

Contents

xiii	Introduction
1	Part 1. North
	Koryak
3	Raven Tales from Kamchatka <i>Alexander D. King</i> <i>Told by Paqa</i> <i>Translated by Alexander D. King</i>
	Tlingit
25	Raven Stories <i>Nora Marks Dauenhauer</i> <i>and Richard Dauenhauer</i> <i>Told by Willie Marks, Katherine Mills,</i> <i>and Austin Hammond</i> <i>Translated by Nora Marks Dauenhauer</i>
	Iñupiaq
42	The Young Woman Who Disappeared <i>Lawrence Kaplan and Tadataka Nagai</i> <i>Told by Minnie Gray</i> <i>Translated by Minnie Gray,</i> <i>Lawrence Kaplan, and Tadataka Nagai</i>
51	Two Children Adrift <i>Edna Ahgeak MacLean</i> <i>Told by Ericklook with Lee Suvlu</i> <i>Translated by Edna Ahgeak MacLean</i>
81	Part 2. West
	Kwakwaka'wakw
83	Giver <i>Judith Berman</i> <i>Told by Umx'id</i> <i>Translated by Judith Berman</i>

-
- Haida
- 105 The Sea Lion Hunter
 Robert Bringhurst
 Told by Ghandl
 Translated by Robert Bringhurst
- 121 The Blind Man at Island Point Town
 and the One Who Went around the Sea as a Halibut
 John Enrico
 Told by Adam Bell
 Translated by John Enrico
- Okanagan
- 134 Prophecy at Lytton
 Wendy Wickwire
 Told by Harry Robinson
- Lushootseed
- 171 Coyote and His Son
 Crisca Bierwert
 Told by Martha Lamont
 Translated by Crisca Bierwert
- Sahaptin
- 195 Celilo
 Virginia Hymes
 Told by Larry George
- Upper Coquille Athabaskan
- 209 Two Tales of Power
 William R. Seaburg
 Told by Coquille Thompson Sr.
- Lake Miwok
- 226 How Coyote Remade the World
 Catherine A. Callaghan
 Told by James Knight
 Translated by Catherine A. Callaghan
- Miguelino Salinan
- 240 Snake
 Katherine Turner
 Told by Maria Ocarpia
 Translated by Katherine Turner

- Yana
- 244 Young Blue Jay's Journey to the Land of the New Moon
Herbert W. Luthin
Told by Sam Batwi
Translated by Herbert W. Luthin
- Quechan
- 268 Old Lady Sanʼu-xáv
Amy Miller
Told by an elder of the Quechan Tribe
Translated by Amy Miller and Millie Romero
- 281 **Part 3. South**
- Western Apache
- 283 He Became an Eagle
M. Eleanor Nevins and Thomas J. Nevins
Performed by Paul Ethelbah
Translated by M. Eleanor Nevins, Thomas J. Nevins, Paul Ethelbah, and Genevieve Ethelbah
- Navajo
- 303 The Flight of Dzilyi neeyáni
Paul G. Zolbrod
Storyteller unknown
- 317 Coyote Stories
Rex Lee Jim
Told by Rex Lee Jim
- San Juan Pueblo–Tewa
- 327 The Oekuu Shadeh of Ohkay Owingeh
Hao Huang
Composed by Peter Garcia Sr.
- O'odham
- 340 Whirlwind Songs
David Kozak
Performed by Ha-ata and Vicente Jose
Translated by David Kozak and David I. Lopez
- Kiowa
- 350 The Red Wolf Story
Luke Eric Lassiter
Told by Ralph Kotay

- Cherokee
- 357 Thunder and the Ukten
Willard Walker
Told by Willie Jumper
Translated by Wesley Proctor
- Yuchi
- 368 Trickster Tales
Mary S. Linn and Jason Baird Jackson
Told by Waxin Tiger and William Cahwee
Translated by Josephine Barnett Keith,
Josephine Wildcat Bigler, Mary S. Linn, and
William Cahwee
- Catawba
- 383 Four Fables
Blair A. Rudes
Told by Sally Brown Gordon and
Margaret Wiley Brown
- 395 **Part 4. East**
- Lakota
- 397 Double-Face Tricks a Girl
Julian Rice
Storyteller unknown
Translated by Julian Rice
- Ioway-Otoe-Missouria
- 408 Rabbit Frees the People from Muskrat
Jimm G. GoodTracks
Told by Mary Gale LaFlesche
Translated by Jimm G. GoodTracks
- Meskwaki
- 423 Two Winter Stories
Ives Goddard
Written by Alfred Kiyana
Translated by Ives Goddard
- Menominee
- 468 Red Swan
Monica Macaulay and Marianne Milligan
Told by Nyahto Kichewano
Translated by Monica Macaulay and
Marianne Milligan

