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Photo by James S. Rayner

THE LAST PROPHET

Puck Hyah Toot, descendant of Smowhala the Dreamer, weaves strips of otter fur in his braids and dresses in his deerskin ceremonial shirt when he leads the *Wushat* dance. The shirt is beaded with the six-pointed stars, one symbol of the religion.

START

Drummers and Dreamers

By

CLICK RELANDER

(Now Tow Look)

The Story of Smowhala the Prophet and His Nephew Puck Hyah Toot, the Last Prophet of the Nearly Extinct River People, the Last Wanapums

With a Foreword by Dr. Frederick Webb Hodge

ILLUSTRATED WITH PHOTOGRAPHS



Pacific Northwest National Parks & Forests Association

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DEDICATION

To those who believe a man must have a big heart to be a true chief. And to those who also believe that unless chiefs, both red and white, keep the treaties as they were written, the time may come when there will be more "Last Wanapums."

THE WANAPUMS OR RIVER PEOPLE

FIRM-FLESHED CHINOOK SALMON, THE FIRST OF THE spring run, threshed upstream against the swirling currents of the Chiawana (Columbia River.)¹ Tirelessly they churned through the glacial-green waters that boiled downstream from rock-ribbed canyons in Canada.

Some of the salmon, eventually bruised and crushed by the relentless downsweep of the water, fell by the wayside. Hundreds were speared and lifted out of the cold water. Others were ensnared in the cigar-shaped traps made of willow withes; but uncounted thousands ran the gantlet of the fisheries. Pushing ahead until exhausted, they fanned out into smaller streams to spawn in gravel beds, die, and complete their life cycle—a pilgrimage to the sea.

Eager Indians waited for the big fish at every rapid along the seven-hundred-mile run to the spawning beds. The people called the spring chinooks *nasau*. They preferred them to other kinds of food fish that came later in the season because the early chinooks were easier to prepare and retained their freshness longer.

Fishing was good at Priest Rapids on the Columbia

¹ Chiawana, literally, "Big River." See L. V. McWhorter, *Hear Me, My Chiefs* (Caldwell, Idaho, 1952), p. 77, given there as "Che Wana." (Footnotes throughout give sources for supplemental reading, occasional citations, or extended interpretation.)

River in eastern Washington, the home of the Wanapums (River People),² the name given to them by cognate tribes. Spirits ran high because the icicles of winter had thawed and slipped from the skies. Everyone was happy with the pure feeling of contentment—everyone but a few of the elders and the doctors, the shamans or medicine men whose strong powers came from fasting and years of praying. One of them, the Old One, sat disconsolately atop a water-polished lava rock, dreaming of the past and thinking about the future.

"It is evil—evil," he muttered as he commenced to chant. Swaying his withered body from side to side in time with his incantation, he wailed, "Oh, Nami Piap (Creator), oh, Brother, forgive them. They are taking *nasau* (salmon), eating and forgetting that the first are for you.³ My Brother, they have forgotten the dark days of long ago and laugh when I warn them that the black days will return. Forgive them, oh, Watcher in the Sky and Keeper of the Earth, forgive them."

The din of celebration intensified in the tule-mat houses of the village that sprawled on the sand flat near the river. It had been a long, cold winter and stomachs had been empty at many mealtimes. The salmon run brought food for feasting—easy-to-get food. This was spring, the time of chanting rain that washed away memories of a dreary winter. Moods, turned sour by loafing, gave way to a feeling of unrestrained security.

Thin, blue smoke wisped from the cooking fires

² *Ibid.*, p. 76. See James Mooney, "The Ghost Dance Religion and the Sioux Outbreak of 1890" (Fourteenth Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology, 1892-93, Part II [Washington, D.C., 1896]), p. 735.

³ A. L. Kroeber, *Handbook of the Indians of California* (Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin Seventy-Eight [Washington, 1925]), pp. 53, 60, 104, 188, 294, 313, 439.

where the women stripped thick slabs off the big fish, spiked the meat on sharpened slivers of wood and set the oily, red flesh at an angle so that it caught the blast of heat from the coals. Fat dripped from the sizzling meat and sputtered in the embers, sending out a temptation-laden odor. The tantalizing scents irritated the Old One and he shook his deer-hoof rattle more vigorously and commenced another song.

