

NOTES ON THE KOLOCHES¹

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In speaking to this assembly,² I want first of all to express my gratitude to my new colleagues for the honor they have bestowed by welcoming me among them with so much indulgence, a young traveler who for the love of science has, at his risk and peril, explored for nearly two years the scarcely visited and almost unknown coasts of the north-western region of North America. Their main intention has certainly been to encourage the spirit of individual initiative, which is so often lacking among us. I thank them both for myself and for our country [France], so inadequately represented in that phalanx of bold explorers who, at the price of a thousand dangers, seek to broaden the horizons of science for our country, for which we have to work today by every possible means in order to increase its prestige in the eyes of the foreigner.

One of our colleagues has told you my main itineraries in a preceding session. Thanks to that paper you know the field of my explorations, and you know what special subject I have pursued in my research. The materials that I brought back are primarily ethnographic and linguistic. I intend to extract notes from my travel journals, the nature of which will be of special interest to you. I begin today with some details on a little-known people, the Koloches [Tlingit], whom I was able to observe closely, particularly in Sitka.³

The Koloche family inhabits the west coast of America and the adjoining islands, from the mouth of

the Nass River to the vicinity of Mt. St. Elias at 60° north latitude. The family is bordered on the south by the Shimshyans [Tsimshian], whom some ethnologists relate to the Koloche proper; to the east by the great Chippewyanne [Chipewyan] family, which goes a little to the west of the crests of the Rocky Mountains; and to the north by the Tinneh [Dene] tribes. They are divided into three main tribes:

1. The Haïdas or Kaiganis, who occupy the Queen Charlotte archipelago, Prince of Wales and Revillagigedo Islands, as well as the coast of the continent stretching between the Portland Canal, the mouth of the Nass River, and the sea.
2. The Sitka Kwan⁴ (from the word *shikh*, which means the place where they have their main village, *htka*, which comes in turn from the words *athika*, on the side of the sea, and *kwan*, tribe), which gives the origin of the name Sitka kwan⁵ as the “tribe of people who live in a place called *shikh*.”⁶ These people are spread along the coast and on the Chilkat River and occupy the large islands of Admiralty, Baranof, Kou, Chichagof, and others.
3. The Yakutat⁷, stretching from the entrance of Cross Sound to Yakutat Bay.

The name that the Koloches have given themselves is Ll’inkit,⁸ to which they almost always add that of the

1 This text was originally published in 1872 as “Notes sur les Koloches.” *Bulletins de la Societe d’Anthropologie de Paris*, Ser. 2, Volume 7, pp. 788–811. Paris. It was printed as a separate item by A. Henuyer, Paris in 1873. “Koloches” refers to the Tlingit. They were so identified by the first Russian explorers possibly because of the labrets (*kolushan*) the Tlingit women wore (Krause 1956:64; Veniaminov 1984:380–381). Notes written by Pinart are so indicated; all others are additions made by Bland and Simonds.

2 Some of Pinart’s writings were initially given as talks to interested groups, this being one.

3 Sitka is the principal town on the west coast of Baranof Island, Alaska.—ALP [Alphonse Louis Pinart]

4 The Sitka kwan are one of the Tlingit tribes and are situated on Baranof Island, Alaska. Sitka, New Archangel to the Russians, was their principal settlement on the west coast of the island.

5 This is the Chitgaganes of Sandifort.—ALP.

6 See Durlach (1928:50).

7 The Yakutat are one of the major Tlingit tribes and are located along the gulf coast of southern Alaska (de Laguna 1990:203).

8 From which the ethnonym Tlingit derives, which means “human being” (de Laguna 1990:226). Also see Durlach (1928:51).

Antou Kwan, that is to say, men of all villages. Besides that general name, they have specific names to designate the inhabitants of different localities, names which they form by simply adding the word *kwan* to the name of the village itself.

The current population of the Kolochees can be given approximately by the following figures: Yakutat, about 280; Sitka Kwan, 4,200; and Haïdas, about 2,000; this gives us the round figure of about 6,500 individuals for the total number of Kolochees.⁹

I saw a quite large number of Kolochees. I brought back photographs of them which I will place before you, but my anthropological notes are unfortunately a bit vague. Like all travelers who preceded me, I was struck by their special appearance, different from that of other Indian tribes along the Pacific, but whose special traits are difficult to grasp and render in description.¹⁰ The height of the Kolochee is generally average to rather small, but they always stand straight—well built, robust, and brawny. Their heads, long and oval, are generally small in proportion to their bodies; their foreheads are high and straight; their hair takes root on their foreheads in a horizontal line; their eyes are of medium size, well opened and separated; their color is dark brown, with some of them tending toward yellow; the nose is straight, well made, and of medium size; the mouth appeared to me rather broad; the cheekbones are very prominent; beards are rare, the hair is very thick; the coloring differs substantially from the reddish-brown of American Indians, being rather of a dull yellow brown and bronzed. All this physiognomy, which my description very incompletely represents, brings the Kolochees close to the pure populations of Arizona, the Pimos [Pima], Maricopas, among others, whom I visited on another trip—and between whom I believe there is a close relationship.