	Ojibwe
486	The Birth of Nenabozho <i>Rand Valentine</i> <i>Told by Waasaagoneshkang</i> <i>Translated by Rand Valentine</i>
	Seneca
515	Creation Story <i>Wallace Chafe</i> <i>Told by John Armstrong</i> <i>Translated by Wallace Chafe</i>
	Oneida
532	The Origins of Man <i>Herbert S. Lewis</i> <i>Told by Andrew Beechtree</i>
	Maliseet
546	The Legendary Tom Laporte <i>Philip S. LeSourd</i> <i>Told by Charles Laporte</i> <i>Translated by Philip S. LeSourd</i>
	Mìgmaq
561	Three Stories <i>Jennifer Andrews and Robert M. Leavitt</i> <i>Written by E. Nàgùgwes Metallic</i> <i>Translated by E. Nàgùgwes Metallic</i>
	Naskapi
572	Umâyichîs <i>Julie Brittain and Marguerite MacKenzie</i> <i>Told by John Peastitute</i> <i>Translated by Julie Brittain, Alma Chemaganish,</i> <i>Marguerite MacKenzie, and Silas Nabinicaboo</i>
591	List of Contributors
603	Index

Introduction

This volume is a follow-up and extension of *Coming to Light: Contemporary Translations of the Native Literatures of North America*.¹ The present collection continues both the format and the method of *Coming to Light*. The introductions that preface each translation give readers as much information as possible so that they can contextualize and understand the work that follows. Although much of the material may be familiar or comprehensible without special knowledge, much is also compellingly different. Also familiarity can sometimes be misleading: what we take for granted will often need interpretation since meanings change across cultures.

The present collection includes retranslations of “classical” literature as well as translations of recent material. It is made up of new work both by contributors represented in *Coming to Light*, and by those, the majority, who are not. Of the former, Paul Zolbrod contributes more Navajo work and Herb Luthin more Yana. Robert Leavitt, whose Passamaquoddy work appeared in the earlier volume, presents Migmaq (Micmac) stories, this time with E. Nàgùgwes Metallic and Jennifer Andrews, while Richard and Nora Dauenhauer add to their Tlingit work and Judith Berman gives us more Kwakwaka’wakw (Kwakiutl) literature. Julian Rice provides a Lakota story, while Robert Bringhurst is present again with Haida work. This time Blair Rudes contributes, not Tuscarora, but Catawba material.

The contributors new to the venture include John Enrico (Haida), David Kozak and David Lopez (O’odham), Monica Macaulay and Marianne Milligan (Menominee), Lawrence Kaplan, Tadataka Nagai, and Minnie Gray (Iñupiaq), Edna MacLean (Iñupiaq), and Rex Lee Jim, a Navajo poet who reminds us that a number of contemporary Native writers are also working with traditional materials in original ways. “It may not be what you expected,” he wrote, “but it is the Coyote way.” Then there are Philip LeSourd (Maliseet), Rand Valentine (Ojibwe), Wendy Wickwire (Okanagan), Virginia Hymes (Sahaptin), Katherine Turner (Miguelino Salinan), Eleanor and Tom Nevins and Paul and Genevieve Ethelbah (Western Apache), Catherine Callaghan (Lake Miwok), Amy Miller and Millie Romero (Quechan), Ives Goddard (Meskwaki), Crisca Bierwert (Lushootseed), Jimm

GoodTracks (Iowa-Otoe-Missouria), Willard Walker and Wesley Proctor (Cherokee), Mary Linn, Jason Baird Jackson, Josephine Barnett Keith, and Josephine Wildcat Bigler (Yuchi), Eric Lassiter (Kiowa), Hao Huang (San Juan Pueblo-Tewa), Wallace Chafe (Seneca), Herbert Lewis (Oneida), William Seaburg (Upper Coquille Athabaskan), and Julie Brittain, Alma Chemaganish, Margaret MacKenzie, and Silas Nabinicaboo (Naskapi). By including Alexander King's contribution (Koryak), I have taken it upon myself to extend our northern boundaries into Siberia, where cultural contacts with Alaska are being renewed. I have, however, illogically left our southern borders in place.

As with all such collections, much is present, but much is also absent. For example, although I tried hard to recruit translators of Southeast materials for *Coming to Light*, only one is represented in that volume. I made extra efforts to obtain Southeast translations for the present volume, but again with only limited success. For the most part, Native communities seem to be directing more effort toward preservation and renewal than to translation. For instance, the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma informed me that their language program was involved in so many projects that it would be a hardship to start anything else, and the Kiwat Hisinay Foundation, Preserving Caddo Culture, told me that they could not participate because they were "madly" trying to get down "all we can, knowing that careful editing of our CDs, DVDs, and other formats to come can be done for decades and centuries to come." Such responses were typical, not just specific to the Southeast.

In gathering material for this book I was dependent on the vagaries of who was working on what and who was interested in sharing the fruits of his or her labors. From the responses to my hundreds of letters, e-mails, faxes, notices in journals, and phone calls, I learned just how busy everybody is in an understaffed field, one in which a vast amount of work remains to be done. Apart from fieldwork there are archives full of materials that need attention, and fragile audiotapes and wax cylinders that need re-recording in new formats. In addition, language experts are frequently called on in law cases involving land rights and claims.

Adding to the difficulty of recruitment, some experts, particularly linguists, are simply not interested in literature or translation. One prominent Algonquinist wrote me: "I am only interested in the original texts themselves, and see translations only as keys into the original." He preferred "the stuff in the raw."² One or two translators even said they didn't want their translations to be accessible or fully understood, in an effort to resist assimilation. Some linguists refused to participate in a project that does not use a bilingual format: "What does it say to the Native communities when we tell them 'Your literature is only valuable when it is in English?'"

