

# MIWOK CULTS

BY

EDWARD WINSLOW GIFFORD

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## INTRODUCTION

This preliminary paper concerns, except for the section on the Southern Miwok, the Central and Northern Miwok of the Sierra Nevada region of central California. It is based upon information collected during several seasons' field work beginning in 1913. The purpose is to discuss particularly the two cults which have come in contact among the Miwok: the God-impersonating Cult of north-central California, and the hitherto undescribed Bird Cult of south-central and southern California. First, however, a few facts about other aspects of Miwok religion will be stated.

The Miwok formerly cremated the dead. A year after a death a mourning ceremony was held, offerings being burned. In funeral and

mourning ceremonies the Miwok moieties performed reciprocal services in the conduct of the ceremonies and the washing of the mourners, land moiety persons washing water moiety mourners and vice versa.

Shamans were of importance among the Miwok, but did not form societies or associations. As usual their principal function was curing. Some, regarded as malevolent, were called *tuyuku*, "poisoner." Important specialists were bear and rattlesnake shamans. Of less importance were the coyote shamans, rain shamans, operators for good luck in deer-hunting, acorn-gathering, and so on. The bear and rattlesnake shamans are of particular interest, since they gave public demonstrations of their power. The rattlesnake shamans exhibited and handled rattlesnakes at ceremonial gatherings, usually in the earth-covered dance house. Such exhibitions have parallels among the neighboring Yokuts and suggest the handling of snakes by the Hopi.

The shamans' contest, well known among the Maidu, is found only among the most northerly Miwok in contact with the Maidu. It is called *tuyuka* (cf. *tuyuku*, "poisoner"). The contest is obviously an intrusive feature in Northern Miwok culture.

To the Bird Cult and the God-impersonating Cult belong practically all Miwok dances with the exception of funerary dances and the *ulula* dance. The *ulula* is a dance of putative southern origin, the Southern Miwok deriving it from their Chukchansi Yokuts neighbors. It is performed outdoors and has no connection with the dances of the God-impersonating Cult, which are performed in the earth-covered dance house.

The Bird Cult appears to be of considerable antiquity. Its chief manifestation is the making of offerings to certain species of birds both in life and after death. Its outstanding ceremonial manifestation is the *pota* ceremony, an outdoor performance definitely connected with the Miwok lineages and moieties and perhaps related to the pole mourning ceremony of southern California, since the dead are represented by poles.

The God-impersonating Cult, as its name implies, has as its chief manifestation the impersonation of gods, spirits, and ghosts, as among the north-central Californian peoples who practice the same cult. It is in this respect quite different from the Bird Cult which embraces no impersonations. The God-impersonating Cult among the Northern and Central Miwok appears to reveal three strata, an early stratum of dances probably long established, a second or middle stratum

derived from the Maidu, and a third or Ghost-Dance stratum taught to the Miwok by non-Catholic, native missionaries from the region of Pleasanton in Alameda county, within the last fifty-five years. These three strata presumably synchronize with the three strata among the Southern Maidu, which are respectively reputed to be of indigenous, northern, and Alameda county origin.<sup>1</sup> For the fullest extant account of the God-impersonating or Kuksu Cult the reader should consult the several chapters touching upon the subject in A. L. Kroeber's *Handbook of the Indians of California*.<sup>2</sup>

The so-called third stratum of the God-impersonating Cult is to be identified with what other writers (Dixon, Kroeber, Loeb) have called outright the Ghost-Dance Cult, a modern messianic cult dating from about 1870. Among the Northwestern Maidu, Patwin, and Pomo, many dances of the God-impersonating Cult were adapted to the new Ghost-Dance Cult and the extent of the modifications is known. With the Miwok, the Ghost-Dance Cult comprised a whole new set of dances, many with the names of dances of the old God-impersonating Cult of other tribes. As the extent to which these have been modified by Ghost-Dance ideas is unknown and as they seem more closely to resemble the dances of the God-impersonating Cult among the Maidu, Patwin, and Pomo, than the dances of the Ghost-Dance Cult among the same tribes, I prefer to regard them as a third stratum of God-impersonating ceremonies as well as a manifestation of the Ghost-Dance Cult. As to the mental attitude that accompanied these dances doubtless the same qualification is justified. Although the dreaming of the Ghost-Dance leader assumed importance at Ione, the dancers nevertheless impersonated the spirits and deities of the earlier God-impersonating Cult and continued to regard the feather regalia as dangerous to both dancer and layman, an attitude foreign to the Ghost-Dance of the Patwin and their neighbors. A sixteen-day confinement of novices in the earth-covered dance house is also a feature that is related rather to the initiations and secret society of the old cults of the northern tribes, than to their modern Ghost-Dance Cult. Moreover, the Bird Cult appears to have already colored these Ghost-Dance introductions among the Miwok.