The Kolochees are extremely hardened to suffering and all kinds of fatigue, be it from a long march or from long privation. This strong fortitude is probably due to the manner in which the infants are raised. No matter

how young they are, they are indeed trained to last entire days without eating or drinking, and that without complaint. They are made to bathe in the sea, in winter as in summer, not missing a single day.¹¹ Finally, the custom of flagellation¹² must contribute to giving the Kolochees that sturdiness, that resistance which everyone remarks on. It could even be that this primitive custom has contributed a great deal to giving them their reputation for barbarism that modern geographers assign exclusively to them, somehow without motivation. Be that as it may, the flagellation I spoke of above and which I witnessed seems to be meant to develop men capable of defying suffering and bad weather. It always takes place in winter and in the morning, at the very coldest time. When the activity is supposed to take place, the oldest inhabitant of the village comes out toward the shore and calls for some rods. Holding some of these rods in his hand, he walks straight to the shore. Then the bravest of those who are bathing comes out of the water and turns his chest toward the old man, who begins to beat him as hard as possible until he himself is tired or until another person comes forward. After this flagellation, the bravest among the bathers take sharp stones and rip their chests and hands until they bleed, injuring themselves sometimes quite seriously. They throw themselves again into the sea and repeat the process until they have lost consciousness. They are then removed and carried into their houses, where they are wrapped in skins or blankets and placed near the fire.

According to the Kolochees, this flagellation is not as painful as it might appear. But they consider flagellation that is done in the evening inside the house near the fire to be a terrible ordeal. As such, it takes place much more rarely. Here is how it proceeds. When everyone is assembled in the house, at an agreed signal one of the old men of the village suddenly gets up. He is given some rods, selecting two or three of them. The one who is chosen to be whipped, in order to receive the title of *brave*, is stripped of his clothing and offers his bare chest to the lashes. The old

9 Given the extent of depopulation in this area after European discovery and settlement, it is difficult to arrive at accurate numbers for pre-contact populations. Mooney (1928) estimated the aboriginal populations of the Tlingit to have been 10,000 and of the Haida, 9,800. See Boyd (1990:135–148).

10 See Litke (1987) and Veniaminov (1984:380) for other descriptions of the physical character of the Tlingit.

11 Bathing in the icy winter sea was also accompanied by flogging with alder branches. Such activities were designed not only to toughen the young but to ultimately bring success in life (de Laguna 1972:516–517, 714).

12 See Veniaminov 1984:418–419.

man beats him sometimes on the chest, sometimes on the back or sides, until the body of the sufferer is one horrible wound. All this while he must remain silent—without uttering a moan, without showing any sign of suffering. He is then declared *brave*, and nothing in the world can take away that title once earned. But if he allows the least groan to escape his lips during the procedure he is regarded as a coward, and he is often forced to leave the village to avoid being the laughingstock of his fellow citizens.

Totems. Tribal divisions. Villages. Toyons. Like the majority of the different American tribes, the Koloches divide their entire race—that is, all the tribes from the Yakutats to the Tsimshian Indians on the Nass River—into two large families:¹³ one has the Raven or Jéll'¹⁴ for a totem,¹⁵ the other symbolized by the Wolf or Kḡanouk.¹⁶ The Koloches of the first division are called Kikh'sáthi, those of the second Ts'itkhoniathi.

The present names of Raven and Wolf—given to the two divisions of the Koloche nation, do not come directly, as one might believe—from the names of the animals reputed to be the ancestors of the tribes. Rather, they are from men, Jéll' and Kḡanouk, to whom I will return later and from whom the two groups of natives originated. To demarcate today the two divisions of the above-named Koloche nation would be very difficult if not impossible. Nevertheless, it seems that the Koloches of Sitka or Sitka kwan more likely belong to the first group and the Yakutats and Haïdas to the second.

When individuals of one of the divisions meet individuals of the other, they call each other by the name Kounét-Kanagi (that is, those who are not ours, or strang-

ers). And if they communicate, they mutually employ the words *axoani* (uncle) or *axkani* (cousin). Two individuals belonging to the same division are called *axḡani* (compatriots, friends, companions).¹⁷

The two groups of Koloches themselves have a certain number of subdivisions that take names of mammals, birds, or fish in order to be identified. Thus the Koloches of the Kḡanouk division are split into subdivisions of the Wolf, Bear, Eagle, Shark, Whale [*cachalot*], and Sea Gull; the Koloches of the Jéll' race divide up into subdivisions of the Raven, Frog, Sea Lion, Owl, and Goose, among others.¹⁸

These subdivisions are further divided into families that bear the names of the places where they live.¹⁹

Each of the groups just enumerated has its peculiar sign, or *totem*, by which it is distinguished from the others. This totem is borne at all meetings where several groups come together as well as in games and ceremonies of worship.

Each village generally contains individuals belonging to the same clan, which has as its chief or *toyon* one of the oldest men or someone who is recognized as the bravest. A certain number of these villages, clans, or families together form a totem with one of the subdivisions of the two larger divisions of the Koloche nation, and the totem has for chief a *toyon* whose power is hereditary in his family and is generally transmitted from father to son.

I said the names Jéll' and Kḡanouk (the Raven and the Wolf) were those of celebrated men reputed to be the originators of the two groups of Koloches. Therefore it is useful to introduce here the legend of the two heroes as the Koloches told it to me:

13 E.g., exogamous moieties, Raven and Wolf (Eagle). See de Laguna 1972:450; Veniaminov 1984:383.

14 Various spelled as Yeil (Veniaminov 1984:386), Jétl (Boas 1888b:159), El (Golder 1907:290), etc.

15 More recently referred to as a crest.

16 Various spelled Ganook (Veniaminov 1984:392), Qanūq (Boas 1888b:161), ḡanūk (Swanton 1909:4), etc. This moiety may be called Eagle (Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 1990:6; de Laguna 1972:450). In earlier discussions of Tlingit social organization (e.g., Swanton 1909), moieties were sometimes referred to as phratries.