Finally, not everyone can translate well. "In this translation I am attempting

to suggest the syllable-counting metrics of the original . . . and reveal the overall pattern,” one song translator wrote me. In the hands of a skilled practitioner, this approach could work. But the result in this case was not successful. For this translator, style was simply pattern. For his purposes, as for many other linguists, any “text” was as good as any other. “Plain translation,” a latter-day Boasian approach, sufficed for more than one. Franz Boas, the grand figure of American anthropology and anthropological linguistics, saw texts as primarily for linguists and ethnographers. Translation was something of a necessary evil. Literary merit counted for little, and Boas thought style was difficult to translate, being bound up with peculiarities of language and culture, a position he shared with his famous student Edward Sapir.³ At a time when languages were disappearing and expert collectors in the field were few, when many previous translations were loose and inaccurate, “direct,” “close,” “literal” texts were the aim. But today, after a few decades of ethnopoetics, plain, close, literal translations surely miss a number of important points. “There are pitfalls to this romance of plainness,” as Willis Barnstone notes.⁴ For one, if an original is regarded as “beautiful,” however the term is defined, the translation is no translation at all if it is not also “beautiful.” So, when another linguist wrote of the work he sent in: “I am afraid the poetry may be left out in the process of trying to be faithful to the original,” he had not been faithful at all. How can the translation of something acknowledged to be “poetic” omit the poetry?

The history of Native American translation has been written about extensively in recent years. For convenient and accessible accounts I refer the reader to essays in the Smithsonian’s *Handbook of the American Indian*, volume 17, *Languages*.⁵ At this point it might suffice to note that the visibility of Native cultures and languages is quite a new phenomenon.

According to some estimates, at the time of contact the American continent contained as many as one-third of the world’s languages, but from the conquest until the early nineteenth century, these languages were not regarded as worthy of much attention. For practical purposes word lists and vocabularies had been recorded from the earliest period of contact, but it took some time for many people to acknowledge that the languages they heard were not Hebrew or Phoenician, Irish or Welsh, or even that the Natives had any language at all. From the first, Europeans looked at the indigenes and saw projections of themselves, outlines of their wishes and desires, wisps of assumptions. Despite our modern tendency to see a new world, these Europeans were largely indifferent to the new and unique. So in a certain sense Indians were invisible and inaudible. Indians had to be fitted in because Europeans were not capable of conceiving of the “other.” As Anthony Pagden has noted, sixteenth- and seventeenth-century observers believed in social

unity among the various races.⁶ They were not looking for “otherness” but for a way of eliminating it, and thereby bringing the disturbingly new within an anthropology made authoritative by its origin in Greek thought. Indians were placed in the familiar category of “barbarian,” implying inferiority, someone distinguished by a lack of ability to speak, someone who can only make animal-like noises (well into the twentieth century Indian languages were often dubbed “barbarous dialects”). Since the Greeks made the close connection between intelligible speech and reason, barbarians were de facto devoid of logos, or reason. Columbus said the natives had no religion and no language. Thus in 1492 he planned to carry off to Spain six of them “that they may learn to speak.”⁷

Comparative linguistics started in Europe in the eighteenth century, about the same time in America interest in indigenous languages developed, as in the case of Franklin and Jefferson and other Enlightenment intellectuals. But it was not until the nineteenth century that a blooming of interest in the languages occurred, as well as attempts at translating them, mostly within the intellectual structure of evolutionary thought and the idea of the “dying race.” The Smithsonian Institution was founded in 1846 to house Native American materials and linguistic artifacts, while the Bureau of American Ethnology, established in 1879, stressed linguistic research. “Salvage anthropology” attempted to preserve what could be preserved as fast as possible before the Indian passed from the stage in a process of natural selection. Many collections were made in this way, before Franz Boas arrived at Columbia University in 1899 and began the scientific training that was to produce many of the most prominent names in American anthropology.

Today it is fair to say that Indian literatures are being treated more seriously than ever before. As far as translation is concerned, two figures stand out as seminal: Dell Hymes and Dennis Tedlock. Most translators today have been influenced in some way by these two men. In essence, Hymes, who elevates translation to a primary aim, works primarily with Native-language texts, whereas Tedlock uses recent tape recordings and performed narrations. Hymes looks for organization by recurrent patterning, from structural particles to, more importantly, clusters of number patterns, mostly three, four, and five, depending on the culture, and treats them as markers signifying distinct segments of the narration, or song, which he then sets up in lines and stanzas, frequently dramatic and poetic.⁸ On the other hand, Tedlock, using a tape recorder, tries to recover the voices and patterns of the original performance, and for him the length of the pause indicates line and stanza.⁹ When he transfers the material to print, he vivifies the page, making it gestural with typographic devices. Tape recording can help overcome certain difficulties encountered in the field. Even Boas, despite his phonetic skills, was sometimes frustrated. Writing down a phrase, checking with the teller or singer, sometimes drove Boas to distraction, and he lamented what he called the unnatural

simplicity of diction resulting in something that even he, who wasn't concerned with the literary quality of translation, found inadequate.¹⁰

