

INTRODUCTION

The Yurok Indians live, as they have always lived in their recorded history, near the mouth of the Klamath River in Del Norte County in northern California. From there Yurok territory extends up the river some thirty miles to include the junction of the Trinity and Klamath rivers, and south along the coast as far as the neighborhood of Trinidad in Humboldt County. Yurok dwellings were never far from the sea or a river, and intercommunication was mainly by water, along the coast or up the Klamath or one of the smaller rivers. To this day the normal direct route between the upper Klamath Yurok habitations and the more numerous ones around the river mouth is by the river.

The Yurok are bounded on the north by the Tolowa, on the east by the Karok, on the southeast by the Hupa, and on the south by the Chilula and the Wiyot; Wiyot territory adjoins Yurok territory at its extreme south coastal border.

In common with most languages of northern California, Yurok has been steadily losing ground to English ever since American penetration of the Yurok country began about the middle of the nineteenth century. At the present time probably not more than twenty persons could claim even a fair working knowledge of the language, which has ceased to be a channel of normal communication except perhaps occasionally between very old persons and the one or two others who may have to talk with them. Beyond this small number of Yurok speakers, a somewhat larger number of Yurok Indians retain fragments of the language in the form of remembered short sentences and phrases that they are unable to use as the basis for further discourse; a still larger number know a few isolated Yurok names for common objects, a knowledge which, despite its limitation, they sometimes proudly display as evidence of "knowing a bit of Indian."

THE YUROK LANGUAGE

GRAMMAR, TEXTS, LEXICON

BY
R. H. ROBINS

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PUBLICATIONS IN LINGUISTICS
Volume 15

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS
BERKELEY AND LOS ANGELES
1958