indians by order of the superintendent of Indian Affairs."

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Kam ai ya kan is the only one of the three brothers who has adopted even the form of Catholicism and he refuses to be baptized, because he would be compelled to put away his surplus wives of whom he has several. Skloo [Skloom] and Sha wa wai are unchanged heathens.

At Ketetas on the main Yakima we were met by Ow hai [Oahi] , one of

the two principal chiefs of the northern band of this tribe. His elder brother, Te eh yas [Teias] had gone to Puget Sound and we did not see him. Ow hai appears to be 45 or 50 years of age... this band trades much more with the Sound than Kam ai ya kan's and is therefore better acquainted with the trails... after the usual custom of seeking wives in adjoining tribes they are much intermingled with the Snoqualme on the western side of the Cascades as well as the Piskouse to the northward. The latter, in fact, speak indifferently the Yakima and their own language...

[Comment: The Wanapums of Priest Rapids do not know the "Piskouse" (the Piskwaus or Winatshipum) which is Salishan rout. In hearing on Yakima Case 161 when the plaintiff's witness Kiutus Jim of the Yakima enrollment committee was on the stand, it will be recalled that he was asked specifically as to Owhi, what kind of blood, where he lived, etc., because he said that Owhi had spoken for the Priest Rapids people and signed for them at the Treaty].

"...Owhi, like Kam ai ya kan has adopted some of the forms of Catholicism and professes to pray habitually...

[Comment: Here again a reason Priest Rapids people did not look upon Owhi as their leader, regardless of what Owhi might have claimed. He was evidently not a Smowhala or Dreamer adherent].

Railway Surveys, Vol. 1, pp. 400-1 George Gibbs Rpt. to Capt. McClellan, Olympia, Washington Territory, March 4, 1854.