

## 1. Description

1.1 Name of society, language, and language family: Chukchi, Chukchi, Chukotko-Kamchatkan

1.2 ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com): ckt

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude): 66°N, 172° W

1.4 Brief history: Human occupation of the Chukchi Peninsula dates back 10,000 years. Chukchi history is riddled by wars, and the Chukchi people were viewed as fierce and capable warriors who were unafraid of death. This view was supported after first contact with the Russians in 1648, when Russia tried to subdue the Chukchi and their land. War between the two lasted for 150 years where the Chukchi were victorious in defending their homeland. During this time of war, Russia overran neighboring tribes including Lamut, Yagmir, and Chuvanzi people. [1] By 1700, Chukchi were the area super powers [4pg210], and through tense pressure from the Chukchi began to absorb neighboring villages.

It should also be noted that Chukchi were divided into two ecological groups, sedimentary marine hunter-gatherers who lived on the coast of the Chukchi peninsula, and Reindeer Chukchi, who live inland as full time reindeer herders. Despite being two distinct parties, the two were closely tied partners of the same society, sharing beliefs and traditions, as well as being economically tied though independent of one another. [14] It was not unusual for a nomadic herder to become a maritime hunter or vice versa. Some Chukchi switched between lifestyles seasonally.

1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors: First outside contact with the Chukchi was by the Russians in 1648. A war initiated that would last for 150 years, and while the Chukchi were victorious, they became fully incorporated into Russian economic sphere. [14] At the end of the war, Russian and Chukchi people made an agreement to stop attacking one another in exchange for independence from Russia, while allowing Russians to build settlements on the Chukchi peninsula. The two nations became deeply entwined through trade. Trade also began with America, which some Chukchi people were so involved with this trade that they moved to America to trade pelts full time. This interaction provided with a constant push of modern weapons, armor, and hunting supplies. Due to the war victory, Chukchi still keep many of their traditions, but it is reasonable to say they also were influenced greatly by Russian culture.

1.6 Ecology: Tundra Flora with intermediate tundra brush. High atmospheric pressure, high winter temperatures, cool summers high precipitation, fog and rain in summer, high snowfall and severe windchill's in winter. Low mountains, peninsula surrounded 3 sides by water. [14]

1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density

Population of first encounter by Russians in 1648 recorded <2,000 individuals. The number continued to increase from 2,000 to 6,000-8,000, with a present day modern population of 15,000+ [4 pg 210]

In nomadic groups, villages were divided into camps, a camp usually contained 2-5 families (10-25 people), and a village contained 8-12 camps (100-250 people). The members of a camp were direct family members, or related by marriage. Camps were almost always a network of relatives. Density of these nomads ranged from .008 to .013 per square kilometer. [5]

Maritime Chukchi nations consisted of a permanent "capital" village that housed members of several local families as well as single satellite villages, occupied normally by a single family. Data is less available on population of maritime Chukchi, but an estimate would range from 250-600 people. [6]

## 2. Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s): Main carbohydrates of the Chukchi people consisted of berries, grasses, wild roots leaves and stems of tundra plants.

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources: Main protein-lipid sources consist of Pacific walrus, seal, Bow head whales, reindeer and various marine life. Dogs were used to find holes in the ice where seals and walrus exited and entered the water. Nets were used to capture these animals, which were then dragged out of the water and bludgeoned to death. Maritime Chukchi also used boats to hunt for other sea life, harpooning walrus and whales with harpoons attached to bladders filled with air, making it difficult for the animal to escape. Reindeer Chukchi herded reindeer, trading slaughtering and trading the meat with maritime Chukchi in exchange for blubber, lamp oil and pelts.

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?: Weapons of the Chukchi consisted of bone tipped arrows, bone tipped spears, and harpoons. It is also reported that some Chukchi had heavy leather and iron armor. Nets, nooses, and knotted chords for hunting.

2.4 Food storage: A preservation technique used was storing meat in seal skin, and burying deep underground to freeze it. The longevity of meat was increased even further due to fermentation undergone by the meats due to storage. Meat and fish were also sun-dried for extended keep. Additionally, almost every family put away up to 220 to 330 pounds of gathered tundra plant berries, stems, and leaves for the winter. [4]

2.5 Sexual division of production: Sea mammal hunting was mostly male dominated, but in the case where not enough males were present in a kindred for hunting, females would take the male role as hunter. [14] Female jobs consist mostly of preparing meals and bearing children. Both men and women tended to the reindeer equally.