He turned his leathery face upstream, facing Beverly Gap, where the Columbia River poured through a cut in the long arm of Saddle Mountain.

Closing his red-rimmed eyes that were nearly blinded by the beating icy winds of winter, the sting of summer dust, and the inflaming ache of camp smoke, he finished his wail and mused, "Soon I shall not be able to see Wasatos (Saddle Mountain). Soon my people will carry me up the bluff and bury me beneath the broken bodies of rocks. I fear my ghost will roam forever up and down the river because Nami Piap is angry."

The evening wind whipped down river through the gap, tugged at the tuft of eagle down atop the Old One's fur cap and the shell spangles pendent from his scrawny neck and sun-dried arms. As the Old One mused, a curious little boy, his eyes wide with the visions he was dreaming, crept cautiously onto the rock. As timid as a mouse, the Little One crouched at arm's length from the melancholy medicine man who was locked in a small world of sorrow.

Sensing the child's hunger for knowledge, the Old One spoke. "Little One, you are growing into a new world. Before I am laid away in my burial mat and it cracks and crumbles into dust, it is time you learn of the sad ways of our people. It is time you forget the singing Little People playing in the sun. The centuries are for the young. For us old men, there is only one

short hour. Soon you will go out and find your guardian spirit and it might be a strong enough power that it will help you show the people how to live after their thousand years of uneasy death.

"As I stand here today and as Anh (Sun) stands in the sky to be my witness, remember well my story. The time is coming when I must go back into the earth whose dust lives forever. We live, we die, and, like the grass and trees, renew ourselves from the soft clods of the grave. Stones crumble and decay, faiths grow old and they are forgotten, but new beliefs are born. The faith of the villages is dust now, but it will grow again like the trees."

The old medicine man told the Little One that in the years to come salmon would forsake the river, leaving the people writhing with twisted bellies, pulled tight by hunger. He told how three times, in the very long ago, Nami Piap warned that when the people forgot the old ways they would be punished. The warning was unheeded in the days of Anhyi (Sun Man) and Chalwash Chilni (One-Legged Abalone Man).

He told how fire came once long ago to burn out the world. Another time, water overran the land; and a third time, the wind came with talons that tore the earth and crushed the forgetful ones. After ages of darkness, life arose from the dust and desolation of death. Nami Piap has told the people that there will be one more warning and then the world will turn over, washing the land clean of hatred, lust, and strife.

The last warning was so long ago that no one remembers when. It was after the sun left the river and went into the sky. It was long before the ancient animal people lived along the river—even before the time Speelyi (Coyote)⁴ was sent to prepare the ancient ones

⁴ Speelyi, Coyote the hero; *spelyah*, "coyote," the animal.

for the coming of the Indians. The two strong men, Anhyi and Chalwash Chilni, lived on the Sacred Island, called Chalwash Chilni, at P'na,⁵ and on the smaller Panhandle Island, just downstream. Alhaih (Moon)⁶ and Haslo (Star) were there, too; but their medicines were weak.

Sun Man's favorite fishing place was on the island where the water gushed through the Hole in the Rock and the salmon flipped onto the flat stone where he struck them with a club, killing them.

Sun Man and Abalone Man were friends until they quarreled about the law that salmon could not be caught with a dip net in the manner of the people lower on the river. Abalone Man, being the stronger, killed Sun Man and cut off his head. Sun Man's body was thrown into the river and there, with arms and legs outstretched and head not far away, it remains to this day.

Because Abalone Man killed Sun Man, Nami Piap was angry and sent darkness. He filled the air with fire and ashes. One-Legged Abalone Man had no place to stay, so he wandered down the river to join his people in the ocean and never returned to Priest Rapids. After that, Nami Piap created the ancient people and sent Anhyi into the sky to sit still all the time and warm the world. There was no darkness and no winter, just spring and summer. No one worked to get food and everyone was happy. They played and slept, their bellies full of strength. No one worried about the winter and the stinging cold that comes with it, and no one hungered and grew lean. It was just like the old days when Speelyi roamed along the river.

⁵ P'na, the name for the village and general area at Priest Rapids.

⁶ *Alhaih*, the same word for "moon" or "month" in the Wanapum language.