The whole question of translation is problematic. It has always had a political and social dimension.¹¹ Apart from difficulties in rendering oral language on the page—the “shadow survivance”—and apart from English's inability to translate adequately language such as the Navajo Yellowman's “pretty languages” or beautiful archaic therapeutic vocabulary, much cultural baggage and many encumbrances exist, ranging from what might be considered the mundane (property rights, who owns what) to the larger context of a history of suppression and exploitation.¹² And there is sometimes opposition to translation from within the Native community itself. Access is frequently not “open.” More than one translator has voiced to me the necessity of checking to see if the stories he or she wished to work on were in fact available for translation. One said that since the stories he was considering were part of a cosmological cycle, he wanted to make sure they were not part of a ceremony for initiates only. The general feeling among the people he was working with, he noted, was that the stories should not be publicized at this time, even though they had been published previously in several anthropological treatments. An older, well-respected scholar had to withdraw from this project because of changing attitudes among the people she had long worked with. Copyright questions had arisen, she wrote, and a litigious attitude had developed, especially among people who did not live on the reservation.¹³

A related dimension to the problem of translation is the way many of the early texts were obtained, the “hidden colonialism.”¹⁴ Fraud, threats, and deceit were sometimes involved. The great collector John Peabody Harrington, for instance, often manipulated his consultants or “informants.”¹⁵ But the story is seldom simple. Recently the indigenous community of San Juan Capistrano expressed its gratitude for materials that resulted from Harrington's field procedures by hosting a conference of linguists and anthropologists devoted to his work.¹⁶ Tribes and individuals have also used materials gathered under suspicious circumstances for language revitalization and development.

There are other questions such as payment and the right of even well known informants to recount materials that were not theirs by genealogical inheritance. Judith Berman has analyzed the situation of Boas's collector George Hunt in this regard.¹⁷ In addition, anthropologists and Native informants are often at cultural cross-purposes. Many speakers of Tohono O'odham, for instance, believe that Juan Gregorio died not of old age but because of what he told Donald Bahr about the way animal spirits can be offended, thus attracting evil forces.¹⁸ In the case of Barre Toelken's work on Navajo Coyote stories with the Yellowman family, his Native fieldwork partners believed his investigations were responsible for certain repercussions: accidents, injuries, even death.¹⁹

While Native languages are under continual pressure, a number are in pretty good shape. Navajo, for instance, has over one hundred thousand speakers, and Cree is spoken by some eighty thousand people in Canada. Approximately the same number speak Inupiaq in Canada and Greenland, while in the United States Choctaw-Chickasaw has about twelve thousand speakers, as does Creek.²⁰ Many efforts are under way to strengthen and revitalize languages on a number of fronts, from colleges and universities, to Native communities and tribal colleges.²¹ On the academic front the exemplary Society for the Study of the Indigenous Languages of the Americas (SSILA) publishes a newsletter as well as a bulletin (<http://www.ssila.org>) and acts as a clearinghouse and notice board. It is also a resource center, producing learning aids, dictionaries, grammars and tapes, bilingual narratives, and so on. Groups of specialists meet regularly at conferences, including the Algonquian Conference, (whose thirty-third annual meeting was held in 2001), the Athabaskan Conference, the Hokan-Penutian Conference, the Siouian and Caddoan Conference, and many others. In addition, a number of Native-based production companies and broadcast channels, such as the Canadian APTN (Aboriginal People's Television Network), are devoted to using Native languages. The Internet provides valuable resources, and there are many language-related Web sites. *Nativeculture.com* is a comprehensive portal site, a good place to start. There are also CD-ROMS, videos, a whole variety of educational means whose purpose for Native peoples is, in the words of the Blackfoot educator Duane Mistaken Chief, "to rediscover who we are."²²

Despite these efforts, the danger of linguistic mass extinction is very real. As the opening statement of the Endangered Languages Fund noted in 1995: "Never have we faced the mass extinction that is threatening the world right now. . . . We are faced with a stark reality: Much of what we study will not be available to future generations. The cultural heritage of many people is crumbling while we look on."²³ Half the world's languages are moribund, that is, not being passed on. Such attrition is sobering if we consider that language is at the core of what it means to be human since cultures are largely passed on through language. As the policy statement by the Linguistic Society of America noted in 1994: "The loss to humanity of generic diversity in the linguistic world is . . . arguably greater than even the loss of genetic diversity in the biological world, given that the structure of human language represents a considerable testimony to human intellectual achievement."²⁴

Those of us studying Native American cultures, who hold them to be precious, need access to the original languages, so we have to be involved with their preservation and strengthening. Everyone pays homage to "the oral tradition," but unless it is grounded in native languages, it could well become, as more than one critic has pointed out, a catchall phrase whose main function would be to name

the source of the difference between Native writers and Euro-American writers. The final step would be when the oral tradition (which, it should be noted, is still alive and flourishing) becomes synonymous with anything that is *told*, mostly in English. The great tradition that defined a culture to itself in its own language will disappear into the thin outlines of itself. As the Anishinabe writer Gerald Vizenor has pointed out, “the tribes were born in language.”²⁵ Words are worlds and vice versa.

But, as with most Native American issues, things are not that simple. What about those Native storytellers, who may or may not know their own language, who choose to tell their stories in English? Or what about those like E. Nàgùgwes Metallic who write their stories in English, or others, such as Harry Robinson, who translate their own stories? This volume, while devoted to the art of translation, also includes such stories; it should be noted that English in the United States and largely in Canada has become the lingua franca of Native peoples, and varieties of Indian English have arisen that are of value in their own right.²⁶ Moreover, even precontact monolingualism was probably a rarity among many Indian peoples on the continent because of trade, travel, and overlap among many languages. One sixteenth-century observer in Latin America remarked that in a single village two or three different languages were spoken. It should be noted that in certain North American groups who have lost their languages, Native culture continues largely in English. However, as Dell Hymes has pointed out in correspondence, the stories told in those cultures are not just English-language stories. Many are shaped by cultural habits and structures. Hymes perceives aboriginal organization and patterning in English-language narration, particularly the use of the numbers three and five in Northwest stories, and surmises that the same is true among other western cultures. “In many cases,” he wrote me, “English is the envelope, as it were, not the shape of the message.”