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<sup>1</sup> Southern Maidu religious ceremonies, *Am. Anthr.*, n. s., xxviii, 1926.

<sup>2</sup> Bureau of American Ethnology, *Bulletin* 78, 1925.

## BIRD CULT

What I term the Bird Cult among the Miwok comprises a series of observances based upon beliefs and attitudes towards certain birds which are by no means limited to the Miwok, although perhaps most fully manifested among the Miwok and the neighboring Yokuts and Western Mono, in short, in the San Joaquin valley region. That the cult is ancient is suggested by its features, its wide distribution, and by two bits of archaeological evidence (eagle skulls with abalone eye ornaments) from the southern San Joaquin valley and from the vicinity of Sacramento. These eagle burials were found in the Elk hills, Kern county,<sup>3</sup> and in Yolo county, twenty miles southwest of the city of Sacramento. No doubt some of the observances extend northward beyond the Miwok borders. In southern California there is a strong manifestation of the cult in connection with the eagle. Eagles are kept in captivity, are sacrificed, and their aeries are the property of certain lineages and of the chiefs of those lineages. This attitude recurs among the Pueblo peoples, where eagles and other birds are kept in captivity for their feathers, and where there is an eagle dance with the entire skin of the bird, much as is used in the Miwok condor dance. I shall limit my remarks to the manifestations of the Bird Cult among the Miwok.

The Bird Cult has largely affected the God-impersonating Cult and apparently certain of the unique features of the latter cult among the Miwok are due to this contact.

## GENERAL MANIFESTATIONS

Birds played a very important part in Miwok ceremonies. Most dance regalia were made or ornamented with feathers, the attitude towards certain species was decidedly religious, and there were frequent propitiatory offerings made to certain species and to the feather regalia. The latter when not in use were periodically sprinkled with an offering of acorn-meal. For a layman to touch the feathers would cause illness.

The eagle, condor, and prairie falcon were regarded with particular awe. The eagle and condor were bird chiefs and their capture or killing was always preceded by the making of meal or seed offerings. Young eagles were sometimes captured and kept so that their feathers

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<sup>3</sup> Present series, XXIII, pl. 13, 1926.



might be used for dance regalia. Their feathers were especially utilized for the regalia of the *wokile* dance of the first stratum of the God-impersonating Cult.

Only a man who knew how to handle the birds would undertake their capture. They were usually taken from the nest when about ready to fly. Two cradles were taken to the aerie by the hunter. In these the eaglets were bound and carried on the hunter's back like human infants. The actual capture was preceded by a feast on the part of a number of men and women beneath the tree or cliff where the nest was located, everyone scattering seeds and beads as offerings. At the nest the eagle catcher scattered more seeds and beads. The eagle was believed to be endowed with supernatural power or *mana* (*alimi*) and if the proper offerings were not made the eagle catcher might meet with misfortune, as for example, falling and breaking his leg. Upon the return of the eagle catcher to the village another feast was held and further seed offerings made. The eagles were placed in a small brush hut or cage. They were regarded as the chief's property and the chief appointed a man to care for them, but only with the "approval of the birds." Each eagle was believed to be like a man and to have likes and dislikes. From certain men he would not take food, but if he liked the man who was offering him food he would shake his wings and take the food. Such a man was then delegated by the chief to feed the eagles. Each morning seed offerings were thrown over the eagle cage.

For a condor (*moloku*) much the same proceedings were followed, offerings of seed being thrown. Condors were usually killed, perhaps because they did not nest abundantly in the Miwok territory and nestlings were difficult to obtain.<sup>4</sup> Relatives of a hunter threw seeds towards a perching bird before the hunter shot it with his bow and arrow. The dead condor was carried on the back of the hunter who moved along with a peculiar dancing step. The slayer and his relatives and friends held a feast and made seed offerings to the dead bird. While skinning the condor the slayer and his party sang: "We have killed the bird chief. Now we shall take him home for a ceremony. Our chief will make a ceremony over this bird chief. Our chief, we think, will have a ceremony now." The body of the condor must not be left to rot, but must be cremated. While the body was burning the slayer's party danced around the fire, singing and throwing offerings of seed

<sup>4</sup> From Miwok territory nesting condors have been reported only from the Tuolumne and Merced rivers (A. L. Heermann, Pacific railroad reports, x, 29, 1859).

on the pyre. The slayer of an eagle or condor always turned the bird over to the chief, who must give a ceremony. If the slayer were not to give the condor skin to the chief it would be incumbent upon the slayer to give the ceremony. The entire skin of the condor was worn in the *moloku* dance of the God-impersonating Cult, but of the eagle only certain feathers were used for the making of dance aprons, capes, and other articles.

