

INTRODUCTION

Celilo Fishery Notes MS-I [Addendum Yakima MS-I] , were gathered during a series of field trips to the Celilo Falls fishing village, Oregon, in the fall of 1952, the spring and fall of 1953 and the early winter of 1954. This sequence of trips was for the purpose of executing a piece of sculpture.

At the time, 1953-54 it became evident that the Mid-Columbias, a general term for the mixture of tribes, were seeking recognition, occupancy rights, and compensation for their asserted loss of fishing rights in the vicinity of The Dalles.

Moreover at this time the Confederated Yakima Nation was carrying on negotiations with the Army Engineers for compensation, contending that the construction of The Dalles Dam would deprive them of their traditional fishing site at Celilo Falls, located approximately eight miles upstream from The Dalles, a city on the left bank, in Oregon.

As announced by the Yakimas in their council meetings, and on the basis of their fishery rights at Celilo Falls, the Yakimas hold in their claim that as a tribe they are entitled to the major share of the fishery. They also contend that the Warm Springs tribes surrendered their rights in years past, and that the Umatillas have no rights to the fishery.

For the purpose of background without going into details of the negotiations which are a matter of record, and have no direct part in these notes, it may be mentioned that the Mid-Columbias consist of Indians who claim to have frequented Celilo Falls, Dalles and Cascades along the Columbia River from time immemorial, occupying permanently various villages and fisheries on both the Oregon and Washington shores.

Through means of a separate suit the Mid-Columbias are seeking compensation for loss of their home village sites as well as salmon.

It has been indicated that a "census" of the Mid-Columbias shows that many of them are "enrolled" on either the Yakima or Warm Springs reservations, although admittedly there are many who dwell along the river who are not enrolled on any reservation and have no allotment. This number may be estimated at sixty-five persons on the basis of a rough estimation.

In years past, 91-year-old Chief Tommy Thompson who appears to be one of the last two men in Central and Eastern Washington recognized as a chief declined to sit for a sculpture from life. While he has always been friendly and has been frequently consulted by ethnologists and graduate students of ethnology and anthropology, he has restricted and limited his interviews. Moreover his son, Henry Thompson is known to be unfriendly to those who solicit interviews and he has on occasion prevented "talking." This is undoubtedly because of the pending litigation and not because of his personality.

Chief Tommy Thompson by his own admission has outlived four wives. His fifth wife, Flora Thompson, some forty years his junior is an energetic woman and is efficiently fulfilling the duties of the wife of a chief in the ancient manner. Her father was a Wyam and was a scout for United States troops in the Modoc Indian War. Her mother was from the John Day tribe. Flora has by her diligence prevailed to keep the chief's standing as a true leader, intact. She has pursued his cause for recognition and compensation intensely and has rallied the Mid-Columbias to a common cause: Compensation for the fishery loss and recognition by which they could secure various "legalized" claims.

Two years after the original petition to be permitted to sculpture the chief was made, Flora in a manner typical of her

operations sent word that if a sculpture was to be made it should be done immediately because the chief was ailing. This word came out of a clear sky and after appearance of a story concerning the Mid-Columbia feast. Meanwhile a friend of the chief and his wife, Mrs. Martha Ferguson McKeown of Hood River, an author, had talked to the two about a sculpture.

Before this feast when Celilo was visited to gather source material concerning the custom, two graduate students in ethnology spent a week at the Indian camp attempting to gather information from Chief Thompson but were first interrupted and then prohibited from doing so by the intercession of the son, Henry Thompson.

During the ensuing visits to Celilo the "litigation" was kept in mind and no reference was made to it and no efforts were made at close investigation. The information secured was voluntarily given. Hence no deep study was made, but the material gathered is presented herewith because of possible bits of information it may contain and of its possible interest to ethnologists who have spent some time at Celilo Falls and gained the ear of the chief.

At the time of the first visit for sculpturing purposes the chief presaged his sitting by the warning that it would have to be done quickly, that he had little time, was always kept busy by people calling on him and that he could not spend the time because he grew tired easily.

The work proceeded with the chief left to his daily routine, seated in his customary chair. When he found that it was no more tiring than just sitting in his favorite chair, he became more friendly. He had no especial interest in the head at first until it began assuming a likeness whereupon his interest increased immensely. And the interest grew on the common ground of a knowledge of Indian words that verged on the "conversational" and the equally

common grounds of a knowledge of his religion, the Washat which is the religion of the Priest Rapids people.