In accordance with this book’s title, I have ordered the voices by the cardinals, north, south, east, west, but rearranged in a large circle, north, west, south, east. This is not entirely logical nor satisfactory if one goes by culture areas. Southeast cultures are distinct from Southwest and Californian from North Pacific Coast, for instance. But the question of language and cultural affinities is, for the most part, taken care of in the individual introductions, and the fourfold division, if it is understood as pure convenience, works to balance the contents and give the reader a rough orientation among materials from so many different cultures.

Finally, in this collection I have attempted to create something of a dialogue, an interplay of voices as diverse as the cultures they come from. I hope the “totality of intentions,” in the translated words of Walter Benjamin, “supplement each other,” and that the necessarily monolingual format doesn’t flatten the diversity or reduce

the distinctions too much.²⁷ The richness and inventiveness of the languages and cultures represented here is only a small, a tiny part, not only of what has been lost, but of what remains.

I am immensely grateful to all contributors for their skills and generosity and not least for their equanimity and good humor in the face of not infrequent editorial badgering.

NOTES

1. *Coming to Light: Contemporary Translations of the Native Literatures of North America*, ed. Brian Swann (New York: Random House, 1994). It is also the result of the cancellation of my Smithsonian Institution Press series *The Smithsonian Series of Studies in Native American Literatures*, which I had hoped would focus on individual volumes devoted to specific languages, thus obviating the need for another general anthology. So far, however, only three of the orphaned volumes have made an appearance: *Translating Native Latin American Verbal Art: Ethnopoetics and Ethnography of Speaking*, ed. Kay Sammons and Joel Sherzer (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2000); *Our Voices: Native Stories of Alaska and the Yukon*, ed. James Ruppert and John W. Bernet (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001); and *Surviving through the Days: Translations of Native California Stories and Songs: A California Indian Reader*, ed. Herbert W. Luthin (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

2. The phrase is Edward Sapir's, quoted in Regna Darnell, "The Boasian Text and the History of Anthropology," *Culture* 12, no. 1 (1992): 42. He wrote: "I am not particularly interested in 'smoothed-over' versions of native culture. I like the stuff in the raw, as felt and dictated by the natives. The genuine, difficult, confusing primary sources, these must be presented, whatever else is done." Sapir was not arguing against translation but against the kind of translations that preceded him and Boas. He stressed knowledge of and immersion in sources.

3. While Boas was not primarily concerned with aesthetics, Dell Hymes credits him with being a pioneer "in discovering recurrent relations among grammatical elements and the patterns of words constituted by them," in his essay "Boas on the Threshold of Ethnopoetics," in *Theorizing the Americanist Tradition*, ed. Lisa Phillips Valentine and Regna Darnell (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 91. For Sapir on style, see the chapter "Language and Literature" in his 1921 volume *Language: An Introduction to the Study of Speech* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co.).

4. Willis Barnstone, *The Poetics of Translation: History, Theory, Practice* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 37. Barnstone's excellent study is typical of all the books I have read on translation and translation theory. It omits any mention or discussion of Native American literatures or oral literatures, being mostly concerned with written literary texts in the "Western" tradition. Concomitantly, most scholars of Native American literatures, especially linguists and anthropologists, rarely show any interest in translation theory and seldom evince any familiarity with its texts, demonstrating a refusal to integrate disciplines, something essential in Native American studies.

5. *Handbook of North American Indians*, ed. William C. Sturtevant, vol. 17, *Languages*, ed. Ives Goddard (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1966). See in particular Ives Goddard, "The Description of the Native Languages of North America before Boas," 17-

Koryak

Raven Tales from Kamchatka

Introduction by Alexander D. King

Raven is the main mythological cultural hero of the Koryaks and their Chukchi neighbors to the north and their Itelmen neighbors to the south. Although these people are indigenous to Kamchatka and Chukotka, in Russian northeast Asia, their mythology has remarkable continuities with mythologies of Native American peoples across the Bering Strait, especially on the North Pacific coast. Some may find it odd to see narratives from Asia among a collection of stories from Native America, but the cultural similarities among peoples of northeast Asia and northwest America are so strong, especially in terms of oral literature, they led Waldemar Bogoras to state a century ago, “from an ethnographical point of view, the line dividing Asia and America lies far southwestward of Bering strait.”¹ Sometimes translated as “Big-Raven,” the trickster-hero’s name in Koryak is Quyqinyaqu. In many stories he exhibits the same characteristics as Raven, Coyote, and other trickster-transformers in North America—an unwavering desire to search for food, sex, and mischief, but also special wisdom and power. Quyqinyaqu differs in key respects from his Native American counterparts, however, for he is not a lone adventurer. He is a father and head of a household. His wife, Miti, son Amamqut, daughter Yiniangawgut, and other children and their spouses and children are featured in many of the stories collected at the turn of the twentieth century and still being told today.

