

THE STONE AND KELSEY "MASSACRE" ON THE SHORES OF CLEAR LAKE IN 1849

THE INDIAN VIEWPOINT

INTRODUCTION

THE RELATIONS between the early Western settlers and the American Indians are matters of prime importance in Western history. The ordinary official accounts of situations that are described as Indian "massacres" or "uprisings" are usually quite unreliable. And, unfortunately, sentimental apologetics for the Indians exhibit a similar unreliability. The following account of a famous and striking incident in early California history has, therefore, a double value, both as an historical document and as an admirable example of the psychology of the Indians in their relations to the whites.

The writer, William Benson, has at various times been informant and interpreter for most of the American anthropologists who have visited Lake County. Among others, he has acted in that capacity for Professor A. L. Kroeber, Dr. S. Barrett, Dr. E. M. Loeb, Dr. J. de Angulo and Miss Lucy S. Freeland. He was born about the year 1862 near the modern Lakeport in Lake County, then very thinly settled by whites. He is a Pomo, and since his early adolescence has been hereditary chief of both the Xolo-napo and the Xabe-napo divisions of his people. This is a formal rank which was duly and solemnly conferred upon him by vote of his tribesmen at the suggestion of his uncle who held one of these positions, and of another chief, for reasons which need not be detailed here. Besides this, he was taught the ceremonial of the Women's Secret Society by his mother who was a Bear-Doctor and a member of the Society.

His Pomo name is *Ralganal*, which means "Wampum-Gatherer." His family name comes from his father, a white settler, who followed the practice of some early "squaw-men" of abandoning white life entirely and residing permanently in the Pomo village. He died when his son was a mere child, and Benson therefore spoke only Pomo in his youth and obtained such knowledge of English as he has only from later contact with the whites.

Benson bears a high reputation for integrity and reliability. In a recent number of the authoritative Viennese anthropological journal, *Anthropos*, (Vol. 27, pp. 261 *et seq.*, April 1932) an article entitled "The Creation Myth of the Pomo Indians," by Dr. Jaime de Angulo of Berkeley, was derived from information provided by Benson who is there named as co-author. He is wholly without formal schooling, and his knowledge of English was picked up almost entirely by ear. However, he taught himself to read as well, so that to some extent his purely phonetic spelling has corrected itself.

Not only were reading and writing self-acquired, but also the use of the typewriter. Benson uses it in the manner approved of those unfamiliar with business schools and innocent of the touch system. The preparation of this narrative was entirely his own idea and the story is here reproduced precisely

as he wrote it. His original typescript is now on file in the Bancroft Library of the University of California.

What may be termed the "official" account of the Stone and Kelsey incident is to be found in local histories of Lake County. Kelseyville where the "massacre" took place is a few miles south of Lakeport on Clear Lake, and is named after Andy Kelsey, one of the two personages mentioned in the narrative. Reference may be made to the "History of Napa and Lake Counties" (Slocum Bower & Co., San Francisco, 1881, pp. 56 *et seq.*); the "History of Mendocino and Lake Counties" by Aurelius O. Carpenter and Percy H. Millberry (The Historical Record Co., Los Angeles, 1910, pp. 125 *et seq.*), and C. A. Menifee's "Historical and Descriptive Sketch Book of Napa, Sonoma, Lake and Mendocino Counties" (Napa City, 1879, pp. 228-29).

These accounts present somewhat romanticized versions of the occurrences in question, following approved models and involving a so-called "chief" Augustine, but they do not seek to minimize the unbelievable barbarities to which the Indians were subjected. Carpenter and Millberry's account closes with the words: "The consensus of opinion is that the deed was justified by the harsh and unjust treatment given the Indians by these two frontiersmen."

The events which are run together in Benson's narrative, took place at different times. The killing of Stone and Kelsey occurred in the fall of 1849, after gold had been discovered and after a futile expedition led by Kelsey and others had returned from the gold regions. Indians of the Clear Lake region had been dragged along virtually as slaves by the gold-seekers, and very few had straggled back.

The punitive expedition against the Indians, which is described in the second part of Benson's story, took place nearly a year later, in 1850, and was conducted with a savagery of which Benson's own account gives only an inadequate notion. Nothing except sadistic lust on the part of the white soldiers can explain it, since the generally pacific character of the California Indians was well known, and Vallejo's agents, under whose control these particular Indians had been for years before 1849, lived on terms of the utmost friendliness with them.