"Is that all?" he would ask at the start of a rest period, and when told it was only the beginning, that a good head should be made so it could properly represent him, he was highly pleased and extremely cooperative.

Finally he and Flora explained that the real purpose of permitting the head to be made was to have a true likeness of him that could be carved on his tombstone after his death.

One day he brought out a crude, small plaster cast of an Indian that he had acquired at some carnival and asked if he could be made "full size standing" so that a large statue could be created some time at Celilo. He and his wife were informed that the head was being made solely for art purposes, that it would be available to his people after his death on loan, but that nothing of the nature he had mentioned--tombstone or full statue--was in mind. Thereupon he was content.

As the sittings progressed he warmed considerably, breaking into fragments of stories voluntarily upon the mere appearance of a notebook during a rest period. He was impressed by "anapum-made moccasins and told bits of the Wyamumpum version of the Washat religion of Smowhala, the Priest Rapids religious leader. He remembered when Smowhala visited the Wyam village to preach, bringing the bird on the pole, a messenger bird, introducing it to the Mid-Columbias.

The Washat dance and ceremonial is observed, with some alterations and innovations, at the Mid-Columbia salmon first foods feast. Tommy Thompson is the host of this feast [newspaper clipping attached]. It is the last of the seasonal first foods feasts and

draws the largest number of people from the most distant places of any of the ceremonials.

These series of feasts commence with the Wanapum feast at Priest Rapids of P'ina usually a week before Easter. Next is the feast at Rock Creek where William Yallup, an aging chief like Thompson, is the host. These are followed by feasts at Wapato, Toppenish and White Swan long houses on the Yakima Reservation, and Mission near the agency on the Umatilla Reservation. While not everyone attends all the feasts, there is a considerable interchange at the ceremonies so that the people are generally familiar with some of the different customs, but not in detail.

Chief Tommy Thompson arose from what the people believed was his death bed to lead the 1953 feast. After that he hovered between life and death but responded ~~xxxxxx~~ to the careful attentions of his wife, regained strength and at the time of later field trips was puttering about his house. He also made occasional trips, sometimes as far as Portland. At other times weakness prevented him from attending funerals that were held within half an hour's trip from his home.

Because of these uncertainties a letter announcing plans for a trip to Celilo was customary.

Typical confirmations:

Celilo, Oregon, August 26, 1953

...yes you may be here. The chief is never too well. But he said you may come. But have everything ready when you come. So you don't take up too much time. Well, there are a lot of people coming in or moving in right a long. Well this is all at this time. I am here year around. Well this is all. Your friend for ever Chief Tommy Thompson Kuni. Writing by Flora. Excuse the scribblings as I am such a busy woman..

Celilo, Oregon, October 21, 1953

My friend...Just to let you know that we are home just now. We were so all busy for time being.

We are all well at home just now.

If you come down the chief said bring some spuds and a few oranges. Thanks a lot. I am Flora Thompson.

The son, Henry Thompson, looked upon by some as the chief's successor and as others as irresponsible because of an occasional inclination to drink, lives near by, also in a government built house. At times he came to inspect the sculpture and expressed his admiration. On one occasion while a sitting was in progress some white man came to the door, knocked and was bidden by Flora to "come in." After he had entered Henry walked over to him and said: "What do you want?" and then before the surprised man could answer, Henry added "we don't want you here. The chief doesn't want you here. Get the ---- out of here." And in such an uneasy atmosphere the work progressed.

Chief Tommy Thompson is referred to by Flora as "the chief" or "Kuni." He is called Lo'wit [Big Belly] by old informants on the Yakima Reservation and by the Priest Rapids people. They say the name originated from his gastronomic capacities.

Typical remarks, translated by Flora, after various story telling sessions or before departure for home at conclusion of sittings:

"...he tells you he has not long to stay here and soon his body and soul will separate and his body will go back into the earth...

"...that is all he can tell you today. It makes him feel sad to talk about those old things that the young people have forgotten and which will die like he is going to die...

"...he would never let any one do this before [sculpture him] but now we think differently. I would like to have the chief's head made in stone so we can mark his burial place.. his head here that looks like him as we know him on the ground for us all to see and remember and his body in the ground his earth and his soul up above...

"...he wants you to know when you are gone [returned home] that he will sit here every day and will think of you and his friends and he wants you to think of him. He wants you to write and let him know when you get home over the pass...[when it was raining hard at Celilo and there were indications of a heavy snow on the Satus pass en route home].

ETHNOLOGICAL REFERENCES

James Mooney Fourteenth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology
1892-93 p. 740-41...