In the two stories presented here, Quyqinyaqu represents the center of the social world. His daughters and sons are the most desirable spouses, and outsiders like Little-Bird-Man, Raven-Man, and the Ermine-People wish to join his household. In other stories Quyqinyaqu can also be a scoundrel as is Raven-Man or the fool as played by Ermine-Man. I have selected these two stories by Paqa for retranslation for two reasons. First, we have the original Koryak versions, published as part of a collection of linguistic texts in 1917.² An ethnoepic analysis based on the original language can transform what at first appears to be just a cute story in prose translation into a powerful work of art. Attention to the form of the original Koryak elucidates deeper subtleties of formal patterning and symbolic organization—a glimpse into the way Koryak people organized the universe

and their aesthetics of language. By working back and forth between the small details of linguistic structure of the Koryak language and the larger patterning of relations within the narrative, one can see how all the parts fit together, parts that seem disconnected in a prose translation. The second reason is that Paqa seems to have been an exemplary storyteller. She is one of the few people to have her stories published by both Bogoras and Waldemar Jochelson. Paqa's stories are well crafted on several levels, from grammatical subtleties to cosmic symbolism.

Bogoras and Jochelson were two of the leading ethnographers working on the Siberian side of the famous Jesup North Pacific Expedition, sponsored by the American Museum of Natural History in New York. The two men had been living in northeast Asia for several years as political exiles, and Bogoras had already developed a high level of proficiency in Chukchi, which is closely related to the variant of Koryak represented by these texts.³ Thus, I believe that the transcriptions he produced are as reliable as any of the best transcriptions by Americanists from that era. Bogoras was working on describing the grammar of the language, and he elicited stories in typical Boasian fashion, publishing them as interlinear texts for linguistic data. Jochelson was documenting Koryak culture, and he was interested in the stories as evidence of Koryak cosmology, religion, and folklore.⁴ He published over two hundred stories in English, but because his notes have been lost, we have no record of the original Koryak versions told to him. Thus, we cannot be sure that the version of "Bird-Men" published by Jochelson, with the order of the second and third acts transposed and other minor changes from the version published in Koryak by Bogoras, reflects Paqa's creative improvisation or Jochelson's editing; most likely both were at work.⁵

Paqa was a young or middle-aged woman living in the village of Waikenan (called Kamenskoe or Kamenki by Russians) on the north shore of Penzhina Bay, which is the northernmost part of the Sea of Okhotsk. With a population of about 160 people, Waikenan was the largest native village for several hundred miles and the largest concentration of Koryak speakers anywhere. People spent winters in semisubterranean, octagonal houses in the village and summers along the banks of the many rivers or the seacoast, harvesting salmon and various sea mammals. Village-dwelling Koryaks (or Nymylans, after the Koryak word for 'settlement') frequently traded with reindeer-herding friends and relatives, who migrated across the interior tundra, exchanging seal skins and other trade goods for reindeer hides and meat. In this area those herders who personally owned many hundreds of deer were considered the richest individuals; a few of these herders owned up to two or three thousand reindeer. Herders lived in dome-shaped, reindeer-skin tents. The Koryak word *yayanga* was (and is) used for all domiciles (and now any building), and I have translated it as 'house' or 'home', although Paqa may have had a skin tent in mind when she used the word in the final part of "Bird-Men" (line 245).

Following Dell Hymes and Dennis Tedlock, I believe that oral narratives are best represented on the page as verse. As Hymes has recognized for Native American narratives, I have found that lines are combined into larger units following consistent patterns. I mark verses by successive indentations when several lines constitute a single verse. Verses are grouped into stanzas, marked by a capital letter in parentheses. Scenes are marked by a small Roman numeral and acts by capital Roman numerals. Scenes, acts, and the narratives themselves are defined by the onset of a problem and its eventual resolution. These openings and closings operate at many levels, producing patterns of bracketing and symmetry. The opening and closing brackets are almost always constructed of pairs—two lines or two verses, and patterns of two are found throughout Paqa’s narratives.

Paqa artfully drew on a variety of linguistic resources at her disposal in her construction of this narrative. Most of these devices are lost in the prose, and my translation recovers these patterns. I have tried to translate Koryak words consistently with the same English word or phrase in order to give the reader a sense of the pattern created by Paqa’s use of *vayuk* ‘so then’, *qonpa* ‘all the time’, for example. Words in square brackets are not in the original Koryak but are added for the benefit of the English reader. Paqa often uses the Koryak word *vayuk* ‘so then’ to mark the beginning of a stanza or other major unit. Scenes often begin with this word, particularly in the second story, “Ermine-People.” Various interjections (*toq*, *go*, *to*, etc.) also mark the beginnings of major units. I have chosen to leave interjections untranslated because they provide some flavor of the original.⁶ *Toq*, for instance, is often used before the speaker starts doing something and may be translated as ‘well’, ‘okay then’, ‘heads up’, or ‘cheers’. I use boldface type to render words that are emphasized by a shift of stress to the final syllable. These words may be louder or more drawn out as part of the emphasis, but not always.