On page 128 of the Carpenter and Millberry's account there appears a brief résumé of the "massacre." It is here reproduced in part, in order to furnish a basis of comparison with the events described by Benson:

In the fall of 1849, when Stone and Kelsey were away with the vaqueros, attending to their cattle one day, Augustine's squaw poured water into their guns. The next morning some of the Indians made a charge on the house. Kelsey was killed outright with an arrow shot through the window. Stone escaped upstairs and on the Indians rushing up after him, jumped out of an upper window, ran to the creek and hid in a clump of willows. . . . An old Indian found him and killed him with a blow of a rock on the head.

Since Benson was not an eye-witness of the events which he describes, it is impossible to suppose that there are no distortions or exaggerations in his account. It is presented here for what it is worth, and will doubtless be received with a certain amount of caution. Unfortunately, however, there is nothing in our knowledge of the treatment of Indians by white settlers or soldiers that

makes it inherently incredible. It is told, indeed, with striking restraint, and presents a moving picture of these tragic events. One may notice a particularly epic touch in Benson's relation of the concealment of Stone's and Kelsey's weapons, an episode which vividly calls to mind the nineteenth book of the *Odyssey*, where we are told that Odysseus and Telemachus removed the arms of the suitors of Penelope before they fell upon them and slaughtered them. Another human touch is the account of the little three-year-old boy who is so carefully wrapped up and left at the fire in the midst of the carnage.

Peace with the Indians who had escaped the white man's vengeance was established in 1851, but the details cannot now be verified and the alleged "treaty" does not appear to be recorded anywhere.

MAX RADIN.

WILLIAM RALGANAL BENSON'S NARRATIVE

The Facts Of Stone and Kelsey Massacre. in Lake County California. As it was stated to me by the five indians who went to stone and kelseys house purpose to kill the two white men. after debateing all night. Shuk and Xasis. these two men were the instigators of the massacre. it was not because Shuk and Xasis had any Ill feeling toge the two white men. there were two indian villages. one on west side and one on the east side. the indians in both of these camps were starveing. stone or kelsey would not let them go out hunting or fishing. Shuk and Xasis was stone and kelsey headriders looking out for stock. cattle horses and hogs. the horses and cattle were all along the lake on the west side and some in bachelors valley. also in upper lake. so it took 18 indian herdsman to look after the stock in these places. Shuk and Xasis was foremans for the herds. and only those herds got anything to eat. each one of these herders got 4 cups of wheat for a days work. this cup would hold about one and ahalf pint of water. the wheat was boiled before it was given to the herders. and the herders shire with thir famlys. the herders who had large famlys were also starveing. about 20 old people died during the winter from starvetion. from severe whipping 4 died. a nephew of an indian lady who were liveing with stone was shoot to deth by stone. the mother of this yong man was sick and starveing. this sick woman told her son to go over to stones wife or the sick womans sister. tell your aunt that iam starveing and sick tell her that i would like to have a handfull of wheat. the yong man lost no time going to stones house. the young man told the aunt what his mother said. the lady then gave the young man 5 cups of wheat and tied it up in her apron and the young man started for the camp. stone came about that time and called the young man back. the young man stoped stone who was horse back. rode up to the young man took the wheat from him and then shoot him. the young man died two days after. such as whipping and tying thier hands together with rope. the rope then thrown over a limb of a tree and then drawn up untell the indians toes barly touches the ground and let them hang

there for hours. this was common punishment. when a father or mother of young girl. was asked to bring the girl to his house. by stone or kelsey. if this order was not obeyed. he or her would be whipped or hung by the hands. such punishment occurred two or three times a week. and many of the old men and woman died from fear and starvetion.

these two white men had the indians to build a high fence around thir villages. and the head riders were to see that no indian went out side of this fence after dark. if any one was caught out side of this fence after dark was taken to stones and kelseys house and there was tied both hands and feet and placed in a room and kept there all night. the next day was taken to a tree and was tied down. then the strongs man was chosen to whippe the prisoner. the village on the west side was the Qu-Lah-Na-Poh tribes the village on the east side. Xa-Bah-Na-Poh. tribes.