17 The prefix *ax* means "my." The term *sáni* (the spelling *oani* in Pinart is either a typographical error or a misunderstanding on Pinart's part) means father's brother, i.e., the paternal uncle, and is used to address men of the father's moiety who are of his age and generation. The term *kani* is the term for a sibling-in-law of the same sex, and thus is used to address persons in the opposite moiety who are of the same sex, age and generation. The Tlingit do not have a term for "cousin" as it is used in Western kinship. Cousins are either siblings or siblings-in-law (de Laguna 1972:475–476; Veniaminov 1984:383–384).

18 The subdivisions Pinart discusses here are sibs, or matriclans, which make up the moieties. They are the primary form of social group among the Tlingit. Members of each possess a common name, a shared ancestry and history as well as a body of mythological traditions, house sites and houses, and a number of inherited incorporeal rights often embodied in material possessions but also portrayed symbolically (de Laguna 1972:451; Veniaminov 1984:384).

19 Pinart is not clear here, but he is probably referring to the lineages or house groups into which the sibs are organized. Each is usually associated with a named house in a village (Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer 1990:8; de Laguna 1972:451; Veniaminov 1984:384).

The legend of Jéll'.²⁰ There was a time, say the narrators, when there was no light and all the world was in darkness. But there was a man who had a wife and a sister. He was so in love with his wife that, contrary to what savages ordinarily do, he did not permit her to burden herself with anything at all. She would remain seated for days at a time in her house with eight of those small red birds the Koloches call *koun*, four on each side. If she had a relationship with a man other than her husband, says the legend, the *kouns* would immediately fly away. In addition, this good husband was so jealous that he would lock his wife up in a chest whenever he went into the forest, where he used to build boats, a thing he excelled at.

His sister was named Kit̄ouginsi (daughter of the Whale).²¹ She had four sons (the legend does not tell how she had them), whom their uncle killed one after another. The Koloches disagree on why the uncle killed his nephews.²² They say that as soon as the uncle saw that any of his nephews had reached his own height, and particularly when he noticed that a nephew had begun casting his eyes on his wife, he would take him hunting and, getting a great distance from the shore, he would cause the canoe in which his nephew sat to capsize.

He thus killed them all in sequence, and their mother could only mourn the death of her children.²³ One day, in her profound sadness, she was seated on the seashore when she saw a group of whales²⁴ approaching the shore. One

of them stopped and began to speak to the poor woman, who could not be consoled because of the loss of her sons. Having learned all the circumstances of her misfortune, the whale told her to go into the sea, take a small stone from the bottom and, after having swallowed it, drink sea water. Then the whale immediately disappeared. Having obeyed this order, Kit̄ouginsi became pregnant and at the end of eight months gave birth to a boy, whom she named Jéll'. Before giving birth to Jéll', she hid from her brother in a secret place.

When Jéll' began to grow up, his mother made him a bow and arrows and taught him how to use them.²⁵ Jéll' developed great love for this exercise and became such a skilled archer that not a single small bird passing by within his range could escape him. He killed so many of these small birds²⁶ that his mother was able to make a suit of clothes. He then built a small house in a place where he could devote himself to his favorite pastime. One day at dawn, seated in his house, he saw a large bird roosting. The bird looked like a magpie with a long tail and with a long, thick, and apparently very hard beak. This is the mythical bird that the Koloches call *koutsgatouli* (The Bird that Is Below the Clouds).²⁷ Jéll', having killed it, immediately removed the skin and put it on. Scarcely had he donned this skin than he felt the desire and power to fly. He then flew away so high that his beak got stuck in a cloud, and he managed to free it only with difficulty. After this experience he returned to his house, took off the skin, and hid

20 See Veniaminov (1984:387–389) as well as Golder (1907:290–291); Krause (1956:176–177); Litke (1987:83–84); Swanton (1909:3–4, 80–81). Frank A. Golder visited St. Petersburg in 1914 where he developed a bibliography of Russian historical sources on America (Golder 1917). The myths in his 1907 article are translations of those in Veniaminov's 1840 *Notes* (Boas Professional Correspondence, Golder to Boas 17 March 1908). Aurel Krause was a German geographer and a colleague of Franz Boas's in Berlin. In 1879 Krause moved to Klukwan in Southeast Alaska and worked among the Chilkat Tlingit there until 1882 (Krause 1956; McCaffrey 1993). The majority of his Tlingit myths were taken from Veniaminov (Krause 1956:174–193). Fedor Petrovich Litke's short version of the Raven myth (1987) was given to him by Veniaminov. John Reed Swanton worked at Sitka and Wrangell (Swanton 1908, 1909). Boas himself never visited the areas of British Columbia and Alaska where the Tlingit live. All of his Tlingit data were collected either at Victoria or Alert Bay on Vancouver Island, B.C. in 1886 and 1888 (Boas 1888a, 1888b). He apparently did not collect the myth of Raven's origin. It is not known whether Boas had read Veniaminov. He cited the latter in his first major publication on Northwest Coast mythology (Boas 1888b:125), but it is most likely that he obtained the Veniaminov material from Krause, whom he also cited.

