

According to Teit, the first wave of Sahaptin immigrants settled in the area of south-central Washington and eventually became known as the Yakima. They were subsequently followed by another large group of Sahaptin-speakers who occupied the territory north of the Columbia around the Klickitat River (Teit 1928:99). The Klickitat, as this group became known, were subsequently followed by the closely related Tenino or Tyighpam, who settled along both sides of the Columbia river, "occupying places between the villages of the Wasco and Wishram" from the Dalles east to the John Day River (Teit 1928:100).

Murdock (1938) and Ray (1938) strongly disagreed with Teit's interpretations, suggesting, instead, that while the Sahaptins and Shoshoneans had always been enemies, each group had maintained its own territory through the late prehistoric period. If anything, they viewed not the Shoshoneans as the expansionistic aggressors, but the Sahaptins. Murdock (1938:398-399) suggested that during the proto-historic period, it was the Tenino who were driving south, displacing the Paiute and other groups. Suphan (1974:50-55) also concluded that the Tenino were indeed likely to have been expanding southward, though they had not completely succeeded in displacing the Northern Paiute by the time whites began to settle in the region. Both of the opposing reconstructions of the culture history of the region seem to suffer equally from problems of reliance on memory culture.

More recently, Hunn (1990:66-67) has argued for the antiquity of the Sahaptin population in the mid-Columbia region. He bases this assessment on several lines of converging evidence including the compactness of the Sahaptian linguistic range; the dialectal diversity noted within Saphatin; the existence of elaborate Sahaptin terminologies for local flora, fauna, and places; and the fact that Lewis and Clark placed the linguistic boundaries at precisely their later historic locations (ibid.).

Early Euroamerican Contact

Lewis and Clark were the first expedition to traverse the Columbia Basin from east to west, descending the Columbia River in the fall of 1805 and returning via the same route the following spring. The American explorers maintained a detailed record of their trip, and their journals provide the earliest ethnographic data on the indigenous peoples of the Columbia basin. The Lewis and Clark expedition was the prelude to American expansion in the Pacific Northwest.

The first permanent trading post in the Columbia basin was established in 1811 at Astoria, near the mouth of the river. Over the course of the next two decades, the activities of trading, trapping, and exploration led to increasing contact between the Native population and whites. Various expeditions, some of which were recorded in the journals of fur men like Alexander Ross (1849), John Work (1920), and Gabriel Franchere (1854), began to ascend the Columbia in search of pelts. A short-lived trading post was established by an American in the Dalles area in the late 1820's (Wyeth 1899:175), but for the most part, white traders simply passed through this region on their way to the interior.

Unlike the fur traders, the missionaries who began to arrive in the 1830s were intent on transforming native culture. The first mission in the Dalles area was established by Methodists in 1838. Pressures on indigenous peoples rose substantially, thereafter, with increasing numbers of white settlers beginning to enter the region after 1842. Almost all of the immigrants passed through or near the growing community of The Dalles and a supply post was erected there circa 1850 by two companies detached from Fort Vancouver (French 1961:355).

By the late 1850s, the tensions resulting from the permanent settlement of Anglo-Americans in the region had led to the eruption of prolonged conflict throughout much of the region. The Yakima and Klickitat pursued aggressive strategies in southern Washington in attempts to regain lands wrested through treaty processes. Displaced Paiute groups in Oregon began operating as small predatory bands attacking emigrants, miners, and ranchers. Skirmishes involving the U.S. military occurred throughout the late 1850s and into 1860s. In conjunction with the military campaigns waged by the U.S. government, officials also pursued a policy of treaty making with native peoples of the region that resulted in the end of indigenous autonomy and relocation to designated reservation lands (Malouf and Findlay 1986).