the starvetion of the indians was the cause of the massacre of stone and kelsey. the indians who was starving hired a man by the name of Shuk and a nother man by the name of Xasis. to kill a beef for them. Shuk and Xasis agreed to go out and kill a beef for them. the two men then plan to go out that nighth and kill a beef for them. thir plan then was to take the best horsstes in the barn. stones horse which was the best lasso horse. so between the two men. they agreed to take both stones and kelseys horses. so the two men went to stone and kelseys house to see if they had went to bed. it was raining a little. moonlighth now and then they found stone and kelsey had went to bed so they went to the barn and took stone and kelseys horses and saddles. Shuk wanted to do the job in the day time but Xasis said stone or kelsey would sure find them and would kill the both of them. Shuk said then sombody is going to get killed on this job. so any how they went out west they knew where a larg band was feeding they soon rounded the band up and Shuk was to make the first lasso Xasis was good on lassing the foot of anox so he was to do the foot lassing. Shuk said to Xasis get redy i see large one hear hurry and come on. Shuk got a chance and threwed the rope on the large ox Xasis came as quick as he could the band then begin to stampe. the ox also started with the band. the ground was wet and slippery and raining. and before Xasis could get his rope on. Shuks horse fell to the ground. the horse and the ox got away. Xasis tried to lass the horse but could not get near it to throw the rope on. the horse soon found the other horses and it was then much harder to get the horse. so the chase was given up. the two went back to the camp and reported to the peopel who hired them. told them the bad luck they had. Xasis then took the horse he had back to the barn which was kelseys horse. all the men who hired Shuk and Xasis was gathered in Xasis house. here they debated all night. Shuk and Xasis wanted to kill stone and kelsey. they said stone and kelsey would kill them as soon as they would find out that the horses was taken with out them known; one man got up and suggested that the tribe give stone and kelsey forty sticks of beades which means 16000 beads or 100 dollars. no one agreed. another man suggested that he or Shuk. tell stoneor kelsey that the horse was stolen. no one agreed. and another man suggested that

the other horse should be turned out and tell stone and kelsey both horses were stlen. no one agreed. every thing looks bad for Shuk and Xasis. no one agreed with Shuk and Xasis to kill the two white men. at daylight one man agreed to go with Shuk and Xasis. his indian name. Ba-Tus. was known by the whites as Busi. and alittle while later Kra-nas agreed.and as the four men started out another man joint the Shuk and Xasis band: Ma-Laxa-Qe-Tu. while this Debateing was going on the hired or servants boys and girls of stones and kelseys were told by Shuk and Xasis to carrie out allthe guns. bows and arrows. knives and every thing like weapon was taken out of the house by these girls and boys so the two white men was helpless in defense. so Shuk and Xasis knew the white man, did not have any thing to defen themselves with and they were sure of their victims. so the five men went to the house where stone and kelsey were liveing. at daylight were to the place where stone always built a fire under a large pot in which he boiled wheat for the indian herders.about 16 of them. these five men waited around this pot untell stone came out to build the fire. Stone came out with pot full of fire which was taken from the fireplace. and said to the indians. whats the matter boys you came Early this morning. some thing rong; the indians said. O nothing me hungry thats all. Qka-Nas: or cayote Jim as he was known by the whites: Qka-Nas said to the men. I thought you men came to kill this man; give me these arrows and bow. He jerk the bow and the arrows away from Shuk and drew it and as he did.Stone rose quickly and turned to Qka-Nas and said what are you trying to do Jim, and as Stone said it. the indian cut loose. the arrow struck the victim.pith of the stomach. the victim mediately pull the arrow out and ran for the house. fighting his way. he broke one mans arm with the pot he had. and succeeded in geting in the house and locked the door after him. little later Kelsey came and opened the door and noticed the blood on the doorstep. the indians advanced. Kelsey seen that the indians ment business. he said to them. no matar kelsey. kelsey bueno hombre para vosotros. the indians charged and two of the indians caught kelsey and the fight began. in this fight kelsey was stabled twice in the back. kelsey managed to brake loose. he ran for the creek and the indians after him. a man by the name of Xa-sis or blind Jose as he was known by the whites. who was in pursuit. shot kelsey in the back. kelsey manage to pull the arrow out jest as he got to the creek and jumped in the water and dove under and came out on the other side of the creek. where several indians were waiting. there was one man kelsey knew well.he thought who would save him. this man was Joe sefeis. indian name. Ju-Luh. he beged Joe to save him. Joe he could not save him from being killed. Joe said to kelsey. its too late kelsey; if I attempt to save you.I allso will be killed. I can not save you kelsey; kelsey was geting weak from loss of blood. Big Jim and Joe had kelsey by the arms. Big Jim said to his wife. this is a man who killed our son. take this spear.now you have the chance to take revenge. Big Jim's wife took the spear and stabled the white man in the hart. this womans name was Da-Pi-Tauro. the body was left laying there for the cayotes. this hapend on the east side of the creek. while this was going on. Xasis and Qra-Nas