When the people were hungry they gathered in their houses, squatting cross-legged on the twisted mats.⁷ They closed their eyes and the headman led them in singing. Seven times they sang, and when they opened their eyes there were baskets full of food—like nothing known today.

They lived, happy and contented, without knowledge of wrongdoing or evil, until the leader died. They sorrowed for him, wailing so long that they forgot everything but their grief. They even forgot the food-bringing chant. This caused Nami Piap to become angry. To punish them, he sent Anh to hide behind the mountain. Then darkness came and cold and clammy dampness walked heavily across the land, chilling the earth Anh had warmed. The terrified people clustered in their lodges, shivering as cold bit their bodies. Hunger and fear took over their hearts. Many died of starvation, and others wandered away and were lost.

When only a handful were left on the Sacred Island, a young man who remembered the past and could see into the future, summoned the small band. "We've forgotten the sacred song that brings food. Let us try to recall it," he said. "We have remembered only false things of little worth."

So the people crawled through the darkness into his lodge. Huddling in a circle and closing their eyes, they tried to sing. Word by word, bit by bit, they pieced the song together and the young man led them. Seven times they sang and then the dark silence was broken by the awesome voice of Nami Piap.

"You have forgotten me," thundered the great voice.

⁷ James G. Swan, *The Northwest Coast; or, Three Years' Residence in Washington Territory* (New York, 1857), pp. 161-62.

⁸ T. T. Waterman and Ruth Greiner, *Indian Houses of Puget Sound* (Indian Notes and Monographs, Miscellaneous No. 9 [New York, 1921]), pp. 37-39.

"You have forsaken your ways. That was wrong and I cannot forgive you; but, because you are my people, I will not let you perish. You will live, but not in the easy way you have known.

"Sun will warm you again, but only part of the time. He will go away, but he will return each morning. I will give you Moon and Star to watch over you by night. No more will I send food to your houses. You must work to get your food; those who do not will die. You will suffer. Remember that I am the Power who gives you food and makes it possible for you to find it.

"On this island I will put food for all," said the great voice of Nami Piap. "There will be times of cold and times of warmth; therefore, you must learn a new way of life. Every seventh time that Sun visits you, dance and sing. When the food grows each spring, hold a feast of thanksgiving,⁹ sharing the new roots and the first salmon; because everything grows to be shared. Dance and sing so I may know you are remembering. Never taste the first food without doing that. Do not force me to take Sun away again; because if you do, you will forever wander in darkness and dampness where there are only snakes and frogs to eat."

When Nami Piap ceased speaking, the dull glow of moonlight touched lightly on the mountain ridges and filtered across the river and the Sacred Island. The darkened sky cleared and overflowed with an unknown sea of stars. Nami Piap thought and his thoughts created food and life for the people.¹⁰

⁹ William B. Newell, "Thanksgiving," *Indians at Work*, December 1, 1936, p. 28. ". . . When Lincoln issued his Thanksgiving Day proclamation it was to thank the Great Spirit for the fruits of the earth. It was the first real Indian Thanksgiving and it had taken the whites many years to learn what a real Thanksgiving Day should be like . . . the American Indian was the real originator. . . ."

¹⁰ John Ballard, interpreted by Walter Eagle at the First Congregational Church, May 20, 1924, at Pocatello, Idaho, on the

A big chinook salmon slipped into the river with a splash. "Nasau will be the first to give himself to the Indian for food," said the fish. Nasau left his mark on the medicine rock, the key of Wanapum life that stands on the island.

"I," said Choos (Water), "will give myself to the Nahtite (Indian). Salmon will live in me." That is why the Wanapums eat a bite of salmon first and then take a sip of water at their first-foods feast of thanksgiving.

Then one by one, every bird and animal, every root, plant, tree, and berry, was released from a prison of long darkness. *Skolkol*,¹¹ the bulb food root that grows on Badger Mountain and at Soap Lake, left its mark on the rock. So did Yamish, the long-antlered deer. Finally Weohno (Huckleberry) was freed. Weohno is the last of the Indian foods to ripen. After that the monsters of darkness were turned into two big white rocks, like horses, and they are still on the forbidden island.