When certain hawks appeared above a village seed offerings were cast upon the roof of the dance house, as was also done when the young were captured. The young of the prairie falcon were taken for use in the *pota* ceremony. In this case the birds were not captured for their plumage, but were kept prisoner as a necessary adjunct of the ceremonial proceedings. After the ceremony they were released or passed on to another hamlet that desired to make the ceremony.

In obtaining crow and meadowlark feathers for the *tula* and *hiweyi* dances of the third stratum of the God-impersonating Cult it was forbidden to molest the birds, the regalia maker contenting himself with molted feathers collected at the roosting places. These two bird deities are reputed to have taught the *hiweyi* and *tula* dances to a man whom they kept sixteen days beneath a pond. In plucking goose feathers, meal or seed offerings were scattered over the corpse. The observances just recited, although incidental to the making of regalia for the God-impersonating Cult, are, I believe, manifestations of the Bird Cult which have been incorporated in the God-impersonating Cult. The reason for believing so is the apparent absence of these features among the more northerly tribes who practice the God-impersonating Cult.

Birds play an important part in Miwok mythology and totemism. It is not surprising therefore that they enter prominently into ceremonialism. The Bird Cult is distinctly southern in its affiliations, the God-impersonating Cult definitely northern. The Miwok constitute the common ground whereon the two cults have met and to a considerable extent mingled. In thus stressing the avian bias of the Miwok form of the God-impersonating Cult, the bird impersonations among the Maidu and Patwin should not be overlooked. I believe, however, that these impersonations have nothing to do with the Bird Cult proper, and are truly manifestations of the God-impersonating Cult, for the crux of the Bird Cult is veneration for certain species, whereas the crux of the God-impersonating Cult is the dramatic representation of ghosts, gods, and spirits, some of which are conceived of as mammals and birds.

## THE CHIEF AS THE BIRD CULT LEADER

In central and southern California the chief was the ceremonial leader in the Bird Cult. The aeries were his, the captive birds were in his custody, as were skins and feathers, and in the actual ceremonies he functioned as director. There was apparently believed to be a sympathetic bond between the chief of men and the chief of birds, the eagle. The chief was responsible for the giving of a ceremony once a condor skin was turned over to him. To fail to give it was believed to bring supernatural punishment upon the chief, presumably from the condor.

## POTA CEREMONY

The outstanding feature of the Bird Cult of the Northern and Central Miwok was the *pota* ceremony. This seems to be regarded by the Miwok as their most important ceremonial performance. It was held outdoors and usually in a large clearing. In the center two or three poles were erected, one bearing a bear skin, the others tule effigies which were named for certain dead individuals of some one lineage. The participants were divided into two groups according to moiety. Those people belonging to the moiety of the lineage whose relatives were represented by the effigies supported that lineage in defending the effigies. The opposite moiety did its best to shoot the effigies full of arrows and to pull them down and destroy them. All dogs that ventured into the clearing were shot. The extensive use of bows and arrows and the sham fighting earned for this performance the name of "war dance" among the white settlers. The underlying motive is perhaps similar to that of the "enemy songs" of the Luiseño and other southern Californians.

An important prerequisite was the capture of one or two prairie falcons, or if these were not obtainable, eagles. The prairie falcons were taken as nestlings and reared with much ceremony at the hamlet of the lineage which was to give the ceremony. While captive the prairie falcons were treated with apparently as much veneration as the ancient Egyptians bestowed upon their sacred animals. The exact part that the prairie falcons played in the ceremony has not been ascertained. The ceremony could not be given without the falcons. Once they were captured the ceremony must be given. To fail to give it would result in sickness for the lineage. It appears to me that the prairie falcons

were present at the ceremony as the representatives of the important central Californian deity, Prairie Falcon or Wekwek. The mythology of south-central California teems with allusions to this deity who is pictured as swift, silent, indomitable, relentless, and above all a reckless gambler. It would seem that the presence of the prairie falcons at the *pota* ceremony bestowed upon the participants the blessing of the presence of the god himself.

