

TO express the ethnical relations of the races on the north-west coast of America—those who may be distinguished as belonging to a stock of peculiar characteristics, dwelling between the coast-range and the sea, from Inuit in the north to Oregon, and reaching down to California—few words will suffice, for this reason, if for no other, that many words cannot be used, if we keep strictly to our slender supply of facts, and refuse to wander into the regions of speculation. Before any one can venture to indulge in conjectures here, a sure foundation should first be laid, in conformity with inductive principles, and upon proper materials, such as are offered in the present collection, the first of its kind in the Museum, and unhappily, as seems but too probable, the last—secured, indeed, at the very last moment before a guaranty of its genuine origin was no longer possible.

From an ethnological point of view, the region illustrated is one of the most important on the globe; lying where two continents approach each other, at Behring's Strait, while a third, represented by a group of islands, interposes between; and the peculiar physiognomy which on this coast has a sort of intermediate character—on the one side showing a tinge of the Polynesian, and on the other with branches bearing similarity to the Nahuatl nomads—has often attracted the attention of observers, who have never failed to regret that, for the satisfactory solution of the problems which appear to be complicated here, there seems to be a greater lack of data than anywhere else.

Since the cession of the Russian possessions to the United States, it is true that our information has been considerably increased; but at the same time, as unavoidably follows the sudden injection of a new and energetic activity, the disintegration of former conditions has made rapid strides; and of these former conditions we can gather but little of a connected character concerning the local and typical peculiarities of social life, on account of the small number of observers between the end of the last century and the middle of this.

To raise an individual above the social level here, as in Nagar, in Assam, in Kunama, etc., wealth is the only means; or as with the Orang Kayan of the Malays (as is shown by the gift-festivals, or Potlach, which are not given merely to assist work for the common good), to preserve an enduring memory; and the natural connection of the acquisition of property with trade causes the trader, as a man of approved skill, to be sought out by strangers as an intermediary with his own countrymen, which may lead to a permanent title of honor, at first conferred out of politeness or flattery merely, as in the case of the "kings" of Guinea. As the experience needful for the successful conduct of such negotiations grows with years, a certain superiority comes to be accorded to the old men, as, in this respect, the stronger—whereas, in earlier times, they were thrust aside because physically the weaker—and in Cook's day the old men in Nootka were the chiefs (Acweek), analogous to the senates of Gerontes, common to all the five continents.

Now when the duration of rule has acquired a reasonable permanence, the son of the chief comes to be looked upon as his natural successor, either because he may be supposed to have derived from his father's instructions a portion of his wisdom, or because of the inheritance from his predecessor of certain mysteries, like those among the Haidah, called the *Alikwa* (a jewsharp, etc.), if indeed the father does not in his life, like the king of Tahiti, abdicate in his son's favor. When this succession has grown to be an established custom, it becomes easy to suppose that in this higher and mightier person there resides some higher power; as is seen in his claim to be provided with all things necessary to his subsistence, or to be assisted to procure them; in his regulation of the weather, his "medicine" for their crops, as the *Aula-manna* of Kunama; or, among hunting races, in his conjurations to draw together the game, ceremonies of a like kind at their fishing, etc.

In this way the threads of mysterious relations begin to be spun between the people and their priest-chief, as their intermediary with the supernatural world, until the whole is involved in a glamour of mystery.

The greater the power in the hands of the chief, the more urgent is the desire of the people that he shall use his control over their weal or woe, only for their benefit; from which cause they expect that he will not shun those acts of self-denial and other austerities which are necessary as expiations of the people's offences, but will consent to sacrifice his personal comfort to their good.

But with the increase of the discomfort, or even danger attendant on such a position, as in the case of the African rain-makers, there arises a struggle to be freed from all religious obligations; and the conflict between temporal and spiritual power may be followed through its phases, modified by local relations, in the history of Japan or Tonga, of Cochin China or Meroe, by the Chibcha, and in many other places.

In the ceremonies attending the dream of puberty among the Indians, the consecration of the Ritschi in India, and of the Atua in Nukahiva, and other similar occasions, solitude is an important factor; and that the accompanying fasting (as the "grass-eating" at Millbank Sound and at Babylon) leads from physical to psychical disturbance is evident from the fact that on the return of the neo-