Brief Sketch of KAROK prepared by William Bright, July 1954 for inclusion in Swadesh’s vocabulary lists.

KAROK. Isolated at family level; Hokogian phylum, but details of relationship not worked out. Northern California. About 100 speakers remaining.

PHONEMES: p t c k s f Q ū ū k ū r v y m n i a u i i e e a a o o u u. (v bilabial, s retroflex.) ū occurs mostly in stem initial. ū distinction and that between single and double consonants carry very light functional burdens. Syllable structure CV(C). Tonal accents: - high nonfinally but falling and with glottalization before pause, - (unmarked) low, - falling in all positions.

In affixation and compounding various phonetic changes occur. Accentual changes are complex. Stem vowels are doubled on addition of certain suffixes. A consonant is generally doubled after an accented short vowel. Double vowels and consonants may be shortened in the first element of compounds. In many elements interchange of r-n, and v-m occurs—the nasal occurs before consonant, the oral sound before vowels and finally. Any vowel other than a adds h in stem final; some final consonants take on an additional a in this position. Stem final v y and stem-initial ū are lost in composition and the vowels may fuse; a + i gives ee, and a + u gives oo.

Symbolic consonant change of r to n, v to m, and ū to c take place in diminutives.

STRUCTURAL NOTES: Employ prefixation and suffixation, extensive compounding, limited reduplication (in verb derivation), very limited suppletion for dual and plural. Nominal and verbal inflections (by affixation) can be distinguished. Generally a stem can be used without an affix as well as with one. Some stems are limited to nominal inflection, others are used in both systems. Many affixes (probably including old stems) occur in derived words, rather than as part of the inflectional systems.

Nominal inflection involves the prefixes pa- the, nani- my, mit- thy, mu- his, va- its, nanu- our, mikun- your, mukun- their. Suffixes, like locative - (ha)k, similitive -kuniś (like), diminutive -ic, are derivational rather than inflective. Plural -as/-sa(s) is added only to adjectival substantives and to those designating persons. Relational postclitics used with substantives ū n subject-marker (with transitive verbs), mūk instrumental, xākkan comitative (with one) and kōovan comitative (with several).

Compounding is used only with nouns. The attributive precedes, except when it is an adjective, used for making direct and possessive (bahuvihi) compounds. Frequent first elements in compounds are a class of stems expressing upriver, downriver, uphill and downhill.

Verbal inflection involves a large number of pronominal prefixes, each one expressing a subject-object relationship. Intransitive stems take the prefixes for 3sg. object, stative intransitives, in the 3sg only, take the prefix normally indicating 3sg. subj. + 3sg. object. Dual and plural number referring to the object of trans. stems and subject of intransitives are distinguished by prefixation, stem suppletion or suffixation, but the distinction is often optional. Verbal suffixes include -va plural action, -ti duration, -(ha)t recent, -(a)heen past, -(ha)nix ancient, -(h)eëś/- (a)viś future. Verb derivation is mostly done by a long list of directional suffixes (up, down, away,
hither, away upriver, hither upriver, away uphill, etc.). There are traces of petrified instrumental prefixes, like "ak- by hand, pa- by mouth.

Affixes added to complete predications are pa- general subordinator, -a'haak when, -(b) irak where, -(b)an who, pu- -(ha)ra/-ap negative, and t (a)- perfective plus the ancient and future tense suffixes.