## GOD-IMPERSONATING CULT

### FIRST STRATUM

The oldest stratum of indigenous God-impersonating dances appears to be exposed in the higher hills of the Miwok habitat, where dances long established have been practiced down to modern times. Among these dances are the *yakuha*, *pusina*, and *tamula*, which extend as far south as the Southern Miwok of Madera county, among whom they are said to have been introduced from the Miwok farther north. The *wokile*, *kumtupu*, and *moloku* are further examples of ancient dances. They are said to have been practiced at Ione and Jackson anciently, as well as in the higher hills, as at West Point, Calaveras county, where the *wokile* at least is said to be indigenous. All three are spirit and ghost impersonations. The *aletu* dance appears to be indigenous to the mountains near Tuolumne and Groveland. It was learned by the Jamestown people, who witnessed it at a ceremonial gathering in the mountains. The *ahana* seems to have had about the same distribution as the *aletu*. Still other dances which are apparently indigenous or long established in the Central Miwok hill country are the *kalea*, the *helikna*, the *henepasi*, the *helkiböksu*, the *helika*, the *hekeke* (valley quail), and the *moloku* (condor).

At Knights Ferry, the modern dance center of the Central Miwok, the following dances may be indigenous; at least they were not listed as of foreign introduction: *salute*, *akantoto*, *lileusi*, *utcupelu*, *sulesko*, *temayasu*, *salute* (with *temayasu*), *totoyu*, *motcikasi*, *sule tumum laksü*, *kalea*, *wehena*, *helika*, *alina*, *helekasi*. That they were all indigenous I doubt, as for example the *motcikasi* in which one of the beings impersonated in the *kuksuyu* dance appears.

It should be noted that only one ghost impersonation (*helika*) appears among the dances indigenous in the hills, but among those perhaps indigenous at Knights Ferry three appear, the *helika*, the

*sulesko*, and the *sule tumum laksü*. Among the Pomo, Loeb<sup>5</sup> considers that a Ghost Cult underlies the God-impersonating Cult. There is no indication that such is the case among the Miwok.

There was no confinement or initiation of boys in connection with the first or second stratum of God-impersonating dances.

#### SECOND STRATUM

The *luhuyi* (a spirit impersonation) and *kamini* dances constitute the second stratum of dances of the God-impersonating Cult, that of Maidu origin. These dances are practiced by the Northern Miwok and are known by their Southern Maidu names. Their introduction antedates the third stratum of dances. Perhaps of simultaneous introduction with the *luhuyi* and *kamini* was the shamans' dance contest (*tuyuka*).

#### THIRD OR GHOST-DANCE STRATUM

Both the Central and Northern Miwok agree that certain impersonating dances were introduced by dancers from the region of Livermore and Pleasanton in Alameda county. The Central Miwok attribute to these people the *uzumati* (grizzly bear) and the *hiweyi* dances. In the former the Central Miwok used curved obsidian blades as imitation bear claws. Their western attribution of the dance is archaeologically confirmed by such objects found in mounds near Stockton.

Although it was impossible to obtain from the Central Miwok informants a full list of dances introduced from the west, apparently because the informants were hill people instead of valley people, it was, nevertheless, possible to obtain from the Northern Miwok at Ione a list of introduced dances which clarifies the Central Miwok situation. The following dances were introduced from Pleasanton by a teacher named Sigelizu: *tula*, *oletcu*, *kuksuyu*, *lole*, *sunwedi* (Central Miwok *olotcina*), *sukina*, *kilaki*, *mamasu*, and *hiweyi*. They probably do not antedate 1870 and are doubtless to be regarded as due to the impetus of the Ghost-Dance movement of that time.

Sigelizu, like the teacher Yoktco among the Southern Maidu, introduced a sixteen-day confinement for boys and girls who were learning to dance.

<sup>5</sup> Edwin M. Loeb, Pomo folkways, present series, 1926.