Skinpa (Shahaptian stock). Synonyms: Sawpaw (?) Skien, Skin, Skinpah. A small tribe speaking the Tenino language and formerly having a village on the north bank of the Columbia in Klickitat county, Washington, at the falls opposite Celilo. They took part in the Yakima treaty of 1855 under the name of Skinpah, and are now incorporated with the other tribes on Yakima reservation. The name is Tenino, and means "cradle place," or "at the cradle" from skin, "cradle" and pa, the locative, and refers to a prominent rock at the site of their former village having some resemblance to an Indian cradle...

Tapanash [p 740]

Tlaqluit or Wushqum [p.740]

Chiluktkwa or Chillukkittequaws [p.741]

Kwikwulit or Dog River [p.741]

Wasko [p.741].

Waiam [p.741] (Shahaptian stock). Synonyms: (Lower) Des Chutes, Waia-m-lem, Wayyampa, Wyam. A tribe speaking the Tenino language and formerly living about the mouth of Des Chutes river, in the present Wasco and Sherman counties, Oregon. Their chief village was on the Columbia river where Celilo now is, and was called Waiam, whence their name of Waia-m-lem or "people of Waia". They joined in p.742 the Wasco treaty of 1855 under the name of "Wyam or Lower Des Chutes band of Walla Walla and are now on Warm Spring reservation in Oregon. Their number is not separately reported..."

For adjoining bands, Tilquni, Tenino or Melilema, Tukspush or John Day Indians, Lohim or Willow Creek Indians, see ibid , pp. 742-43.

Reference

For Wisham place names, see Yakima MS-I p. 68-72, excerpts from Henry J. Bible in Oregon Quarterly, Vol. XXVII, 1926

Without elaboration or pretense of detail, family life and customs will be referred to in the words of the informants. Their expressions and viewpoints may give some fragmentary bits of information or indications of beliefs.

DWELLINGS

"The lodges at Wyam as I remember them and have lived in them were long ones. They had five or more fire pits. They were made of tule mats. One family lived in a lodge. That would be fifteen or twenty people.

"The dried fish were kept in the lodge, too. If they were stored outside in the cold, they blackened and spoiled.

"Some salmon stayed the year around. In the winter when I got hungry for fresh salmon I would go over to the islands on the ice. In a kind of cave like, the fish were in the water and I could one or two. But I didn't go out often because it was dangerous..."

CALENDRIC TERMS

"The Wyamumpums and the other people who lived at the falls had names for the seasons, like you have names for each of the months. There were four of them. The Yakimas had a calendar too, it was different. You will have to ask them about that. It is not the same as ours.

"Spring was called waugh wahan. That was the springtime. That was the meaning.

"Summertime, starting about what you call July was called skat mit.

"Fall, about the time the full run of salmon came, was ti ah me wit or sometimes we just called it tiam.

"Winter was just winter. It was called ahn num, and it continued

until the start of spring waugh waham ..."

[For additional reading on calendric terms, including reference to Yakima months, p. 85, see: Arthur C. Ballard, Calendric Terms of the Southern Puget Sound Salish reprinted from Southwestern Journal of Anthropology, Vol. 6 Number 1 Spring 1950, University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, pp. 79-99.

[See also Forty-Fifty Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology, 1927-28 p. 95 Coeur d'Alene seasons.

FOOD CONSUMPTION

"We ate more salmon than anything else. It was our big food. Each family would use as many as a thousand a year. There were fifteen to twenty persons in a family. That was dried fish and fresh fish, and the fish we fed the people who came as guests.

"Dry salmon we call sugar salmon. It is ground. Cha lie means ground up, dry salmon.

"It is ground up with salmon grease after it is dried. Steelhead oil is also ground into it. You call that old tschumpt.

"Chinook dried salmon is ah swiss.

"Besides that we had deer and rabbits. We had wach camo [camas], chokecherries, huckleberries and other berries and food roots, but mostly we ate salmon. We had eels too. They were cut in strips and dried, like salmon, on wooden stretchers."

FISH MIGRATION

In 1953 the spring run of steelhead and chinooks started early in April and was at its height by August 20th, tapering off that date until late in June.

The same year the fall run started as early as August 1 and continued until cold weather which marked the end of the salmon run for the season. By October 10, some commercial fishermen were still frequenting the fisheries, and on good days, made as much as

\$40 daily.

BERRYING

Huckleberries were gathered in August, the customary berrying grounds being on the slopes of Mount Hood in Oregon.

