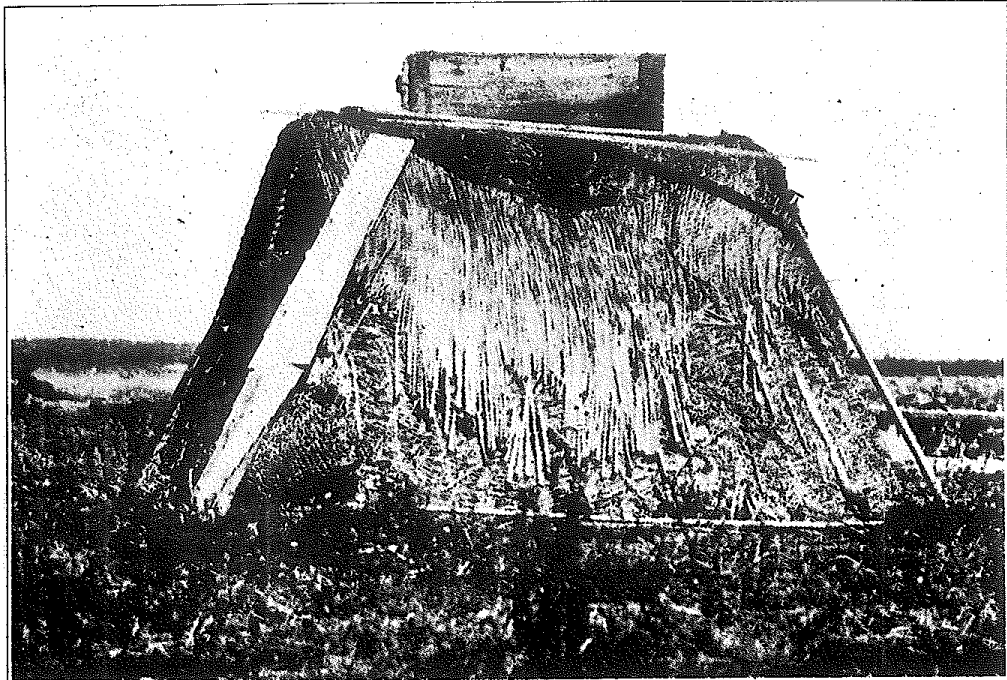


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Department of Indian Art

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KLAMATH SUMMER HOUSE
(University of California)

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THE KLAMATH INDIANS

THE KLAMATH INDIANS are a semi-sedentary people belonging to the Lutuamian linguistic stock now living on the Klamath reservation in south central Oregon. The present population is about 475, of whom about 175 are full blood. The tribe has been steadily decreasing in numbers from a high point of about 1,200.

PRESENT CONDITION. The Klamath have been unusually receptive of the white man's way of living, so that much of their old life has disappeared. The descriptions contained in this leaflet are very largely of things which no longer exist. The available information does not clearly state how much of the old life remains.

NAME. The people call themselves maklaks, meaning "men". The word Klamath, pronounced kla-met by them, is of unknown origin and meaning. Ogden, the discoverer of the tribe, heard of them as "Clammitte" from the Columbia River tribes. The tribe should not be confused with those California tribes who live on the Klamath River in that state and are locally called Klamath River Indians.

HISTORY. The Klamath have lived in their present territory for a very long period. There seem to be no traditions of migrations. They first saw the whites about 1825. Ogden spent some time with them in 1826-27 and Fremont passed by in 1843 and 1846. Another party, perhaps French-Canadian, visited about 1835. During the fifties the tide of immigration to California passed through their territory, without, however, disturbing them very much. In 1864 they ceded their land to the government and were placed on their present reservation. They have never been at war with the whites, having had no part in the Modoc troubles of 1872-73.

HABITAT. The Klamath center about Klamath Lake and Marsh and the connecting Williamson River in south central Oregon. The country is a shallow basin in a high plateau, with the Cascade range to the west and mountainous desert and lava country north, south and east. There is timber on the western mountains and fertile valleys lie in the eastern desert. Much bird, animal and fish life existed because of the extensive marshes. The winters are severe. There is little rainfall in the summer and it is often very hot.

PHYSIQUE. The people are rather light colored and tend to lack the high cheekbones and prominent jaws so common among Indians. The men are inclined to be tall and slender and the women short and often stout. Flattening of the forehead was extensively practiced. A pad was applied to the child's head while in the cradle. Naturally shaped heads were derided and called slave-like.