### Modern Ceremonial Centers

In connection with the dances of the third or Ghost-Dance stratum two ceremonial centers appear in the region under consideration. One is Knights Ferry on the Stanislaus river in Stanislaus county. There the greatest elaboration of ceremonies took place and from there the dances spread into the hill and mountain country of the Central Miwok area. The second ceremonial center was Ione in Amador county, whence dances spread into the foothills and mountains. These two places which survived as Indian villages in spite of the white man's pressure, were the nearest objectives of the Ghost-Dance missionaries from Alameda county. There appears to have been a certain rivalry between the two places in modern times and apparently a suspicion of occult and malevolent influences emanating from one center towards the other. The transmission of dances to the Miwok living higher in the hills was due in part to Caucasian pressure which caused many of the people to leave their old homes and to move up to the higher hills.

### Teachers

At Ione and Knights Ferry there appeared, apparently about 1872, teachers of dances who came from the west. The teacher at Ione was Sigelizu, the teacher at Knights Ferry, Teipliteu. Presumably these teachers were contemporaneous with the teacher Yokteo, who appeared among the Southern Maidu.<sup>6</sup> The careers of these three teachers were very similar. The fervor of the Ghost-Dance movement in Alameda county developed at least these three missionaries. At Pleasanton there were Plains Miwok who had once been taken to live with Costanoan and Yokuts at Mission San Jose in Alameda county, and who were not only allied in language and culture but probably to some extent in marriage with the Northern and Central Miwok. It is not surprising therefore that native non-Catholic missionary efforts were directed to their Sierra foothill relatives who were still quite numerous at that time.

Teipliteu, who is reported to have first taught the *hiweyi* dance at Knights Ferry, was apparently a Costanoan, to judge from a fragment of linguistic evidence. Another dance performed by the Knights Ferry people, but said to be ancient, was the *lileusi*. The performer

<sup>6</sup> Southern Maidu religious ceremonies, Am. Anthr., n. s., xxviii, 1926.

impersonated a spirit from Mt. Diablo, near Pleasanton, further evidence as to the source of some of the Central Miwok dances. Certain of the Central Miwok dances also performed by the Northern Miwok and the Southern Maidu are attributed by those peoples to the Pleasanton region.

Tcipliteu was murdered but his supernatural character was such that his head became a "rolling head," which is said at times to roll after people as they pass through the covered bridge over the Stanislaus river at Knights Ferry.

Sigelizu, a Plains Miwok, taught the western dances to the Northern Miwok at Ione where he occupied the position of *temayasu* or dance manager.<sup>7</sup> The office of *temayasu* was old and was not instituted by Sigelizu. He sickened and died at Comanche, Amador county in 1876, from seeing the ghost of one of his two brothers, one having died.

After teaching the informant William Joseph the *tula* and *hiweyi* dances, Sigelizu carried the feather paraphernalia for those dances over a hill each evening at sundown, going in the direction of the setting sun. He did this on four successive evenings. Sigelizu informed Joseph that the *hiweyi* and *tula* dances were taught by crow and meadowlark to a man whom they took down into a pond and kept sixteen days. Sigelizu warned Joseph not to kill meadowlarks or crows lest he suffer serious illness or death. He might, however, pick up feathers at the roosting places for the making of dance paraphernalia.

At a ceremony Sigelizu could detect a menstruating woman simply by looking around the assemblage in the dance house. He would point to such a woman and order her to leave. If she remained the dancers could not dance properly and the singers would choke. He did this through his "medicine."

Sigelizu taught no beliefs as to the end of the world or the return of the dead; yet, even though these Ghost-Dance features are lacking, it seems likely that his teachings were due to Ghost-Dance stimulus. The introductions by Sigelizu brought new spirits which apparently were not hitherto present in the region, notably the *tula* and *hiweyi* spirits. Frank Powell, the present dance manager at Ione, began dancing the *tula* dance at the age of eleven. The *hiweyi* spirit appeared to him, however, and expressed his dislike of Frank's dancing the *tula*. Therefore Frank discontinued dancing the *tula* and took up the *hiweyi*

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<sup>7</sup> Compare the Southern Maidu *temaya*, Southern Maidu religious ceremonies, loc. cit.

dance. The *hiweyi* spirit showed Frank a certain root which he ate, apparently for the purpose of obtaining curative power. According to Frank neither the *hiweyi* nor the *tula* are ghosts but are sylvan spirits. Not all men who become *hiweyi* dancers see the spirit *hiweyi*.

A further instance of the importation of spirits or fairies along with the newly taught dances was related. Several women one day saw the *tula* dance while they were gathering seeds for food. It was performed by tiny fairies in a hollow oak tree. Upon returning to the village they told Sigelizu, who cried. Next day he went to the tree and sent the fairy dancers home. Then he taught the *tula* dance at Ione.