21 Veniaminov (1984:388) identified the parent as Killer Whale.

22 In a matrilineal system, like that of the Tlingit, one of the chief's sister's sons will inherit his position, as one of his own sons will inherit that of his own mother's brother. The usual procedure was for the chief to designate a young unmarried nephew as his heir, but given various circumstances, any of the nephews might inherit (de Laguna 1972:490–491). The older man, therefore, may have resented the younger men's entitlement to his position and seen them as a threat to his authority. Jealousy may also have played a role as the heir would also marry his uncle's widow if she was still alive at the time of the uncle's death (de Laguna 1972:480–481).

23 See Krause (1956:177).

24 Again, Veniaminov (1984:388) identified these animals as killer whales.

25 See Veniaminov (1984:389). Note that it is a woman who made the boy a bow and arrows and then taught him how to use them.

26 Veniaminov (1984:389) identified these birds as hummingbirds.

27 Veniaminov did not translate this name, and in fact, in the 1984 translation of his *Notes on the Koloshi*, no Tlingit term or translation is given for it. *Kinyix-ool'i* or Bird of Heaven is suggested as a possible translation (Veniaminov 1984:389).

it. On another occasion and in the same manner he killed a huge duck, skinned it, and put the skin on his mother; as soon as his mother had this skin on, she felt capable of swimming in the sea.

When Jéll' became a man, his mother told him all of his uncle's deeds. Scarcely had he heard these words than he left the house and opened the chest where his aunt was confined.²⁸ The legend says that then the small birds flew far away from her. The uncle, returning home and seeing what had happened, became dreadfully angry. Jéll' sat quietly and did not move from his place. His uncle dragged him out of the house, made him sit down in the boat, and took him away. Having reached a place where there were many sea monsters, the uncle threw Jéll' into the sea. But Jéll' resurfaced from the bottom of the sea and reappeared on the shore before his uncle. The latter, who saw that he was unable to kill his nephew in the same manner as had worked with Kit̄ouginsi's other children, angrily exclaimed: "Let the world be covered with water!" Then, the Kolochees say, the water began to rise higher and higher. Jéll' put on his magpie skin and flew away toward the clouds where, as before, he hung on with his beak. He remained in that position the entire time the water covered the earth. The water rose so high that it almost touched the clouds and Jéll's tail and wings were in the water. When the water receded, Jéll' tired and let himself fall on the kelp (*kit*),²⁹ where the rising tide brought him to the shore.

The Kolochees of the Stikine River claim that he landed on one of the Queen Charlotte Islands. Taking a piece of red cedar (*Pinus lambertiana*) in his beak,³⁰ he flew from island to island, and this tree grows wherever Jéll' threw the pieces of cedar. Wherever he did not throw any, this tree does not grow. One should not be surprised to see the cedar appearing in the great legend of the Kolochees, because this tree has exceptional value for the natives, who use it in the construction of canoes.³¹

According to the Kolochees of Sitka, after Jéll' had returned to the earth, he went to the west. Finding small dead children in a certain place, he resuscitated them by tickling the inside of their noses with a hair from a woman. Who was this woman? Who were those children and what became of them? Our natives do not tell us that.

*The origin of light.*³² As mentioned earlier, light did not exist in those mythological times. It was possessed by a certain rich *toyon*—a contemporary of Jéll', an antediluvian without doubt—about whom the preceding legend did not speak. Light was shut up in three chests that were guarded with the greatest care, and no one was permitted to look at them. Jéll', having learned this and ardently desiring to have the light, stole it.

The *toyon* had an only daughter, a young virgin whom he deeply loved and on whom he constantly kept watch with his own eyes. The legend says that he only allowed her to drink or eat after having carefully examined her food himself. With paternal feelings carried so far, Jéll' understood that the *toyon's* light would certainly belong to the child whom the young virgin would bear. And Jéll' resolved to be brought into the world by her. Following up on this idea was not very difficult for him since he had the ability to take any form he desired. (One sees that his supernatural powers accrue substantially from one legend to another.) So, having transformed into the smallest part of a wisp of grass,³³ he placed himself in the cup from which the *toyon's* daughter generally drank. When the *toyon's* daughter had drunk after the usual examination, Jéll' crept into her throat. Having felt that she had swallowed something, she tried hard to throw up in every possible way; in spite of her efforts she did not succeed.

I will skip the trivial details of little interest³⁴ related to the pregnancy of the young virgin, to the second birth of Jéll' and to his infancy. He obtained through cries and tears the first chest that contained the light, took it near

28 Golder (1907:291) included the phrase that Raven "instantly debauched her." The Pinart translation omits this act and follows Veniaminov (1984:389) exactly.

29 In Golder (1907:291) Raven is rescued by Sea Otter. Also see Krause (1956:176).

30 *Pinus lambertiana* is not the red cedar. It is the sugar pine, which does not grow in this area. The Western red cedar is *Thuja plicata*.