One of Paqa’s more subtle uses of language includes her choice of verb tense. Scenes ii and iii of act I of “Bird-Men” provide us with a particularly apt example. Looking at lines 28–36, Raven-Man’s attempt is in a verb tense analogous to the English present continuous, as I have translated it here, and this produces a sense of Raven-Man running around and doing a lot but accomplishing nothing. In Koryak the verbs are at the ends of the lines and thus rhyme with one another (word order is not as strict in Koryak as it is in English). In contrast, Little-Bird-Man’s action is expressed in a narrative past tense and connotes that the activities are “finished.”⁷ Thus in lines 55–65 and again in lines 74–80, Little-Bird-Man got things done. He finished one thing after another while Raven-Man was just doing nothing useful.

Paqa’s story of Raven-Man and Little-Bird-Man is a narrative of social and cosmic order; the universe must be kept in balance, a balance of conjugal pairs. Koryak society does not have clans or lineages, and marriage was (and continues to

be) primarily an issue of personal or household choice based on the qualities of the individuals concerned. Bringing a stranger into the household was fraught with physical and spiritual danger, and the snowstorm is a metaphor for this. When a young man was interested in marrying a woman, he would go to her father or the head of the household and “serve” for a period of time that typically lasted one year. This labor was not payment for a bride but a test of the prospective son-in-law’s character. He was made to work hard and perform unpleasant tasks, not so much for the benefit of the household, but in order to test his strength, endurance, and intelligence. Fixing the hole in the sky is exactly this kind of test. With two suitors, the son-in-law service becomes a competition between the two bachelors. Changing the weather is a typical shamanic competition to establish who is more powerful. Judging from Raven-Man’s ineffectiveness and his sneaking off to eat alone in the first scene (a selfish and immoral act all across the North), we should surmise that his claim to hunting the furs is a lie, but Little-Bird-Man just keeps silent (as he does again after witnessing Raven-Man’s duplicity) and lets his actions speak for him. However, Little-Bird-Man succeeds not alone but in cooperation with Quyyqinyaqu; even heroes aren’t *prima donnas*. I can’t say whether Raven-Man’s peeing in his boots is an index of his cowardice or just his general grossness. While ravens are sacred, they are also disgusting—eating shit and decayed animals isn’t pretty. Contemporary Koryaks and Nymylans to whom I have shown these stories find Raven-Man pretty funny.

The women in this story (and in Koryak culture in general) are not helpless damsels. Yiniangawgut’s sister Chanyai is powerful enough to conjure water out of a dry riverbed and thus attract River-Man’s help and wed him. While River-Man can only bring forth a little light, Yiniangawgut restores the daylight completely. Raven-Woman appears as the most pitiful creature in the story, wailing her brother’s death yet forced to accept it and rationalize it. In Koryak narratives most people in her situation avenge the murder of a relative, revive him through shamanistic power, or both. The fact that Raven-Woman simply “left” makes her pitiful, but she is not weak because she is a woman. Indeed, women (like Yiniangawgut here or her mother, Miti, in other stories) are usually the most powerful agents in a story. Raven-Woman is weak and pitiful because she is alone.

Anyone familiar with narratives of the Northwest Coast of America will recognize the motif of Raven carrying the sun in his mouth and releasing it, although here Raven-Man carries the sun to hide it, not release it. On the other hand, the sun’s liberator, Yiniangawgut, is also a raven, as are all of Quyyqinyaqu’s family. In other stories Quyyqinyaqu parallels the American trickster in many raunchy respects. Even though Quyyqinyaqu is always an important household head, he is not above the crude acts concerning food, sex, and general mischief common to tricksters in America. In this story the trickster is separate from the culture hero.

Raven-Man (the fool) is a fool through his orality. He eats shit, talks a lot, and is generally concerned with food above all else. He puts the sun in his mouth, and when Yiniangawgut puts his head on a house post, she refers to the inside of his mouth (“spotted palate”) as a metaphor for the sky, which it was while the sun was there. Thus, Raven-Man and his bad mouth are a symbol of bad weather, as Bogoras notes in his transcription.⁸

Raven-Man orders several pairs of boots for his journey to the sky. This reminds one of the Chinook “Sun’s Myth” translated by Dell Hymes in the volume *Coming to Light*, where the protagonist orders ten pairs of moccasins and leggings for a long hike to the sun. Jochelson points out that this motif is also found on the southern British Columbian coast and in Greenland.⁹ The motif of Raven-Man and Little-Bird-Man’s competition for a wife is also found up and down the coast of British Columbia.¹⁰ This narrative differs from most Koryak stories with its “happily ever after” statements in the final verse (lines 262–65), providing a closure (epilogue) to a long narrative not found in the other, shorter stories. Notice the repetition of the verb in present tense through every line of this verse. We also see this kind of repetition in the rhyming stanzas of act I. Here it gives the listener a definitively happy ending, which is only partially successful in translation. Also, the penultimate line is the formula “they were living,” which is often used as an opening to narratives. No other Koryak narrative in Bogoras’s collection of texts uses this device.