TRIBAL ORGANIZATION. The Klamath nation is split into four or five little tribes, each living as an independent group in its own area. But the groups are united to a considerable extent by their common language and culture. The group around Klamath Marsh and the Williamson River, comprising about half the tribe, are considered to be the true Klamath. Chieftainship is but little developed. Not every division has chiefs. The office seems hardly to have existed before 1864, when contact with the government and with northern tribes introduced the idea. After this any man who was rich, a good warleader and a convincing talker might be a chief during his life. But there were but few such leaders. Leleks, who lived during the middle of the last century, was the most celebrated. Each little group ran its own affairs to suit itself. The shaman or medicineman was the most powerful leader. The Klamath have no trace of clan or gentile organization.

RELIGION. There is no organized system of gods. The people believe in a multitude of spirits which are not sharply defined. The principal religious activity of the people consists in endeavoring to get "power" from these spirits by means of fastings, vigils on the mountains, etc. Everyone seeks for power at least once. The spirits are mostly mythical living beings of all sorts, and natural phenomena. These creatures are connected with hundreds of locations in Klamath territory. The shamans, or medicine men or women, are the strongest influences in the tribe. They are believed to have control of many spirits who enable them to cure disease, to regulate the weather, to foretell the future and to perform many magical feats. These latter are exhibited in the five-day performances held in December in the shamans' houses. Besides these ceremonies there were a girl's puberty ceremony and dances before and after war. The first Ghost Dance wave of 1870 gained some

ground in the tribe, and in recent years the semi-Christian native Shaker religion has been strong. The Baptist church has been at work for many years.

DWELLINGS AND VILLAGES. Two house types were used, similar in shape but differing in materials used. In winter a circular knee deep pit was excavated from 12 to 35 feet in diameter. In the floor of the pit four posts were erected at the corners of an elongated rectangle. The tops were connected with stringers. Four bracing logs extended from this frame to the edge of the pit. The roof was made by placing a series of rough planks close together, the planks reaching from the edge of the rectangle to the pit edge. A layer of tule mats was placed on the planks, to be in turn covered with a layer of grass and then of earth. The open rectangle on the roof served both for entrance and smoke hole. The summer house was the same except that it had no pit and only mats on the roof. It was entered through one side. Outside each earth-lodge was a cook house with a dome of bent over rods covered with mats. Sweat lodges were small replicas of the summer and winter houses. The larger buildings were for several families or for one family with several wives. The shamans' houses were the largest. They had roughly painted supporting poles.

The winter houses were arranged in towns straggling along the lakes or rivers. They were not in compact villages. The summer houses were erected according to the individual needs of each family as it wandered over the territory of the tribe.

CLOTHING. In primitive times men usually wore only a skin breech cloth, a fringed skirt of tule, sage-brush bark or leather, and a basket cap. Later garments of the Plains type were used, shirts, leggings and moccasins of leather. The use of Plains-type garments was restricted to the rich. The usual moccasin was made of woven tule or grass. Leggings were also sometimes made of tule.

Women originally wore the breech cloth, fringed skirt—longer than that of the men—and basket hat. Later they adopted the long dress of the Plains women, but made of deer rather than elkskin, short leggings and moccasins. They wore moccasins less than did the men. In the winter elbow length fur mittens were used. Snowshoes were used. Face painting and tattooing were common.

FOOD. Fish is the most important food. Several varieties are caught with nets—rarely with spear or hook—and dried. Crawfish and freshwater clams are eaten. Though animal life abounded not much meat was eaten. Deer, elk, antelope, mountain sheep, bear, many small animals and water fowl were eaten to some extent. Dogs were not eaten. The seeds of the water lily, *Nymphaea polysepala*, called wokas by the Klamath, is the next most important food after fish. A wide variety of other roots and berries are eaten. Salt was introduced by the whites. See reference one for a complete list.

WAR AND WEAPONS. Before reservation days began in 1864 the Klamath indulged in considerable fighting with their neighbors, except for their close kin the Modoc and the Columbia River tribes. Raiding for slaves to be traded for horses was the main type of action. The Pit River tribes in California were the especial targets of these raids. The Klamath also had to defend themselves against raids from their surrounding enemies. The Klamath tribes fought amongst themselves. The warriors wore long hide robes for armour, or vests made of narrow wooden slats tied together with cord. The shield was rare. The bow and arrow, wooden club and short spear with obsidian blade were the offensive weapons.