31 See Veniaminov (1984:390). Pinart has rearranged the order of events here.

32 See Veniaminov (1984:390); Boas (1888a:122; 1888b:159–161); Golder (1907:292–293); Krause (1956:179–180).

33 In the version collected by Boas the young woman swallows a pine needle (Boas 1888b:122).

34 Pinart presumably omitted the details of her pregnancy either to conserve space or for prudish reasons. Everyone else includes them. The young woman was originally to have given birth on a bed covered with fine furs, etc., but she could not do so under these circumstances, and had to be taken into the woods where she gave birth on a bed of moss under a tree (Veniaminov 1984:391).

the door, and opened it. Immediately the stars appeared in the sky. At this sight the old *toyon* lamented over the loss of his treasure, but he did not punish the one who was his grandson. In the same manner Jéll' got the second chest, which contained the moon. Finally he extorted the last chest—the most precious of all—which contained the sun, by refusing to eat or drink. This made him sick. The grandfather allowed his last treasure to be entrusted to the child, but with the order that they must closely keep an eye on him. Scarcely had Jéll' obtained the chest and approached the door than he changed into a raven and flew away with the chest. He heard human voices, but he was not able to see anything since there was no sun yet. He asked the people if they wanted to have light. They answered that he was tricking them, that he, Jéll', was not the only one capable of producing light. Then, in order to show the disbelievers what he could do, he opened the top of the chest he held in his hand and instantly the sun appeared in all its brilliance. The frightened individuals fled in various directions, some toward the mountains, others into the forest, others into the water. From this originated the wild animals, the birds, and the fish, according to the place the individuals fled to.

*The origin of fire.*³⁵ Fire did not exist in the land of the Kolochees in those far-off times, and I attach a certain importance to this memory of a time when fire was not yet known because, compared to other documents of the same kind produced by various authors, it tends to prove that it was a primitive age when people lived without this indispensable auxiliary. But the fire the Kolochees lacked existed on an island in the middle of the sea. Jéll', a new Prometheus, flew to this island in his magpie skin, grabbed a blazing brand in his beak, and resumed his flight with all the speed of a bird. But the journey was so long that, by the time he reached land, the brand he carried got fire on his beak and burned it halfway through. Scarcely had he reached the shore than he let the coals fall onto the ground, from which sparks passed to the rocks and wood. This is the way one now gets fire on the Northwest Coast.

*The origin of water.*³⁶ Fresh water, until the time of Jéll', was lacking on the islands and the continent. Only

on the small island Tekinoum, which is located near Cape Ommaney at the extreme western end of Sitka Island³⁷ (Chixllioutou in Koloche), did it exist. There a small spring flowed over which Kxanouk, stretched out, kept watch. Jéll' obtained the water by a trick—about which I will speak in telling the story of Kxanouk—carrying away as much in his mouth as he could take and passing over the islands and the continent. Wherever he let large drops of fresh water fall, lakes and rivers were formed. Wherever he let only small drops fall, creeks and springs appeared.

Finally, after having accomplished all these marvels and showering the Kolochees with good deeds, Jéll' withdrew to the place where he is supposed to live yet—at the springs of the Nass River, in the place called Naschakiéll' (from *nas*, name of the river, *chaki*, from *achak*, the top or beginning of a river, and *iéll*, the name of Jéll' himself).

*The legend of Kxanouk.*³⁸ Among the Kolochees the legend of Kxanouk is not nearly as clear as that of Jéll'. It represents Kxanouk as being older than Jéll' on the earth, but it seems to emerge from these two legends wherein the latter, if not the stronger, was at least the most skillful and the most benevolent.

Kxanouk was a being who lived, as I said, on a treeless island near Cape Ommaney. This island is known to the Kolochees by the name Tekinoum (that is, sea fortress). According to the Kolochees, on this island there is a small triangular rock worn down by the water and covered by a roof of stone. On the upper part of the stone, constituting the roof, a horizontal line of a different color from that of the stone itself can be seen. Following the testimony of the Kolochees this line did not exist in the past, but today it is the mark of the place where Jéll' got the water that he then gave to the world. The place where this spring comes out is called yet today *Kxanouk-ini* (or the water of Kxanouk) in remembrance of the house that Kxanouk built over the spring and on the roof of which he slept.

At sea in his canoe one day, Kxanouk met Jéll', whom, as he sailed up, he asked: "Have you been living a long time?" To which the latter responded that he was born when the earth was not yet displaced. (This word "displaced" has a special meaning for the Kolochees. They

35 See Veniaminov (1984:392). Also see Boas (1888b:161–162); Golder (1907:293); Krause (1956:180); Swanton (1909:83).

36 Veniaminov 1984:392–393. See also Boas 1888a:124; 1888b:161; Golder 1907:293; Krause 1956:183; Swanton 1909:4.

37 The long axis of Sitka Island, now Baranof Island, runs essentially north-south, with the north end slightly farther west than the south end. Cape Ommaney is located on the south end of Baranof Island.

38 See Veniaminov 1984:392–395. Also consult Boas (1888a:125; 1888b:161) where Kxanouk is identified as Eagle; see Golder (1907:293–294) and Krause (1956:178–179), where Kxanouk is identified as Petrel, and Swanton (1909:4, 83) where the protagonist is also named Petrel.

think that the earth on which they now live is not the same as that which was formerly in the same place, but that by some upheavals it has changed its location). "Is it a long time that you've been living on the earth?" Jéll' asked him in return. Then Kḡanouk responded that from below has come the *agitliou-kou* (*agitliou-kou* signifies something that came from the earth, such as a volcanic eruption, but I do not know the exact meaning of this word in the text that I transcribed).³⁹ "Yes," responded Jéll', "you are much older than I am." Having thus spoken, they went far from the shore and Kḡanouk, desiring to show his companion what he could do, took off his hat and placed it behind him. Immediately a very thick fog formed on the sea, and at that moment Kḡanouk separated himself from his companion. Jéll', being unable to distinguish anything, began to cry out to Kḡanouk: "*Aḡkani, aḡkani*" (friend, friend).⁴⁰ But the latter did not answer. Turning this way and that, Jéll' did not know which way to go. Finally, with trembling voice, he began to beg Kḡanouk and to call for his help. The latter, advancing, asked him why he was crying. At that moment he put the hat back onto his head and immediately the fog disappeared. Then Kḡanouk invited Jéll' to come home with him.