When the medicine man finished telling his story, the agony of terror was etched deeply on his face as he thought of the sins of the people. "That is what will happen again," he prophesied, and he warned the boy how to live in the ancient way, dance the old dances, sing the old songs that come from the sky, and hold the first-foods feasts of thanksgiving.

subject, "The Religion of the Indian." ". . . our Father brought us land. . . . He did it with His thought. . . . He left us every living thing. Therefore I believe that above all things water is the mother of natural life . . . my heart beats with that water that He left in my body and you are also like me . . . you have water in your bodies."

¹¹ *Skolkol*. This food root, for which the Wanapums alone were known, is pronounced by them much like Sokulk, the name applied to the people by Lewis and Clark in 1805, an appellation which means nothing to any remnants of the tribe. It is possible that the Indians interpreted the inquiry as a request for food and referred to *skolkol*. Tape recording in author's collection shows close similarity.

That is the story of how the spark of a new religion was born among the Wanapums at Priest Rapids. It is the same Wanapum story of creation, told by Smowhala,¹² the Dreamer, to his son, Yoyouni, and to Puck Hyah Toot, the Last Prophet of the Wanapums, who is Smowhala's nephew.

Sun, Moon, and Star, the sacred trinity of the Wanapums, were handed down in legend and were interwoven with the *Washat*¹³ dance, developed to its perfection by Smowhala.

The island is as sacred to the last Wanapums as it was to the extensive tribe, the Sokulks, who lived along the Columbia River a century and a half ago.

There are at least one hundred and fifty examples of unusual petrographic art on the island, and there is, too, an animalistic carving with easily recognizable eyes, mouth, teeth, nostrils and ribs, following a distinct pattern. There are also two large white rocks with carved heads. In the lower part of the island, halfway between the rushing rapids on either side, is the stone on which animals, birds, and plants left their mark when they were released from darkness and given to the people for food. At times it is smothered beneath the sand and cannot be easily found. Another rock, fractured by time, wind, rain, and cold, is incised with sunray symbols.

The island has been inundated by flood only two

¹² See Mooney, *op. cit.*, footnote, p. 717. Like most Indian names, it appears in a variety of forms. Other spellings include Imoholla (misprint), Smawhola, Smohaller, Snohallow, Smohanlee, Smohollie, Smokeholer, Smokeller, Smuxale, Smohollie, Snoholler, Somahallie. (Smowhala, pronounced Smo-wha-la, was chosen after careful checking with informants, including both relatives and personal acquaintances of the Dreamer. It is further borne out by the pronunciation given by Yakima acquaintances. Tape recording in author's collection.)

¹³ *Washat*, pronounced "washot." No interpretation is known to the Wanapums excepting a similarity to the word "to ride," pronounced "washshat."

times in one hundred years. Very old surface burials were washed away then. Some old Wanapums said the big white rocks were horses. Others knew old people who had vague recollections that they were white bears that came from the ocean. One rock toppled over, fifty years ago, and has been partially covered by sand. Part of it has been mutilated.

The feeble embers of the new faith smoldered for centuries among the Wanapums in their dark ages along the mighty Columbia, but it was a generation after the dawn of historic times before it renewed and burned fiercely. On all sides of the Wanapums, the new culture and its panorama of beliefs and ambitions swirled by, but the River People retained their religion and their more ancient customs.

The Columbia River was as unchanging.

Springing from the glacial fields of the Selkirks and the deep, cold, constantly fed lakes in Canada, the feeder streams of the Columbia start their long, reckless plunge toward the sea;¹⁴ but not until the icy water dashes through twisting miles of black, basalt-walled canyons does it finally shake itself free on the peaceful, gentle coulee below Vantage, a no-man's land between the Wanapums and the Kawachkins, whose chief was Moses. There the Chiawana spreads out and rolls through Beverly Gap, the wedge torn through Saddle Mountain. The tapering finger of Saddle Mountain, made of sand, earth, and basalt, loses itself in a desert of sagebrush and dunes as it curves southeasterly toward White Bluffs.