Sigelizu came from San Jose (probably Mission San Jose, near Pleasanton). He went from dance house to dance house teaching people the dances. He built a dance house at Buena Vista near Ione where he taught the local people. He instructed people to the north of Ione as well. He had all sorts of "medicine" but was no sucking doctor. He talked to a ghost (*sulesko*) outside of the dance house at night. The ghost told him that if he did not dance he would kill him, in fact, he made Sigelizu temporarily crazy and caused blood to come from his mouth. In addition to *tula*, *hiweyi*, and *lole*, Sigelizu is said to have introduced from the west on this occasion the *kuksuyu*, *sunwedi* (called by the Central Miwok *olotcina*), *sukina*, *kilaki*, *mamasu*, and *oletcu* or clown dance.

#### *Curative Aspects*

In a *tula* ceremony witnessed at Tuolumne on June 24, 1922, a woman was treated by the *tula* dancers bending over her to cure sickness caused by seeing the *tula* spirit.

The *hiweyi* was danced on a hilltop at Knights Ferry, at its traditional introduction by Teipliteu, as a prophylactic against smallpox which Teipliteu said was about to come from Ione. The *hiweyi* is today danced for curing, particularly illness caused by seeing a ghost. Before its introduction the *kumtupu* (Central Miwok *sulesko*) was performed for the same purpose.

The dance manager Frank Powell, by virtue of his knowledge of *tula* and *hiweyi* ceremonies, mended a woman's supposedly broken arm at Ione. He effected the cure by assuring her repeatedly that the arm was not broken. He sang over her for four nights, causing eagle and owl feathers to "sprout" from the lower edge of her arm as he stroked it.



That such curative functions in some measure attached to other dances seems likely, for one informant of the hill country near Jamestown, Tuolumne county, had been cured by being brought into the dance house and having the *kuksuyu* dancer dance around him. It seems unlikely, however, that the prime function of the God-impersonating Cult system among the Miwok was curative.

#### GENERAL FEATURES

Certain features of the God-impersonating Cult cannot be allotted to the different strata of that cult. Although either late or early in origin they permeate the whole cult.

#### *The Chief as the Ceremonial Head*

The institutor of ceremonies was the chief rather than the dance manager, who might on very rare occasions take the initiative. Usually, however, the dance manager advised with the chief. The chief always knew the proper time to make a certain dance. If a death occurred the dance would be postponed for at least one moon.

#### *Instruction of Dancers*

Young men might be asked to dance by the chief or they might begin voluntarily. If a young man liked a certain dance he might begin dancing it without instruction. Such a dancer need not see the spirit he impersonated, in fact many never did. Only at Ione, and introduced by Sigelizu, was there confinement of the young men while learning.

There appears no secrecy about the dancers. Their relatives and the people in general know who they are even if disguised. When a dancer starts to learn a dance he tells his relatives, including females. Often an old dancer chooses his successor, perhaps from understudies. The *kuksuyu* dancer usually selects new clowns who are taught by the old ones. Even for the performance of the *kuksuyu* dance a man is not required to know any other dances as preliminary. He may step from layman to *kuksuyu* dancer, which emphasizes the lack of a secret society. The clowns do not instruct new dancers but only new clowns.

A person might become a dancer either as a boy or after he had reached manhood. Another feature that militates against a male secret society is the prevalence of female dancers in most of the ceremonies.

### *Spirits Impersonated in the Dances*

Dances in all strata are god-impersonating; thus, among the Northern Miwok the *luhuyi* and *wokile* dances, of the second and first strata respectively, are both spirit impersonations, as are the *hiweyi* and *tula* dances of the third stratum. *Hiweyi* and *tula* are spirits, or perhaps classes of spirits, that may appear to people.

The conception of the *kuksuyu* varies. Some informants said it was a little whistling bird of the river banks, presumably a shore bird. Certain of the Northern Miwok, however, conceive of *kuksuyu* as a feather-cloaked sylvan spirit with but one leg and a black face. The informant Frank Powell, one night heard a *kuksuyu* outside of his house at Comanche. He heard its whistling and its feathers rustling. Although badly frightened, Frank burnt a feather, the smell of which is offensive to the *kuksuyu*, to drive him away.

Many other dances are spirit impersonations and a notable one is *lileusi* in which a spirit from Mt. Diablo is represented.