When they arrived at the island where he lived, Tekinoum, Kḡanouk offered him fresh water. Jéll' liked this water very much. He drank it with an insatiable thirst and asked his host quite openly for more.⁴¹ After the refreshment, Jéll' began to tell his host his origin and the whole story of the world. At first Kḡanouk listened to him. But finally, as if Jéll's words bored him, he began to yawn and fell into a deep sleep on the very place where the spring was. Then Jéll', having taken the droppings of a dog, placed them very gently beside Kḡanouk. That done, he cried to him: "*Aḡkani* (friend), one would say that you're not well!" Kḡanouk, waking up and seeing what was beside him, took Jéll's trick as real and immediately got up and went to wash himself in the sea. During this time Jéll' hurried to open the spring and drank as much as he could. He took his favorite form, a raven, and flew away into the chimney where he became caught. Then Kḡanouk, hav-

ing returned, lit the fire and smoked his guest as much as he pleased. From this the Raven, who was white before, became black.⁴² Finally Kḡanouk, appeased and tired, let Jéll' escape. The latter flew away, carrying the water to the world. With the exception of this legend about Kḡanouk, the Koloche I saw knew absolutely nothing more about him, though like Jéll' he formed the totem of one of the groups of the first order of the nation. This silence is explained in part however: Kḡanouk is the ancestor of the Yakutats and the Haïdas, whom I visited much less.

Religion. Like that of the majority of American peoples, the religion of the Koloche consists of a belief in spirits, good and evil, which they seek to render propitious either through their religious dances or their songs. To proceed in order, I will first examine the different kinds of spirits the Koloche believe in, then I will occupy ourselves with shamans and their practices.

Spirits among the Koloche are known by the name *iéki*.⁴³ They are divided into three classes: 1. *kiiéki* or those who live above (from *kina*, above); 2. *takiiéki* or those who live somewhere in the north; 3. *tekiiéki* or those who live in the waters of the sea. The *kiiéki* are supposed to live above on the clouds and are the spirits of the brave who died in wars. These spirits appear in the magnificent attire of combat to hunters in specific circumstances: The hunters think this is a sure sign of war. The second spirits or *takiiéki* are those of individuals who die a natural death or who are not killed in wars. The place where the *takiiéki* live is called *ta-kankou* (from *ta kou*, far); it is located somewhere to the north. According to the Koloche, the road leading there is quite uneven. If the relatives of the deceased cry a little, the road is smooth and easy. If on the other hand they cry a lot, the way is marshy and difficult. The *takiiéki* show themselves to hunters in the forms of ordinary terrestrial animals. As for the *tekiiéki*, they always appear in the form of sea animals. But what the spirits are who come in this form it is difficult to say. The Koloche themselves do not seem to know. Some claim that they are the spirits of slaves; others that they are the animals themselves. These spirits, belonging to one

39 Pinart has garbled this section, paraphrasing Veniaminov and adding his own interpretation. In Veniaminov (1984:395) Kanuk, or Wolf, responds to Raven's question by saying that he had lived "since the time when from below the liver emerged." In an accompanying footnote Veniaminov states that he was unable to find out what this meant.

40 As used here, *Axkani* may also be translated brother-in-law. This seems to be a more likely translation as the two men represent the two different divisions and, thus, stand in opposition to one another.

41 In Veniaminov (1984:395) Raven is ashamed to ask for more.

42 Veniaminov 1984:396. Boas (1888b:125) offers a different version of how Raven became black.

43 Veniaminov 1984:397.

or another class, get irritated from time to time for one reason or another, and certain dances are carried out to appease them or a shaman is called.⁴⁴

The idea of transmigration of souls is generally widespread among the Koloche.⁴⁵ They believe that the individual never dies, that death is only a momentary dissolving. And a person is reborn in another form, sometimes in the body of a man, sometimes in that of certain animals such as the bear or otter or wolf; of certain birds such as the raven or goshawk; and certain sea animals—primarily the whale. Veniaminov, in his great work,⁴⁶ makes a mistake in saying that the Koloche believe in the transmigration of the soul only into another man. This purely human transmigration of souls is not exclusive but predominant. Thus it happens quite often that if a woman, during the period of childbirth, sees one of her long-dead relatives in a dream, she will say that it is the same relative that has returned to settle itself in her and that it will again be returned to this world. It is common to hear a sick or poor individual exclaim that he would be better off being dead, for then he could be reborn on this earth young and healthy. One of the factors that make the Koloche an indomitable race comes precisely from their little fear of death. On the contrary, they often go to meet it, bolstered by the hope of soon returning to this world in a better position.