Upstream from where the Columbia River has worn through Saddle Mountain is the little town of Beverly,

¹⁴ *Pacific Monthly*, XII (January-June, 1908), 660, plate. The watershed of the Columbia River covers 60,000 square miles in Oregon, 70,000 in Idaho, 40,000 in Washington, 30,000 in British Columbia, and 30,000 in Montana.

sitting on the eastern slope of the river, its boardwalk feet buried in sand and its head and shoulders almost constantly buffeted by wind. Just below the gap, 421 river miles from the Pacific, is the head of Priest Rapids, an eleven-mile stretch of the worst water on the Columbia. Priest Rapids is the most desolate region along the entire course of the river. In such an isolation, the shifting eyes of the new era easily overlooked the Wanapums, leaving them alone with nature and their religion.

From the head of the rapids to their foot,¹⁵ seven riffles are scattered in the river. The first of these takes off with a growl and a roar; the others follow after intervals of comparative calm. The river drops eighty feet during its mad run, an effective block to early navigation. The distance from Vantage to the foot of Priest Rapids is twenty-eight miles. It is over eighty miles from Vantage to Pasco. The rapids head at Borden Springs, fourteen miles downstream from Vantage.¹⁶

The second riffle is made dangerous by jagged rocks lurking beneath the surface. The third riffle, although shallow, is swift. It is followed by six miles of sluggish water, broken only by the fourth riffle and additional clusters of sharp rocks.

The Wanapum fisheries were along the three lower rapids, where, in places, rocks extend almost across the river. It is here that the Sacred Island, where much of the religion of the Wanapums had its genesis, is located. The water boils and foams but the current isn't as swift as the final rush where the main channel is cut currentwise by a long basaltic mass planted almost in

¹⁵ M. J. Lorraine, *The Columbia Unveiled* (Los Angeles, 1924), pp. 301-5.

¹⁶ Lieutenant Thomas W. Symons, *Report of an Examination of the Upper Columbia River* (Washington, 1882), pp. 46-49.

midstream. This creates the Whale Chute of later days,¹⁷ the channel down which the boatmen sped with race-horse speed for four hazardous miles. The water-course, close to the right bank, was used by the few early-day steamers that made their way cautiously up and down Priest Rapids.

The foot of the rapids was the head of steamboat navigation. Here, before the railroad came, was to have been a city of importance; because the landing was not only the terminus for the wood-fueled stern-wheelers, but from here heavy-wheeled freighters left overland for the Kittitas and Yakima valleys and then trailed over the Military Road across the Simcoe Mountains to The Dalles on the Middle Columbia River. From the landing at the foot of the rapids the wagon road led northeastward to Colville, Coeur d'Alene, and Montana. Along this stretch of the Columbia the Wanapums had twelve villages, the dominate one being P'na.

From the foot of Priest Rapids, downstream to the mouth of the Snake River, the current is the slowest to be found anywhere upstream from The Dalles. Along that course Wanapums had fifteen villages, the largest being Towmowtowee (Richland), Chanout (Hanford), and Tacht (White Bluffs), cities now within the vast governmental holdings of the Atomic Energy Commission. From Pasco, which was called Kosith, northward to Vantage, named Panko by the Wanapums, were thirty-five dwelling places. At these sites the River People had permanent villages, fisheries, or community camps where they met with nomadic tribes. Scattered between were many places where small family groups lived or where food was cached. When the bands

¹⁷ Interview with Jackson P. Richmond, retired ferryboat operator of Richmond's Ferry, near Priest Rapids, October 12, 1950, Yakima.

roamed northward to Soap Lake, westward to the Yakima, or eastward to the Palouse on trips lasting several months, they hid their food stores and heavy camp equipment in cellar caches.

The river turns almost due east at the foot of the rapids. Toward the south the land flattens out, climbing slowly into the Yakima River Basin. Across the Columbia at that point is the Wahluke Slope—desert country the old-timers called it—but it turned out to be richly laden with agricultural possibilities and blessed by sunshine that came early in the spring and lingered long.

The river then makes a vast swing toward the south, a semicircular sweep at White Bluffs. For ten miles it batters against an almost vertical wall ranging up to six hundred feet high. Here was another great fishery and an old graveyard.¹⁸ In the days of the Indian wars in which the River People had no violent part—the days of the blue-coated soldiers and dragoons—here was a military depot.

