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## REVIEWS

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**Ararapíkva = Creation Stories of the People: Traditional Karuk Indian Literature from Northwestern California.** Edited and translated by Julian Lang. Berkeley, California: Heyday Books, 1994. 110 pages. \$10.95 paper.

This beautifully written book provides us with a glimpse into the world of the Karuk, an indigenous group that have lived along the Klamath River in Northern California since—according to their beliefs—the *Ikaréeyavs*, the Spirit People, created the world. The Karuk call themselves *áraar* (“the people”), and call their creation stories *píkva*—hence the title *Ararapíkva*. There were about two thousand Karuk when the gold rush reached them in 1849; today the language is spoken by less than twelve people. This book is a part of the ongoing efforts of the Karuk to retain and perpetuate the traditions of their ancestors. It also serves to introduce outsiders to some of the beauty of their oral literature.

The book not only presents five traditional stories, it also contextualizes them with ethnographic background about life before the coming of the whites. In the first part of the book, Lang describes the daily lives of the Karuk—how they dressed, ate, and lived, as well as their beliefs about how the world was created. In the second part he presents the five stories: Four are creation myths and one is a discussion of traditional Karuk culture, including some reflections on what the future holds. The four creation stories have never been published before; three come from the papers of John P. Harrington, and one was collected by Hans

Jørgen Uldall. The fifth story appeared in Harrington's *Tobacco among the Karuk Indians of California* (Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 94, Government Printing Office). It was transcribed in the early part of the century and its original narrators are unknown.

The Karuk believe that before humans arrived on the scene, the world was inhabited by the *Ikaréeyavs*, who prepared the earth for the arrival of the humans. The *Ikaréeyavs* were "hyper-alive," as Lang puts it (p. 23). They created all of nature as well as the songs, medicines, and customs of the Karuk. When the humans came, the *Ikaréeyavs* did not leave—instead, they transformed into the physical and nonphysical things of this world. Thus animals, plants, and mountains are *Ikaréeyavs*, as are ceremonial dances and stories. Because of this, the stories are subject to a number of restrictions. They have to be told at the proper time of year and cannot be interrupted: "[T]he story is alive, its power is invoked, and once started it must be told from its beginning to its end" (p. 30). (Lang does not address the problem that publishing these stories might raise; presumably publication and reading do not count as telling.)

It is, of course, a commonplace that the stories of native North America often do not follow the same kind of logic or have the same kinds of endings as are found in traditional stories of European origin. (The many works trying to explain the psychological function of Coyote and other tricksters in North American tales are evidence of how different these stories are from Western narratives, and of how difficult we find them to interpret.) Lang provides a preface to each story, and in most he addresses precisely this issue. For example, "Ikarámkuusra Muhrôhas—Moon's Wives" tells the story of how Frog Woman became the best of Moon's three wives. But why tell this story? Lang explains that, to the Karuk, the moon and his wives are alive, and that the story is about the lust and passion that Frog Woman feels for Moon. "We live in a world created by yearning and sexuality, and every time we look at the moon and see Frog Woman there, we are reminded of this wonderful fact" (p. 49). "How Pishpishi Got His Stinger" straightforwardly explains how it is that certain animals (such as snakes, scorpions, and yellowjackets—*pishpishi*) can harm humans. But Lang points out that the story has a more practical function as well: When someone is stung by a bee, the story is told as medicine. "Knowledge, which is what the story is, gives power" (p. 45). In "Eel-with-a-Swollen Belly," Eel travels up and down the

Klamath River, trying to get to where his mother was raised, and building shrines along the way. Here, Lang acknowledges that the significance of Eel's travels is not completely clear, but asks, "[D]oes everything in this world have to have an easy answer? Can it be that we need wonder and mystery more than we need answers?" (p. 55).

One of the things that sets this volume apart from other collections of Native American myths is that the editor/translator is both a scholar and a member of the tribe about which he is writing. On the one hand, Lang's scholarly background situates the volume in academic culture, the historical and ethnographic background at the beginning orienting the reader to the external context. At the same time, though, the stories are explained from the native point of view, and the English translations are informed by a knowledge of the world within which they function, as well as a knowledge of the language in which they are normally told.

Lang's academic background in my field, linguistics, is most apparent from the way that he presents the stories—he uses the traditional three-line format often employed by linguists when publishing texts. That is, each line of the story actually consists of three lines: The first is a transcription of the Karuk words using the practical orthography that the tribe has adopted; the second shows the English for each of the morphemes in the Karuk words; and the third is a free translation. This allows the reader to see the actual Karuk forms, as well as to gain an appreciation for the way that words are constructed and thoughts are expressed in the language. The interlinear glosses are also very helpful to a linguist who wants to use the stories as data, as I have done.

The book is attractively produced. Photos from the turn of the century serve as illustrations, and the titles of the stories are presented in blocks decorated with traditional basketry designs. All of the volumes that I have seen from Heyday Books so far are like this. This small, independent publishing company is to be commended for its high production values.

The book clearly is written with a great love for all aspects of Karuk culture, and it is a privilege to be given this moment of insight into the Karuk world.

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