*Shamans and their practices.*⁴⁷ Like almost all non-civilized peoples of North America and Asia, the Koloche have some kind of priest or shaman whom they consider an intermediary between the spirits and men. The Koloche shamans had and still have boundless power; everyone bows before them and obeys their oracles. The shamans have in their power a certain number of spirits, good or evil, which they have succeeded in attaching to themselves and which, at their pleasure, they are able to send into the body of such and such individual. Being on good terms with the shamans is a token of success. On the other hand, being on bad terms with them unfailingly attracts all kinds of misfortune. The primary office of the

shaman is to render the spirits propitious and carry out the functions of a doctor.

The son or grandson inheriting the paraphernalia of his father or grandfather succeeds him in his practices and in his power. The one who wants to become a shaman must separate himself for a certain period from the society of his fellow men and retire in solitude, either in the heart of the forest or on a high mountain. He spends at least two weeks there and sometimes a month or even more, living only on a kind of root (*Panax horridum*),⁴⁸ avoiding by all means contact with and even the sight of people.

The time that an aspiring shaman spends in solitude depends on the promptness the spirits employ in showing themselves to him. When the candidate begins to receive visits from the spirits, the most powerful of them sends him an [sea] otter in the tongue of which, according to them, is all the strength and knowledge of the shaman.⁴⁹ This otter, the most indispensable part of the shamanic paraphernalia, comes to meet the candidate. The latter has no sooner seen it than he utters four times in different tones the interjection “Oh!” Scarcely has the otter heard these terrible sounds than it falls on its back and dies, letting its tongue hang out of its mouth. The shaman moves toward it and cuts off its tongue, which he places in a small bag where he already holds many tools of his future profession. He hides the bag in a remote place so that the profane cannot see, even by accident, a talisman (*kouchtallcouté*, tongue of the otter) so powerful it would render him mad! The shaman also removes the otter’s skin, which he keeps as a sign of his power. He then buries the body of the animal with great care. Once this hunting for the otter is completed, he returns among his fellow beings, where a great meeting is held that night in order to try out the power of the new priest. Some shamans who are not privileged, it seems, to receive the spirits or to kill the otter in solitude, go to the tomb of a famous shaman where they spend the night equipped with a tooth or any part of a cadaver, which they hold in

44 See de Laguna 1972:816–823.

45 Veniaminov 1984:398–399. Also consult de Laguna (1972) and Mills and Slobodin (1994).

46 Veniaminov 1984:399.

47 Veniaminov 1984:400–407. See also de Laguna (1972:673–682, 701–710; 1987:84–100), Krause (1956:194–204), and Swanton (1908) for discussions of Northwest Coast shamanic practices.

48 *Panax horridum* is a taxonomic synonym for devil’s club (*Oplopanax horridus*).

49 For this reason, the otter is strictly considered by the Koloche as sacred and they never kill it. It is only after the arrival of the Russians that they began to hunt them.—ALP.

their mouths with the intention of forcing the spirits to show themselves and to give them the sacred otter.

Shamans today only wear hair of a disproportionate length as an exterior mark of their function.⁵⁰

As I said above, the Koloche attribute to their shamans truly supernatural power and strength. I will cite only one reported example of a famous shaman of Sitka.⁵¹ Stories have it that one time this legendary character had his relatives and aides take him by boat into one of the bays of the Clear Islands,⁵² near Mount Edgecumbe. When they got to this large bay, he had them take him to the middle. Then he ordered them to grab him, bind him in a mat, and throw him to the bottom of the sea. After many difficulties his order was carried out. They tied him up with ropes made of the enchanted skin of the otter and, swinging him four times, threw him into the sea. Thus bundled up the shaman went to the bottom. Then his relatives tied a bladder of the same enchanted otter of the shaman to the other end of the rope. Not seeing him reappear as they believed he would, they went to the shore to mourn for the one they believed was dead. The following day they returned to visit the place where they had thrown the shaman but saw only the floating bladder, and saw the same sight on the third day. On the fourth day the bladder had disappeared; they were returning sorrowfully when all of a sudden they heard a noise resembling the sound of a shaman's tambourine. Moving closer to the place from which the noise was coming, they came to a cliff and there they saw their shaman lying with his head down, halfway up the hill, completely free in his movements, and surrounded by a bunch of those little birds that are only seen in Sitka. On his face blood flowed in rivulets from his mouth, but he was quite alive and singing songs. Filled with joy they ran up to him and, having descended the hill, carried him to the boat. Scarcely was he aboard than his good health returned completely and he was taken home, so the legend ends.

In the case where a shaman becomes sick, his relatives fast for several days to procure his healing. When he dies, the manner of burial is totally different from that of ordinary individuals. The Koloche never cremate a shaman. They leave his body one night in the corner of the barabara⁵³ where he died. The second day they carry him to another corner, and the third and fourth days to the last two corners of the barabara. They fast during this whole time to honor the deceased, and on the fifth day the funeral takes place. Having dressed him in his outfit, they tie him to a plank pierced on the sides with small holes. Of the two small rods of ivory that the shaman used in his ceremonies, one is placed in the cartilage of his nose, the other is used to hold up the hair and tie it on the nape of the neck. They then cover the head with a kind of mat. The preparation of the cadaver being thus finished, they carry the body out and place it in the woods on a raised place or by the water. The Koloche believe that one of the shaman's most powerful spirits always watches by his side, and when they walk by the side of a shaman's grave they throw tobacco or some other object as an offering and ask his spirit to be favorable.