Flora-"...There was a cave there that some people had been murdered in. When we went there to get berries, I knew we were near the cave because I could hear teeth chattering, clicking together, the teeth of the dead people who had been murdered...so we didn't pick there but went to another place. That place near the cave is where the berry pickers have been getting lost because those people who were killed don't want them around the cave. [Two berry pickers, whites, from Portland were lost and searching parties were going out daily looking for them. Flora kept in touch with the news through a radio, but showed no partiality to western music, news broadcasts, football games or religious programs].

"It was the same way at the museum where Mrs. McKeown took us. [This was verified by Mrs. Martha Ferguson McKeown, authoress and close friend of Chief Tommy Thompson and Flora]. When we started into the museum, and were downstairs, I could hear people's teeth chattering, dead people, they talked the language of the Inland Passage people and I couldn't understand them too well, but they were talking about graves and clothes. We went upstairs and there were burial clothes from graves of the Inland Passage people laid out in glass cases. They were asking me to get their clothes and bodies reunited. I couldn't stay. My arm started to swell and hurt. By the time Mrs. McKeown brought us back to Celilo [from Portland] it was swollen badly. I held a medicine dance that lasted three days and my arm got better." [Four days later Mrs. McKeown went to visit them and found Flora in the yard, chopping wood for the cookstove]

Flora-"...We bury our people facing toward the east. When they

come alive, they are facing the sun, and they should have their clothes and everything that was buried with them..."

Flora-"...There are strange things in the deep holes in the river. A diver came to look into some things before they built the dam. He went down and down, but never got to the bottom. He signaled to be pulled up. He said he would never go down there again. He saw something like a big bull walking through the water toward him..."

Tommy Thompson--"...Kamiakin, Owhi and Skloom never came to Wyam to fish. They weren't fishermen. They were fighters and made war. They were always sending word and gifts to try and get the people here to go to war, but we wouldn't. Owhi's people were at Ellensburg and Wenatchee. He lived there and sometimes he came to the Wenas and lived there a little. Skloom lived at Topnish." [Toppenish, not the city but Toppenish creek, southeast of the site of Fort Simcoe, and southwest from present White Swan].

RIVER MONSTERS

"Wanthla thlea was a river monster--ghost you call him. He told children he was Ooh-lo. He had a long face, large claws and long hairy arms and ate people. Waththla thlea was turned to stone by Speelyi [Coyote, the demi-god].

"There is a hole in a rock on the north side of the island, the island down stream [Miller Island]. You can see him sitting there watching you. You can go by him in a boat and look through the hole in the rock and he is sitting there, and his eyes are kept on you as you go by, watching you as far as you can see as you go by. Waththla thlea is up and down the river at other places, left on the rocks as a witness that he was there."

HOWLING OR WAILING HOWLISH [WOLF]

"Once a preacher, Liswahlite [Smoking] who was a Klickitat and lived at Husum [Washington] told two brothers they should hurry

and go up to the Washat. Liswahlite lived at the time of Smowhala and preached the Smowhala religion. He was the first religious man in his community on the north side of the river.

"He told the women to go to the Washat too. They ran as fast as they could to get to the dance. They quit digging the food roots and ran.

"He told the brothers if they didn't hurry they would turn into something like a stick or a stone or some animal. But the brothers wanted to go fishing instead.

"All right," said Liswahlite "something will happen to you."

"The drum sounded for the dance to start. One of the brothers felt queer like something was happening to him. So they started to run to the long house where the Washat was being held. Just before they got there the slowest brother fell to his knees, on all fours, just like an animal. He felt something happening to him. His legs changed. Hair spread over his body and his hands and feet turned into paws with claws on them and he howled like a wolf [howlish] and ran away. The other brother leaped hard and fell through the door into the dance house and didn't change into howlish.

"In the fall of the year when the people hear howlish wailing high in the sky like a wolf, they call him wailing howlish, and they know it is going to be a long, hard winter, so they go out and gather lots of wood and store it because the winters are long and cold."

Another fragmentary story concerning the Washat religion:

Flora--"...The chief is going to tell you a story because he knows you understand about the Washat and wear moccasins with the bird, wowshuxkluh [oriole] sitting on the flat pole.

"Skamia was the first religious leader we know of along this

part of the river. He was before the time of Lishwahlite. He was the chief of the Skinpahs.

"Skamiah began worrying in his soul. The worrying was like a clock in his heart, ticking and worrying him. He began wondering how to do good for his tribe and he worried day and night.