The second narrative, titled “Ermine-People,” opens with the formula “X were living” and closes like the first narrative with the Koryak word *achoch*, which Bogoras translates as ‘that is all’. I have found this word to occur only as a closing to narratives, and thus I believe it is best translated as ‘The End’, which is an equivalent English formula. “Ermine-People” is divided into five scenes according to the same principle of problem introduction and resolution used with “Bird-Men.” Scene i is defined by the problem of cutting the new child’s umbilical cord. This scene seems to show that these Ermine-People are fools or worse. Aside from everyone having names meaning ‘stinky’, they use an ordinary axe to cut the umbilical cord instead of the sacred knife kept for that purpose in every household’s collection of sacred objects. However, Koryak traditions concerning child-birth and other close interactions with spirits makes this scene ambiguous. During births, funerals, and while traversing spiritually powerful landmarks, people say and do things in an opposite manner from the intended meaning. Thus, in a wax-cylinder recording of a narrative of a birth (made by Jochelson), women tease an expectant mother as being dirty and a stranger. However, this other narrative does use the Koryak word for the sacred umbilical cord-cutting knife (*kiləčvineŋ*), whereas the Ermines in the narrative presented here use an ordinary ax (*a-al*). The rest of this narrative is not as clear-cut in terms of problem onset and resolu-

tion as the Bird-Men narrative because there are no resolutions to the problems. Scene ii begins with the start of the birth feast and relates the misadventures of an Ermine-Girl trying to carry some food to Quyqinyaqu, which she ultimately fails to accomplish. Thus, the rest of the narrative is organized by successive failures to resolve problems.

On the surface this story strikes me as a sort of Koryak version of the Three Stooges. The Ermine-People are stupid, disgusting, and all-round fools. At a more cosmic level the narrative opens with a birth and closes with a death. Ermine-Man's death is connected to someone eating inappropriate food. This is symbolically reminiscent of the demise of Raven-Man in the first story by Paqa. Food is also connected to the birth through the birth feast. Making the expected connection between sharing food and sharing social relationships, the Ermine-People try to establish sociality with Quyqinyaqu's household by sharing their food. Quyqinyaqu finds their food unfit, and they are consistently rebuked as disgusting. They smell like shit, and their food is fit only for dogs. The Ermine-People are buffoons, and since they can't act like people, they turn into real animals forever. This is a theme common to much of North America, where the mythic age is populated with a variety of beings who crisscross the boundaries between human and animal. Some beings ultimately become people with some sort of spiritual connection with the animal whose form they had periodically assumed. Others end up permanently animals that reflect one or more inherent traits of the beings. Thus, we see that Raven-Man and Little-Bird-Man change shapes but are ultimately ancestors of contemporary Koryak people, while the Ermine-People end up as ermine because they are inherently more erminelike.

Unlike many of the contributions by elders and senior scholars to this collection and the *Coming to Light* volume, my translation and editing of these two stories are just the beginning of my work with oral narratives. I have recorded several contemporary narratives in Kamchatka, and publication of those stories is planned. Presently I am transcribing and translating several narratives recorded by Jochelson on wax cylinders in 1901 (including the one mentioned earlier) with the help of the last few elders who understand well the dialects of Koryak on those recordings. Evidence of direct connections between northeast Asian languages and those of the Americas is still lacking, and definitive relationships may never be demonstrated.¹¹ However, this does not invalidate the cultural connections that seem obvious. As Franz Boas and his students demonstrated nearly a century ago, people can be unrelated physically or linguistically but still participate in a common general culture. Although anthropologists have abandoned the concept of culture area as not being useful, many native people in Kamchatka think of themselves as part of a culture area that includes Alaska and other parts of northwestern America as they compare their rituals of the first salmon, funer-

ary practices, mythologies, and other practices and beliefs with those of American Indians. Native Kamchatkans and Siberians are communicating with and visiting Native Americans in Canada and the United States. The present generation of elders, activists, and indigenous scholars are sharing stories, material goods, and political strategies back and forth. The Pacific is not a barrier; it's a highway.

A NOTE ON ORTHOGRAPHY AND PRONUNCIATION

The letters *ng* represent a single sound similar to the final sound in the English word *sing*, as opposed to the two sounds in *finger*. Koryak and Chukchi do not have voiced stops. The letter *g* alone represents a voiced fricative, articulated in the back of the throat and sounding similar to a French *r*. *Q* represents a back velar, which sounds like a *k* to English speakers, but is made farther back and contrasts phonemically with *k* in Koryak. *V* is made with just the lips and is softer and sounds more like *w* than in English. The letters *ny* represent a single sound (palatalized *n*) similar to the sound in the word *canyon*.

NOTES

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1. Bogoras, "Folklore of Northeastern Asia, as Compared with That of Northwestern America," 579.
2. Bogoras, *Koryak Texts*.
3. For a general introduction to the cultures and the anthropology of the North Pacific, see relevant chapters in Fitzhugh and Crowell, *Crossroads of Continents*. Rethmann's *Tundra Passages* is an interesting ethnography of Alutor Koryaks focusing on women's lives. A description of Koryak language and culture, as well as a full bibliography, pictures, an index of scholars working in the area, and links to other resources can be found at <http://www.koryaks.net>.
4. Jochelson, *Koryak*.
5. Jochelson, *Koryak*, 250–53.
6. Tedlock, "On the Translation of Style in Oral Narrative," 43–46.
7. These statements are based on both studying publications by Bogoras and Zhukova on Koryak grammar and talking to Koryaks themselves on why they chose one tense instead of another. Note also that since these stories occurred in a mythic era, this distant past tense (or Past II) functions as a narrative past tense.
8. Bogoras, *Koryak Texts*, 20.
9. Jochelson, *Koryak*, 369.
10. Franz Boas, *Indianische Sagen*, cited in Jochelson, *Koryak*, 372–82.
11. The most comprehensive investigation to date is Fortescue, *Linguistic Relations across the Bering Strait*.

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