The paraphernalia of shamanism are very numerous: these are the skin, tongue, and bladder of the otter; the drum; and masks carved from wood and painted with care, each different for each of the spirits that the shaman has to conjure.

The ceremonies of the shamans are of two types: one always takes place during the winter months, the seventh and eighth day of the moon.⁵⁴ The purpose of these ceremonies is to protect the village. The shamans, having appealed to their spirits, conjure them to be kind to their relatives and to the entire village during the coming year, to ward off epidemics and send them elsewhere. The shaman is assisted in this ceremony by his relatives, who sing the songs with him. On the day when the ceremony is to take place, none of the relatives of the shaman can eat until

50 See de Laguna (1987) for a photograph of a Tlingit shaman with his hair uncut.

51 Veniaminov, v. III, p. 66 [Veniaminov 1984:403–404].—ALP.

52 Identified by Pinart as “Îles Propres” or ЧИСТЫЕ острова, these islands were named “Batareyuny” by the Russians. The name was changed to “Clear Islets” by U.S. Navy Cmdr. R. W. Meade in 1869, and later became the Battery Islets (Orth 1967:110).

53 “Barabara” is generally used to refer to the traditional sod houses of the Aleut. The Russians may have used it for Tlingit houses in the Sitka area, but this usage has not continued.

54 Veniaminov (1984:405–407) states that there are two types of shamanic ceremonies. One is held “only during the winter months, and only on the 7th or 8th day of the moon.” This ceremony is held for “repairing the residence,” that is, for general happiness and good fortune. The second type of shamanic ceremony “occurs for various reasons [e.g., to discover sorcerers] and at various occasions.” This type of ceremony can “occur whenever there is need for them.”

the next morning. In addition, all make themselves vomit before the ceremony in order to purify their bodies (they use a feather as an emetic). The ceremony begins with the setting of the sun and ends with the appearance of light in the morning. When the sun begins to fall the Kolochees gather in the barabara, where the ceremony must take place and which is made as clean as possible. When the favorable moment arrives, the songs—struck up by men and women—begin, accompanied by the tambourine that always hangs in front to the right of the entrance. The shaman, dressed in his outfit and wearing a mask, runs from east to west (according to the direction of the sun) around the fire, which has been lighted in the barabara. He contorts himself and makes all kinds of movements, his eyes turned toward the entrance and directing the group with the tambourine. His movements become more and more violent and jerky. His eyes roll in their orbits and convulse. Then suddenly he stops, looking fixedly at the tambourine and emitting piercing cries. The songs then cease, all eyes directed on the shaman, all ears set to listen to the incoherent words that come out of his mouth—words that are believed to inspire, for it is supposed that during the ceremony the shaman does not speak and does not act on his own, rather there are spirits that act and speak through his voice. Thus the incoherent words he utters are collected and kept as well as the message itself and the orders of those spirits.

The spirits of different classes are reputed to appear to the shaman in different forms but without any definite order. The priest, in changing the mask, always puts on the one of the spirit he is going to see and replaces his mask in the order of the spirits' appearance. The ceremony ends by distributing tobacco and different kinds of dishes and meat.

In addition to these great ceremonies in the winter months, there are other, more frequent ceremonies occasioned by various circumstances and particularly by witchcraft.⁵⁵ There are individuals or sorcerers among the Kolochees who know how to bewitch their fellow humans and who are called *nakoutsati*, from the word *nakou* or medicine. Witchcraft, it seems, is a body of knowledge entirely different from that of shamanism and does not resemble it in any way; sorcerers are the natural enemies of shamans. Attributing all skin diseases, cancers, paraly-

ses, and even fractures to witchcraft, the Kolochees hasten to the shaman so that he can point out to them the individual who has cast the spell. The messenger must stop at the door of the barabara and cry *O! igoukhouat* (oh! for you). Hearing this cry the shaman, without having the envoy enter, tells him to repeat it. The envoy repeats louder *O! igoukhouat*. The shaman makes him repeat the invocation yet a third and a fourth time, casting alarmed glances and listening as if he heard a distant voice. It is only when the envoy has thus cried four times that the shaman promises to visit the sick person in the evening. The Kolochees believe that by the sound of the envoy's voice their priest can recognize that of the one who has bewitched the sick person.

When evening has come the shaman, gathering together his singers and assorted paraphernalia, goes to the barabara of the sick person, who has been cleansed for the occasion, and where the patient's relatives and friends are already gathered. The shaman enters dressed in his attire and has the drum played and the singing started. During this time he places himself near the sick person and remains there all the time the song lasts. When it ends he must know the name of the sorcerer, whom he reveals to one of the patient's relatives. This revelation ends the ceremony.

If the one who has been identified as the sorcerer does not have rich relatives or is not protected by the power of the *toyon*, then the unfortunate is often himself a victim, having to suffer all kinds of vile treatment.

It happens sometimes that the relatives of a sorcerer kill him in order not to be in contact with a being so evil and so dangerous.

These sorcerers, moreover, are regarded with great fear by the Kolochees, who attribute to them all kinds of marvelous traits, such as making themselves invisible and the power to hide in water.

What I have reported about shamans, with a few legends that I related a short while ago, makes up the background of the religion, or rather of the superstition of the Kolochees. This religious aspect is one of the most original traits of that nation. I like to believe that for that society, where rightly great importance has always been attached to the knowledge of such manifestations, my modest communication will be heard with interest.

55 Veniaminov 1984:407–408; de Laguna 1987.

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