was trailing the blood up stairs and for a hour allmost. Qra-Nas said they crawled up stairs breathless thinking that stone was yet alive. they opend the door of a wheat bend and saw stones foot Qra-Nas drew his arrow across the bow. redy to cut loose. for a moment they watch the lifeless body. Xa-sis discovered that the body was dead. they then took the body and threw it out the window. and then they called all the people to come and take what wheat and corn they could pack and go to-a hiding place. where they could not be found by the whites. so the indian of both villages came and took all the wheat and corn they could gather in the place. and then went to hide themselves. some went to Fishels point and somewent to scotts valley. the men went out to kill cattle for their use and every man who was able to ride caught himself a horse. in around the valley and upper lake and bachelor valley. there was about one thousand head of horses. and about four thousand head of cattles. so the indians lived fat for a while. Qra-Nas and Ma-Laq-Qe-Tou was chosen to watch the trail that came in from lower lake. and Shuk and Xasis was watching the trail on the west side of the valley. yom-mey-nah and ge-we-leh were watching the trail that came from eight mile valley. two--or three weeks had pass. no white man were seen on eather trail. one day. Qra-nas and ma-Laq-Qe-Tou seen two white men on horse back came over the hill. they stoped on top of the hill. they saw nothing staring around stone and kelseys place. no indians in the village. Qra-nas and Ma-Laq-Tou. went around behind a small hill to cut the white man off. the white man saw the indians trying to go around behind them. the whites turned and went back before the indians got in back of them. so three or four days went by. no more white man was seen. one day the lake watchers saw a boat came around the point. som news coming. they said to each others. two of the men went to the landing. to see what the news were. they were told that the white warriors had came to kill all the indians around the lake. so hide the best you can. the whites are making boats and with that they are coming up the lake. so we are told by the people down there. so they had two men go up on top of uncle sam mountain. the north peak. from there they watch the lower lake. for three days they watch the lake. one morning they saw a long boat came up the lake with pole on the bow with red cloth. and several of them came. every one of the boats had ten to fifteen men. the smoke signal was given by the two watchmen. every indian around the lake knew the soldiers were coming up the lake. and how many of them. and those who were watching the trail saw the infantrys coming over the hill from lower lake. these two men were watching from ash hill. they went to stones and kelseys house. from there the horsemen went down toge the lake and the soldiers went across the valley toge lakeport. they went on to scotts valley. shoot afew shoots with their big gun and went on to upper lake and camped on Emmerson hill. from there they saw the indian camp on the island. the next morning the white warriors went across in their long dugouts. the indians said they would met them in peace. so when the whites landed the indians went to wellcom them. but the white man was determined to kill them. Ge-Wi-Lih said he threw up his hands and said no harm me good man. but the

white man fired and shoot him in the arm and another shoot came and hit a man staning along side of him and was killed.so they had to run and fight back; as they ran back in the tules and hed under the water;four or five of them gave alittle battle and another man was shoot in the shoulder. some of them jumped in the water and hed in the tuleys. many women and children were killed on around this island. one old lady a(indian) told about what she saw while hiding under abank,in under aover hanging tuleys. she said she saw two white man coming with their guns up in the air and on their guns hung a little girl. they brought it to the creek and threw it in the water. and alittle while later, two more men came in the same manner. this time they had alittle boy on the end of their guns and also threw it in the water. alittle ways from her she, said layed awoman shoot through the shoulder. she held her little baby in her arms. two white men came running torge the woman and baby, they stabled the woman and the baby and, and threw both of them over the bank in to the water. she said she heard the woman say, O my baby; she said when they gathered the dead, they found all the little ones were killed by being stabed, and many of the woman were also killed stabing. she said it took them four or five days to gather up the dead. and the dead were all burnt on the east side the creek. they called it the siland creek. (Ba-Don-Bi-Da-Meh). this old lady also told about the whites hung aman on Emerson siland this indian was met by the soldiers while marching from scotts valley to upper lake. the indian was hung and alarge fire built under the hanging indian. and another indian was caught near Emerson hill. this one was tied to atree and burnt to death.

