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Kroeber: *Yurok Myths*

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introduction in which the reader is informed of procedures followed in compiling the bibliography, a section on publications on Indians in government documents, Indian Claims cases, dissertations on Native Americans, manuscripts and archives, non-print materials (films, tapes, maps), and bibliographical tools post-1972 and continuing research.

Murdock, O'Leary, and their assistants have provided all North Americanists with the means of improving scholarship, and I think there will be no objections if I here say for everyone, thanks.



Yurok Myths. A. L. Kroeber. Foreword by *Theodora Kroeber*. Kroeber and the Yurok, 1900-1908 by *Timothy H. H. Thoresen*. Folkloristic Commentary by *Alan Dundes*. Editor's Preface by *Grace Buzljko*. The Geographical Setting by *A. L. Kroeber*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1976. xl + 488 pp., 7 maps, 5 black and white photographs, 3 bibliographies, appendix (recordings of Yurok myths on phonograph cylinders), index (personages, characteristic stories and themes). \$18.50 (cloth).

Reviewed by KATHARINE LUOMALA
Honolulu, Hawaii

The heading clues one not only to the historical and emotional significance of probably the last work to be issued under A. L. Kroeber's name but to the incredibly awesome amount of labor and loving devotion by Kroeber himself and of those who later put the unfinished work together for publication.

Prefaces concern the personal relationship

between Kroeber and the Yurok; the part his early Yurok trips played in his personal history and that of American, particularly of Californian, anthropology; the folkloristic strengths and deficiencies as viewed from the perspective of Kroeber's era and the present; and the difficult editorial problems, intelligently and creatively resolved. Total immersion and empathy with the material, as evident as Kroeber's, suffuse the prefaces through the contributors' efforts to understand what Kroeber had done on the material and what he had hoped to do in the future. A coldly analytical review would violate the warm ambiance with which Kroeber and his followers have surrounded the work.

Through the years after he had collected the narratives, Kroeber worked on them, turning to the manuscript for "the sort of refreshment he brought to a game of chess with a congenial player" (*Theodora Kroeber*, p. xiv). Eliminated was the broken English of either the storytellers or of the interpreter translating for a narrator in the Yurok language. Mrs. C. Goodwin later beautifully Englished some stories recorded in Yurok on phonograph cylinders; those by Ann of Espeu mentioned below are among them. The entire collection is published in English only. Kroeber added for every narrator a biographical and psychological sketch, and for several, especially the two he rated the most gifted, an aesthetic analysis of how, given a certain psychological bent, the teller creatively retold tribal stock-in-trade. Not only is each of the more gifted's stories separately analyzed aesthetically but so are occasional stories by the less talented.

Of the hundreds of footnotes explaining Yurok cultural details and narrative art, some, one feels, spontaneously flooded into minor essays. An example is the one on certain characteristics of Yurok narrative art (pp. 465-467). Nowhere, however, are all the footnoted perceptive comments on narration worked

into a full synthesis—Kroeber's time ran out too soon. Much remains for others to do; Kroeber laid the foundations.

My reading began, not with the several prefaces by others, but with the heart of the book. I read Kroeber's descriptions of his more than twenty-three informants, most of them men, the narrative analysis, and sampled footnotes and stories. Years before Kroeber and I had gone over the collection to find, if it were there (as it was), a variant of a story I was working on (Dundes, p. xxiv). More time and study is needed to say whether I agree or disagree with all of Kroeber's evaluations of informants and their narratives.

To read *Yurok Myths* I had laid down Henry James' *The Wings of the Dove*, curiously relevant it turned out. From a wealth-and-prestige conscious Western social class, I turned to an Indian society in which dentalia replaced dollars and "a full marriage" replaced "a good marriage." Near the end (p. 453) came the startling discovery of the Yurok equivalent of James' character who was a "symbol of differences" and the fluttering of this "dove's" wings. James deliberately leaves us to ponder what next; Ann of Espeu does too, but accidentally. Of her first story in which the hero is the symbol of which I write, Kroeber (p.453) says: "All that happens is that a man is overcome with nameless and irresistible drawing to play the flute to the exclusion of everything else, and finally to enter the ocean and swim westward until he passes under the sky and reaches the land beyond. Yet so insistently pathetic is the handling of the slender theme that I, at least, am left in unsatisfied suspense when the story is snapped off by external accident of recording." Kroeber also draws attention to the swimming flutist's poetic exclamation as he turns to look at the mountains he has left. The unnamed flutist sought not wealth or prestige but an answer to the question he repeatedly asked himself: "What is it I am always longing for?" (p. 454).

A strange Yurok, indeed! Ann, like her brother, Tskerkr, one of Kroeber's "best" informants, was concerned, not with action, dialogue, characterization, or plot structure like another of the best, but with a character's emotions, usually those involving pathos, and response to nature.

Little heard these days is the former commonplace that anthropology also encompasses the humanities. Our bond with the humanities weakened with the passing of Boas's students and many of his students' students. *Yurok Myths* by an anthropologist who was also a literary artist and here discusses his informants' skill with words reminds us of that bond. And I recall years ago in the old tin building at Berkeley discussing Kroeber's abstractions and theories. I, at the time a fledgling student, insisted, "But Kroeber is interested in people too." My more advanced peer then emphatically warned me, "Don't ever let Kroeber hear you say that!" Well, friend, here at last is the book to prove my point.



California: Five Centuries of Cultural Contrasts. Julian Nava and Bob Barger. Beverly Hills: Glencoe Press, 1976. 428 pp., many illustrations and maps, index. No price listed.

Reviewed by E.N. ANDERSON, JR.
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The book here under review is a general textbook of California history, written for the high-school/junior-college level. It merits review because one of its objectives is "to describe the impact of minority groups on California's development from a valid perspective." (That last is a good phrase; I always