The individual dancers who impersonated spirits were not denoted by the exact name of the spirit but usually by the stem of that name plus an agentive ending. Thus the dancer who impersonates the *kuksuyu* spirit is called *kukusbe*, the *uzumati* or grizzly bear spirit *uzumpe*, the *lileusi* spirit *lilepbe*, the *mamasu* spirit *mamasbe*, and so on.

### *Ceremony and Dance*

*Kote* denotes a ceremonial gathering of any sort. This term covers assemblages for gambling and for dancing. At a ceremonial gathering for the performance, say, of the *kuksuyu* dance a number of other dances will be performed, though the whole ceremony is termed *kuksuyu kote*. The individual dances are called by the generic term *kalanga* by the Central Miwok.

### *Dance Motives*

Motives for dances are far from clear. At times the dances were held to prevent some supposed impending disaster which might be presaged by a bad dream, a motive which is probably connected only with the third stratum. Thus, if the *temayasu* had a bad dream about a ghost (*sulesko*) the chief would assemble the old men and the singers and say, "Temayasu had a bad dream, we must dance. Shall we dance

for two nights or for four nights?" Normally, however, the *temayasu* or dance manager took orders from the chief as to when dances were to be given.

### *Sanctity of Feather Regalia*

The feather regalia worn by dancers are inherently sacred and are believed to be endowed with supernatural power which if not controlled or propitiated by offerings and by required ceremonial movements, will injure the dancer who dons them. The flicker feather head bands (*tamakila*) and the feather aprons or capes (*metakila*) must be swung four times around the dancer by the dance manager before they can be put upon the dancer. Failure to make the four ceremonial passes would result in the illness of the dancer. Far more deleterious in its effect is the contact with the feather regalia on the part of a layman. It would surely result in serious illness; therefore the dancers, in their movements about the dance house and in departing from it, are careful to gather up their capes and hold their head bands in such a way that they do not touch the spectators.

Feather regalia must be danced with four times around the dance house, lest the dancer suffer. Apparently the Miwok conceive of no definite spirit or god being offended but of an impersonal supernatural power acting automatically in case the required movements are not made. They characterized the *kuksuyu* dance as a "mean" dance because of the large number of ceremonial rules that must be followed, even the omission of one required movement being regarded as fraught with serious consequences for the dancer.

The feather cape is the most malevolent feather object worn and the slightest contact with a spectator would make him seriously ill. The reason attributed for this extreme malevolence of the feather cape is that two sorts of roots have been chewed and spit over it and a white eagle feather attached to it. All dancers must eat together after a ceremony before any one of them can partake of fruit or melon. A dancer, some years ago, is said to have broken this taboo by eating an apple. As a consequence an apple developed in his abdomen. This was removed by a sucking doctor.

Feather regalia are made for and owned by the chief, although he himself neither makes nor wears them. The completion of feather regalia for a dance is the occasion of a small ceremony at which each of the workers who has handled the feathers makes four food offerings before each meal. The offerings are, as a rule, cast into the fire. This

applied even to water, which would be taken in the mouth and spat four times into the fire. If a man is about to eat acorn bread he successively breaks off four pieces, spits on them, and throws them into the fire. The manufacturers of feather regalia usually have with them a singer who sings certain songs during the process of manufacture.

Feathers of the bald eagle, the pigeon hawk, and the prairie falcon are considered to be *alini* (endowed with mana) which makes them dangerous things for an ordinary person to have in his house. Flicker feathers and other feathers in themselves are not dangerous, save when made into dance regalia and then should not be kept in an ordinary dwelling house.

It is the custom not to burn ceremonial costumes of dead dancers. The poisonous root called *hopolisa*, with which they have been treated, will get into the smoke and kill everyone, so it is believed. Ceremonial costumes of deceased dancers are therefore put under stones in running streams. It is believed that dance whistles buried with the dead will be heard whistling every night.

#### THE GOD-IMPERSONATING CULT AMONG THE SOUTHERN MIWOK

The Southern Miwok are the southeasternmost people with whom the dances of the God-impersonating Cult became established. South of them lie the Chukchansi Yokuts and the Western Mono. The former did borrow from them three of the dances, which, however, they performed outdoors or in a brush shelter and presumably without the characteristic footdrum.

Among the Southern Miwok the Cult (as distinguished from mere dancing) exists in such attenuated form that perhaps it is not justifiable to include them among the tribes practicing the Cult. There are no secret society, no initiation, no food taboos, no sanctity of feather regalia, and no custody of feathers on the part of a shaman or the dance leader. On the other hand the dances are performed in the earth-covered dance lodge to the accompaniment of the footdrum. The characteristic regalia are worn and the details of the dances tally with those among typical cult groups.