The jagged, black rocks of the upstream rapids give way to islands and sand bars along its lower reaches. Thirty-five miles downstream from the bluffs the Yakima River flows into the Columbia from the west. The Snake River enters the Chiawana from the east nine miles farther downstream. There the Columbia begins another long sweeping curve southward and eastward until it turns along the Oregon border on its final long dash to the Pacific Ocean.

Here, at the mingling of the Columbia and Snake rivers, was where the Wanapum, Palouse, and neighboring tribes lived and merged. South and east of the Palouses, the Walla Wallas, and the Cayuses, were the

¹⁸ Symons, *Report of an Examination of the Upper Columbia River*, Plate XXII.

cultured Nez Perces, the most important tribe of Shahaptian stock.

On both sides of the Columbia River were other Shahaptian tribes. The Tenino, the major Shahaptian tribe of western Oregon, lived on the middle Deschutes River, having wrested the present Warm Springs Reservation from the Snake Indians in a century-long conflict. Numerous small tribes, allied to the Tenino, occupied the big stream along the south bank from the mouth of the Umatilla River down to The Dalles. At Celilo Falls were the Wyampums, Skeinpahs, Wascopums, Klickitats, and Yakimas, all kindred of the Wanapums in tongue, religion and, frequently, by marriage.

By treaty, negotiated by Governor Isaac I. Stevens of Washington Territory on June 9, 1855,¹⁹ the Yakimas and other Shahaptian stock tribes in central and eastern Washington ceded territory on both sides of the Columbia, extending from the Cascade Range eastward to the Palouse and Snake rivers and southward from Lake Chelan to the Columbia. The Yakima Reservation was created and the fourteen tribes that were herded onto it by the armed might of the new civilization became the Yakima Nation.

The Palouses, like the Wanapums, refused to recognize any treaty, but family ties drew them to reservations where most of them soon became assimilated and their pure Palouse blood was thinned. Only a handful of the Palouses clung to their old homes on the Snake River, there to grow old and die.

South of the Wanapums were the Chamnapums and the Wallulapums, distinct bands, although so closely related to the River People that their dialects were

¹⁹ Charles J. Kappler, *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties* (2 vols.; Washington, 1904), II, 698-702. Treaty with the Yakima, June 9, 1855, 12 Stat. 951. Ratified Mar. 8, 1859, proclaimed Apr. 18, 1859.

nearly identical. They were all known by the general name, "River People."

Along the Walla Walla River to the south, and on the east bank of the Columbia from the Snake River to the Umatilla River, were the Walla Wallas. By treaty, also negotiated in 1855,²⁰ they agreed to go upon the Umatilla Reservation together with the Umatillas and Cayuses.

All these tribes, excepting the Cayuse, belong to one linguistic stock, the Shahaptian—their language varying mainly in dialect.

It was over this territory and among the many bands composing it that Smowhala spread his Dreamer faith. It was called the *Washani* and was contemporaneous, in later years, with the *Waptasi* (Feather Cult). It did not stop there, but penetrated southward deep into the Walpapi Snake Country and the territory of the Bannocks and northward to the Kawachkins, the Spokanees, and even beyond to more distant tribes.

Born in the era of exploration, before the *Upsuch* (Greedy Ones) poured westward like masses of clouds blown before the wind, the new faith flourished for a time. Despite gloomy conditions, it left its mark—even unto the third generation. It will never die, Smowhala told the Wanapums, so long as there are men who refuse to cut their long braids, continue to eat the old Indian foods, and seek great truths in lonely places.

As the new faith spread across the Northwest like restless weather, other news traveled faster and over greater distances, following the natural waterways and traveling from camp to camp.²¹

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 702-6. June 11, 1855. 12 Stat. 957. Ratified Mar. 8, 1859. Proclaimed Apr. 29, 1859. *Ibid.*, Treaty with the Nez Perces, June 9, 1863. 14 Stat. 647. Ratified Apr. 17, 1867, proclaimed Apr. 20, 1867.

²¹ Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., *Original Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, 1804-1806* (7 vols. and atlas; New York,

Dreams and prophecies blown about the Indian country by the medicine men were not conjured by savage imagination. They were based on fragments of stories from the sea lanes, the Coast Indians on the west and the Plains tribes on the east. The dire prophecies of the long-braided doctors antedated, by many years, the coming of the first white men.