the next morning the solders started for mendocino county. and there killed many indians. the camp was on the ranch now known as Ed Howell ranch. the solders made camp a little ways below, bout one half mile from the indian camp. the indians wanted to surrender, but the solders did not give them time, the solders went in the camp and shoot them down as tho if they were dogs. som of them escaped by going down a little creek leading to the river. and som of them hed in the brush. and those who hed in the brush most of them were killed. and those who hed in the water was over looked. they killed mostly woman and children.

the solders caught two boys age about 14 or 15. the solders took them to lower lake, and then turnd them loose, when the solders started the two boys back, they loded them with meat and hard bread, one said as soon as they got out of site, they threw the meat away and som of the bread also. he said they went on a dog trot for dear life. thinking all the time that the solders would follow them and kill them. he said they would side tract once and awhile and get up on a high peak to see if the solders were coming he said when they got back that night they could nothing but crying. he said all the dead had been taken across to a large dance house had been and was cremated. wetness, Bo-Dom. or Jeo Beatti, and Krao Lah, indian-name.an old lady said her futher dug a large hole in abank of the river and they hed in the hole. one old man said that he was aboy at the time he said the solders shoot his mother, she fell to the ground

with her baby in her arms, he said his mother told him to climb high up in the tree, so he did and from there he said he could see the soldiers running about the camp and shooting the men and woman and stabbing boys and girls. he said mother was not yet dead and was telling him to keep quit. two of the soldiers heard her talking and ran up to her and stabbed her and child. and a little ways from his mother, he said laid a man dieing, holding his boy in his arms the soldiers also stabbed him, but did not kill the boy, they took the boy to the camp, crying, they gave it every thing they could find in camp but the little boy did not quit crying. it was about three years of age, when the soldiers were getting ready to move camp, they raped the boy up in a blanket and lifted the little boy setting by the fire raped up in a blanket and was still crying, and that boy is live today, his name is bill ball, now lives in Boonville; One Old man told me about the soldiers killing the indians in this same camp. he said young man. from the description he gave. he must have been about 18 or 20 years of age. he said he and another boy about the same age was taken by the soldiers and he said there were two soldiers in charge of them. one would walk ahead and one behind them. he said the soldiers took him and the other boy. they both were barefooted he said when they begin to climb the mountain between Mendocino and Lake County. he said they were made to keep up with the soldiers. their feet were getting sore but they had to keep up with the soldiers. when they were climbing over the Bottlerock mountain. their feet were cut up by the rocks and their feet were bleeding and they could not walk up with the soldiers. the man behind would jab them with the sharp knife fixed on the end of the gun. he said one of the soldiers came and looked at their feet and went to a box opened it took a cup and dipped something out of a sack and brought it to them and told them both of them to hold their feet on a log near by. the soldier took a hand full of the stuff and rubbed it in the cuts on the bottom of their feet. he said he noticed that the stuff the soldier put on their feet look like salt. sure enough it was salt. the soldier tied cloth over their feet and told them not to take them off. he said the tears were rolling down his cheeks. he said all the soldiers came and stood around them laughing. he said they roled and twisted for about two hours. and they also rubbed salt in the wounds on their seats and backs where they jabbed them with the soldiers big knife. as he call it. two or three days later the chief soldier told them they could go back. they was then given meat and bread, all they could pack. he said they started on their back journey. he said it was all most difficult for them to walk but raped a lot of cloth around their feet and by doing so made their way all right. he said the meat and bread got too heavy for fast traveling so they threw the meat and some of the bread away. looking back all the time thinking that the soldiers would follow them and kill them. now and then they would side tract. and look back to see if the soldiers were following them. after seen no soldiers following them they would start out for another run. he said they traveled in such manner until they got to their home. he said to himself. hear I am not to see my mother and sister but to see their blood scattered over the ground like water and their bodies for coyotes to devour. he said he sat down under a tree and cried all day.