Reservation Period

The U.S. government began to negotiate with the indigenous peoples of Oregon and Washington in 1855 for removal to reservations. In June of that year, various bands of Wasco and Warm Springs Indians in the middle Columbia region signed a treaty with the U.S. government at The Dalles, Oregon. Parties to the Wasco Treaty of 1855 included the Upper and Lower Deschutes, Tenino, and John Day River bands of the Warm Springs Sahaptins, and the Dalles, Dog River, and Kigaltwalla bands of the Wasco (Suphan 1974:13). In that same year, 14 different groups from the Washington Territory signed the Yakima Treaty at Walla Walla, Washington. Many of the Yakima and Klickitat rejected the official agreement, however, and went to war against the Americans late in the summer of 1855.

The Warm Springs Reservation created by the 1855 Treaty was intended to accommodate all of the tribal groups of central Oregon. In the treaty, the Tenino (Sahaptin speakers) and the Wasco (Chinookan speakers) ceded 10 million acres of land to the United States in exchange for exclusive use of their reservation. The Oregon Sahaptins relocated to the reservation in 1857, while many of the Wascos chose to wait until the following year to leave their villages along the Columbia.

Moving to the Warm Springs Reservation put the Wasco and Tenino in much closer proximity to their traditional enemies, the Northern Paiute. Taking advantage of this situation, the Paiutes conducted numerous raids on the dispersed homesteads of the newly resettled groups during the first years of the reservation period. These attacks continued until

1866 when the army mounted a campaign to subdue the Paiute. Northern Paiute survivors of what came to be known as the Snake Indian Wars were removed to the Warm Springs reservation at the close of this campaign in the 1870s. In 1938, the three tribes occupying the Warm Springs Reservation, the Wasco, Tenino, and Northern Paiute, formally organized under the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 to form the present day Confederation.

The Yakima Treaty of 1855 brought together 14 different tribal groups representing three different language families. The majority of these tribes were from the central part of the Washington territory and were Sahaptan speakers. These were the Yakima and the Klickitat groups. The northernmost groups, including the Wenatchi and associated sub-groups such as the Entiat, Chelan, and Methow, spoke languages belonging to the interior division of the Salishan family. The Wishram, from the Dalles area of the Columbia River, were members of the Chinookan language family (Daugherty 1973:28). Though the Wishram and Wasco had traditionally been closely related, the fact that they were removed to separate reservations led to a gradual loss of contact (French 1961:373). Under the treaty agreement, the Yakima chief Kamaikan was recognized as head of the confederated Yakima Nation.

According to the terms of the treaty, the Yakima agreed to concede 16,920 square miles of their territory, retaining only 1875 square miles for their exclusive use. Various misunderstandings led to a series of battles between the Yakima and the U.S. Army in what came to be known as the Yakima Wars of 1855-56. The Yakima Treaty of 1855 was not ratified by Congress until 1859 (Daugherty 1973).

Mortuary Practices

Four principal methods of disposing of the dead have been reported from the Middle Columbia basin area. These include: 1) talus slope and earth inhumation; 2) cremation; 3) plank cists; and 4) charnel houses (Osborne 1957; Strong et al. 1930:40-51). Burials found in this region typically have associated grave goods indicating that the placement of items with the dead was the norm (Osborne 1957:143). Funerary offerings could be placed on the individual, in or on the burial container, in or on the grave, or hung on stakes or trees around the grave. Personal items of daily use were the most common type of funerary object (Sprague 1971:184). Sprague (ibid.) states that the amount of goods interred with the individual increased from the prehistoric to the historic period.

Facilities

Talus slope and earth inhumations. Talus slope and earth inhumations were common throughout much of the middle Columbia basin, though in the Columbia River gorge, they occur primarily to the east of the Dalles (Strong et al. 1930:45). The earth pit burials excavated by Strong et al. (1930:45) in the vicinity of Spedis, Washington were typically shallow, frequently no more than a few centimeters deep and seldom as much as one meter. Pit graves were sometimes elaborately lined with rocks or wooden planks and/or capped by a