"There was a bird, a medicine bird called Wqhas Qlash [Meadowlark] (pronounced deep in the throat, lips practically closed). The bird knew and listened to the chief's pleading and worrying and wishing. Then Meadowlark came and talked to the chief. He tells him, 'I have mercy on you. Let us forget all our troubles and worries. You are worrying about the law. When the white man comes and brings law, you talk few words to him [be friendly] and he will cooperate with you.'

"The bird told him, 'I am just like the creator of all things. I know everything from east to west, from north to south. I know what is coming in the future. I know what will take place. There will be many white men come, and they will change things for the Indians and nothing can stop it.'

"After that the chief began to feel and understand. He and the bird talked and he could understand what was going to happen in the future.

"Before this Skamia had no understanding about nothing or anybody. He knew only about life. He knew nothing about after death. But after Meadowlark taught him what to do and say, he knew all-- about life and death. And he started holding religious services. These services started on Friday and continued Saturday and Sunday. They were services like the Mashat.

"The spring came first and the coming of the salmon. The father of the salmon was the strong swimmer, the steelhead. Then came the chinook salmon following. These two were leaders.

"Beel came in the river too. He is the religious one. He carries

the seven days, the seven sacred numbers for the days, seven spots, on his side. The eel was created to remind the Indian of the seven days of the week, made to show the coming of the time for the Friday, Saturday and Sunday dance..."

Another fragmentary story of the Washat religion:

Flora--"...The chief wants to tell you a story. He saw wowshuxkluh on your moccasins. Even the young people here don't know much about that. They don't pay attention any more and are more interested in other things.

"You noticed the pole. He used to have a bird sitting on it, but someone stole it. Wowshuxkluh was brought to Celilo from up the river by Smowhala.

"Since the time of creation that pole was set forth deep into the earth, the Mother Earth, and the bird was sitting on top. It awaits the message. It carries the messages back and forth to the Creator."

Tommy Thompson"...When that pole was planted, my body of flesh was formed from the Mother Earth in which the pole is planted.

"When all was completed, it meant the life within my soul which means everything to me. According to that I keep with all my soul this valuable pole which sets in the Mother Earth. I have a great deal of faith in this pole that no one knows or understands what it means to us older folks.

"The bird is called Wowshuxkluh. I guess it is Oriole. This bird that sits on the pole is just like a clock. When dawn comes he counts the layers of the dawn, the seven layers of the dawn. By the time it is growing daylight, the fifth dawn comes up.

"We have the layers of the stars. We all know the evening star and the morning star. Those the same bird takes care of and looks after like what you call an angel. He knows everything. When there is a

message sent one way or the other, he carries the message to the heaven above to the Great Almighty, our heavenly God. This is as far as I can go at this time. It gives me a heart ache to talk about it because so many have forgotten and because I old it so dear..."

Fragment of historic story

"It was told me by my father-in-law who lived across the river. This was an old man, the father of my old wife, Ellen.

"Bolon [the Indian sub-agent Andrew J. Bolon, who was killed Sept. 21, 1855 at the outset of the Yakima War, 1855-56] was riding a big white horse. Kamiakin sent three men after him. Said, kill him. That was on the old Fort Simcoe road and they came up to him at Wach Shum [Wahk Shum]. One man grabbed him and another man cut his throat, nearly whacking off his head from his body. He threshed around like chicken with its head out off. It took him quite a while to die. My father-in-law knew the men who were there. He named them to me. [Names not asked for because he was telling sketchy story and interruption would have ended story].

"Then they came to the Skinpah camp, to Colwash's camp, upstream from Wyam on the other side [Washington] of the river.

"The Yakimas were excited. Kamiakin asked Colwash to send men to help him fight. Colwash said 'no, we will not spill blood. It will mean war. When the men came to the camp and told of the killing, Colwash went to the fort at the Dalles. There were soldiers guarding the walk leading to the fort. He told the guards that Bolon was killed last night. They started to seize him, but he said: 'I didn't kill him. I just came to tell you he had been killed.'

"After they killed Bolon they tied his things to his horse and turned the horse loose to make it look like an accident. They dug a shallow place and buried him, just barely covering him over. That

is what my old wife's father told me, and he was an old man."

[For extended reading concerning Bolon murder, evaluated by numerous historians as provoking the Yakima War, see: Lucullus Virgil McWhorter "Tragedy of the Wahk-Shum, Prelude to the Yakima Indian War, 1855-56, privately printed, 1937 and limited to seven hundred and fifty copies.