The impression is gained among the Southern Miwok, that they do not know what it is all about. All of the dances and songs are said to have been introduced from the north. There seems to be no fear of the feathers and moreover each dancer keeps his own regalia. Sometimes

if a dancer lacks a certain piece it may be loaned to him by the chief. One informant said that he was in the habit of sleeping very often at the performance of dances and that he depended on his friends to awaken him when a particularly "pretty dance" was being performed. These several points give the impression that the Southern Miwok do not enter into the spirit of the performances as do the Patwin. They have taken over the physical enactment of certain dances without any appreciation of the spiritual features which are so all important among such peoples as the Patwin and Northwestern Maidu.

An early stratum and a late stratum due to Ghost-Dance stimulus are recognizable.

### CONCLUSION

Among the Sierra Nevada Miwok two religious currents have met and blended, producing the peculiar form of the God-impersonating Cult which is found among the Sierra Nevada Miwok. With the south the Miwok share the Bird Cult in which raptorial species in particular are venerated. With the north the Miwok share the dances of the God-impersonating Cult. These dances appear to divide into three strata, the earliest stratum being today represented by the dances of the hill people. Whether or not this stratum antedates the Bird Cult I cannot say, but I have the impression that the Bird Cult is the older. The third stratum comprises those dances which appeared at Ione and Knights Ferry at the base of the foothills not over seventy-five years ago and probably not much more than fifty years ago. The appearance of this stratum was probably synchronous with the Ghost-Dance religion of 1872. I consider that the Ghost Dance movement furnished only the stimulus for the teaching of the dances to the Sierra Nevada foothill people by the Plains Miwok and other peoples residing near Pleasanton in Alameda county.

Dr. Edwin M. Loeb<sup>8</sup> has recently shown that the Pomo cult observances fall into two strata, an earlier Ghost Cult and a later Kuksu (God-impersonating) Cult. Among the Sierra Nevada Miwok it is impossible to make such differentiation. The strata to which I refer are not Ghost Cult stratum and Kuksu Cult stratum, but on the contrary both appear to be identifiable with the God-impersonating (Kuksu) Cult of other tribes. However, an examination of the various

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<sup>8</sup> Pomo folkways, present series, XXIII, (in press).

Sierra Nevada Miwok dances reveals a number of dances which are definitely connected with human ghosts, whereas all others are spirit or god impersonations. The several dances which have to do with human ghosts are *sulesko*, *sule tumum laksü* (ghost from drum emerging), *suleyuse* (performed with an enemy's scalp), *helika*, and *helkiböksu*. The last dance is said to be danced by a person who has been crazed from seeing a ghost. It would appear that dances, perhaps originally from the two cults which Loeb differentiates, have reached the Miwok merged in a single system.

That the Miwok form of the God-impersonating Cult is not the same as the Pomo, Northwestern Maidu, and Patwin forms is obvious. The secret society, initiation, and cult leader are lacking. The Miwok chief functions as the ceremonial head, a position which may be carried over from the earlier Bird Cult and which may in turn be definitely connected with patrilineal chieftainship. In the Bird Cult of the Miwok, Yokuts, Western Mono, and southern Californian tribes the birds which are the object of veneration are regarded as "chiefs" and when captured are put in the custody of the human chiefs. They are considered the chief's birds. In southern California the nesting places of eagles, which are the birds particularly venerated and sought, for the sake of their feathers, belong to certain lineages or more exactly to the chiefs of these lineages. It is this ceremonial pre-eminence of the chief in the Bird Cult which I believe has been carried over into the God-impersonating Cult as practiced by the Miwok. With regard to the latter cult the chief occupies a position perhaps analogous to the secret society leader among the Maidu, Patwin, and Pomo who practiced the God-impersonating Cult.

Among the Miwok certain birds, the creeper, condor, and valley quail, are represented in the God-impersonating Cult. In the third stratum dances the spirits impersonated in the *kuksuyu* and *kilaki*, which elsewhere are regarded as anthropomorphic deity and dragon respectively, are by the Central and some Northern Miwok identified with birds, the *kuksuyu* with a shore bird, the *kilaki* with a hawk. This is perhaps a manifestation of the tendency to avianize even the new dances of the third or Ghost-Dance stratum.