The news was welcomed by the people at first, promising as it did another and easier way of life. The life of the Indian, before he was overwhelmed by the white man's civilization, was not always easy. Although the *suyapos* (white people) brought evil, they also brought a manner of living that tempted the Indian with food, new weapons, and other luxuries he had never known.

Suffering and sickness, forecast by the old medicine man at Priest Rapids, ravaged mercilessly up and down the Columbia and Snake rivers, exterminating entire villages before the *suyapos* came. Other death-laden epidemics followed and hovered about the Indian camps.

Lewis and Clark made their long trip in 1805, passing down the Snake River to where the Palouses lived. The explorers crossed the lower stretches of the Wanapum country and called the people they met there the Sokulks.²²

David Thompson explored the main Columbia in the early summer of 1811 and visited Priest Rapids. That same year Alexander Ross traveled along the river. Wilson Price Hunt of the Astor Company was next, followed by Ross Cox the ensuing year and Gabriel

1904-5), III, Part II, p. 143. ". . . here we saw two scarlet and a blue cloth blankets, also a sailor's jacket. . . ." (Evidence of white intrusion and contact from the sea lanes far up the Columbia River by 1805 [Ed. note].)

²² Paul Allen, *History of the Expedition Under the Command of Captains Lewis and Clarke* (2 vols.; New York, 1844-45), II, 44-52.

Franchere in 1814. Finally, after a succession of explorations, a party from the Wilkes United States Exploring Expedition visited the country in 1841. During the first half of the last century a procession of explorers preceded the coming of the railroad and the beginning of land development.

The wise Smowhala sensed these things as the first fingers of civilization began to penetrate the wilderness. He foresaw the extinction of pure Indian blood and the conquest of the Mother Earth. He fought to stem the onrush—not with warriors, for Smowhala was a man of peace—but with his religion. He was slandered by army officers when they could not overcome his strength. He was the victim of poisonous tongues, of coarse people, and of warlike, plotting chiefs who claimed land that was not theirs and ceded the homes of the Wanapums to the government without justice or authority.

Smowhala and his people refused to recognize the Yakima war chief, Kamiakin, of Palouse and Yakima blood; the Walla Walla chief, Homli; or any who met in council with Governor Stevens and signed away vast holdings for patches of land and shallow promises that have not been kept to this day.²³

"They did not speak for us," Smowhala told the last of the Wanapums.

The Dreamer religion had the missionaries to contend with as well as the explorers and treaty chiefs.

Following the era of the men of God, railway exploration parties sifted across the Indian lands; then came miners to shovel through the gravel in the river beds and strip the soil from the hillsides. After the interruption of the Indian wars came the cattlemen.

²³ Francis A. Walker, late U.S. Commissioner of Indian Affairs, *The Indian Question* (Boston, 1874), p. 105. ". . . local chieftains were not infrequently ready to convey away lands that did not belong to them. . . ."

Their herds grazed the bunch grass to its roots and stirred up clouds of dust that settled on the country. When the cattle industry played itself out, the settlers arrived, and the white tide of emigration rolled over the Indian homeland.

CHAPTER II

QUEST FOR SPIRIT POWER

THE HOUR GLASS OF THE RIVER PEOPLE WOULD HAVE RUN out more rapidly had it not been for the little boy—the one with the big, wide eyes—who had sat on the rock at Priest Rapids and listened while the Old One told the Wanapum story of creation.

Saturating his mind and soul in the traditions, the little boy had grown to young manhood when one day at the Wanapum village the prophecy of the Old One came true. The doctor died, unable to withstand the recurring weight of mournful years.

The River People wrapped him in buckskins and shroud mats and laid him on the dance floor in his long house. For two days and three nights they chanted and danced around the body. Each gray morning the wind blew down river from Beverly Gap, died down until evening, when it sprang up, refreshed although heavy-laden with biting sand.

On the third morning the people circled the shrouded body, reaching out and touching the Old One's protruding hand and saying tenderly in turn, "Good-by, brother. Good-by." Then they carried the Old One up the mountain to a patch of scab land where they scraped rocks and earth aside and laid him away in all his burial finery. Once again they circled and this time they tossed onto the body a handful of the earth of the past—the life of the future. They placed half of a dugout canoe over the body and heaped rocks and