TRANSPORTATION. Until horses were obtained about 1840 all travel was on foot or by canoe or tule rafts. The canoes are crude dug-outs made from fir logs. They are from 10 to 18 feet long, 18 to 24 inches wide and about 16 inches deep. Until iron became available they were made by burning with fire and scraping with stone or elkhorn tools. Except in the marshes, when a fork-ended pole is used by a standing person, they are propelled with long bladed cedar paddles held by a person seated near the stern. Several tule bundles, 2 feet in diameter and 8 to 15 feet long, were lashed together to form rafts. These were propelled by the hands.

BASKETRY. Flexible caps, flat trays and bowls of various sizes are made in close plain twining with a twisted double warp of tule, *Scirpus lacustris occidentalis* and wefts of cat-tail, *Typha latifolia*. Geometrical designs in red-brown tule root or cat-tail dyed black with mud and wokus pods appear on a light cream to tan ground. Porcupine quills dyed yellow are sometimes used in the designs. Conical burden baskets, seed beaters, ladles, winnowing baskets, cradles, moccasins and leggings, fish traps, and mats are made in coarse open twining, principally from unsplit tule stems, though willow and juniper root are also used to a slight extent. For details of more unusual technics and materials see references one and two. There are about ten women who still make baskets.

MANUFACTURES. Woodwork was restricted to canoes, rough planks, the carved

figures in shamans' houses, spoons and digging sticks. There were no stone axes or adzes. Cutting was done with elkhorn and stone or shell knives. Fire was made by rotating a stick on a piece of wood on which wood dust was piled. Sewing was done with a bone awl and deer sinew. Rope was made of grass or tule stems. Cord was made of nettle or flax fibre. Food was ground on metates with a muller which was likely to have a double handle peculiar to the tribe, and with stone mortar and pestle.

MUSIC. There are many songs to accompany every activity. The shaman's songs, at least, do not have a number of meaningless syllables inserted. A flute without tongue or reed is made from pithy wood. It is played by blowing across the open end. Rattling sounds are produced by jarring a long stick to which deer hoofs are attached, by striking the split end of a stick on the palm and by rubbing one stick over another in which notches are cut. No resonator is used with the latter. The drum is a small one-headed instrument. Whistles and the musical bow are used for toys. Lip whistling is done.

GAMES. There are several dice and dice-like games, and games involving guessing about hidden objects. The tribe is one of the few which play the four-stick game of the latter type. The women play double ball, the latter being two billets of wood with a connecting string. The men play shinny. There are several variations of the hoop-and-pole and cup-and-ball games. Tops are spun and string figures made. There are foot races, trials of weight lifting, wrestling matches and diving contests. There are occasional social dances.

SMOKING. Both men and women smoke a wild tobacco, *Nicotiana attenuata* Wats., sometimes mixed with manzanita or bearberry. Clay pipe bowls are spherical and those of stone are discoidal or elbow-shaped. The stems are of elder. The shaman's pipe has a longer stem but no special significance. Smoking is apparently only for pleasure and is not ceremonial.

CUSTOMS. Children are born in a special lodge. There is no special celebration. Babies are kept in a cradle of tule or willow for a month or two and are then placed on a stiff carrying board. Names, usually taken from some personal characteristic, are given the babies by the parents. They may be changed later. Most marriages are arranged by the couple themselves, though a girl may be forced into marriage by her parents. Marriages are accompanied by mutual gift-giving. Failure to do this is a social disgrace. Anyone not a relative may be married. Divorce is easy, a wife simply leaving her husband. Polygamy was possible for a rich man. The dead are well dressed, wrapped in a tule mat and conveyed to the cremation place for burning after five days. Much property is destroyed with the body. The house is burned. The spouse and parents spend five days in the sweat lodge, seek a vision and observe certain rules about food and clothing for a year. Slaves were captured from neighboring tribes. They seem to have been fairly well treated. Many were traded into other tribes. The slave trade seems to have developed after the coming of the horse made contact with the slave-holding northern tribes easier. The spread of trade, chieftainship, and the idea of the importance of wealth all seem to have developed in the same way. The people are hospitable and friendly and live according to certain standards of good conduct, in which the children are definitely instructed.

Compiled from the following sources by F. H. Douglas:

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