2.6 Land tenure: For reindeer Chukchi as well as marine hunters, the land was divided into communities formed through cooperation between villages or co residence of that land. These lands were tenured and held passed on from generation to generation in the communities. Rules were often lenient as problems rarely occurred. [4]

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns: Sedimentary hunters shared far more food than the reindeer nomads. The reindeer nomads did not integrate economically or socially, and the distribution of food was directly proportional to the size of the families heard. Wealthy families are reported to eat 2.5 times more reindeer meat than poor ones.

If any member of a village is struck with bad fortune and loses part of all of their flock, richer members will provide replace part or all of the lost animal. [1]

2.9 Food taboos: No information found

2.10 Canoes/watercraft? Maritime Chukchi used walrus hide canoes called "baidarkas" used for sea mammal hunting. [11] Crews of six to ten male hunters manned these boats during open sea hunting expeditions. Reindeer Chukchi occasionally bought small wooden boats, but usage was rarely significant.

### 3. Anthropometry

3.1 Mean adult height (m and f): While no specific data could be found, Chukchi could be described tall and well built, though they lost significant weight during the summer months. [1]

3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f): No information available.

### 4. Life History, mating, marriage

4.1 Age at menarche (f): No information available.

4.2 Age at first birth (m and f): Early data sets are unclear on exact age, but more recent data of the community point to age of first birth average of 18-19 years. [2] Large sized families were described to consist of very young brides and often old white haired husbands, supporting the idea that the recent data matches similarly to the past [1 page 92]

4.3 Completed family size (m and f): Families are large, one mother often having 10 children [1 pg 92] Average household size of Chukchi herding population ranged from 4.1-5.8 from 1850 to 1937 [5pg]

4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f): While inter-birth-interval isn't directly specified, Chukchi people normally had exceptionally high birth rates in order to combat exceptionally high infant mortality rates.

4.5 Age first marriage (m and f): Often marriages were assigned while both parties were still infants. Marriage begins as soon as the bride and groom to be reach sexually maturity.

4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce: Divorce rates between Chukchi people were quite low due to the sexual freedoms outside the marriage. Almost all Chukchi people practice sexual communism. While the practice usually stays in camps, it is not a restriction. The practice is said to be a source of "cementing a firm bond of friendship". Wives are often temporarily exchanged, with exchanges potentially becoming permanent. [primitive society]

4.7 Percent marriages polygamous, percent males married polygamously: Information on whether the Chukchi were polygamous are conflicted. While one study suggests polygamy is very uncommon, another says that it happens regularly. In the latter, polygamous relationships are usually limited to two wives per one husband, with a rare exception of a rich man or community leader. [1] In both cases, polygamy was generally accepted by the community.

4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?: While marriages existed between kindred required no exchange, marrying outside of groups bride service was normally expected. Often, the groom will leave all contact with his home family and work for the bride's family. In past times this service was permanent, but more recently the groom's service will end after one to two years, where then he can return back to his family freely.

4.9 Inheritance patterns: Property is normally owned by camps of 8-12 people, and as such property never distributed.

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict: Parents are usually present in offspring's lives and continue this way unless the child marries into another family. In these instances the communication between parent and offspring will cease until bride service has been fully paid.

4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals: It is reported that a man will be taken over by spirits that push a man going through shamanistic change (discussed further 6.1) into spontaneous sex change. The man will dress in female clothes, speak in a female voice, and act as a female from that point on. The transitioned man will begin to hunt for a husband with the help of the spirits to win the man over. While instances are rare, it seems after this transition the now female will live a normal life and continue to be accepted as a member of the group. [1]

4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy): While no strict rules in set, statistics show a bias toward endogamy. [14]

4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these "other fathers" recognized? While paternity isn't recorded to be "partible", the group nature of families distributes responsibility of raising children between many people. These "other fathers" are recognized and respected.

4.14 What is the belief of the mother's role in procreation exactly? (e.g., "receptacle in which fetus grows") No information found

4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)? No information found

4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape? Sexual coercion is rarely talked about in past Chukchi history, but has become much more prevalent in the past century.

4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin) Marriages are usually restricted to their own kindred, and marriages of couples closely related by blood are normal. [1 pg 101]

4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms? Females enjoy limited sexual freedoms, but are mostly under the control of a husband's wishes. Pre marriage, females are allowed sexual freedoms.

4.

19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring

- 4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children? In the case of a mother perishing, the child is taken care of by the father and other members of the community. [11]
- 4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females No information found
- 4.22 Evidence for couvades? There is no mention of couvades in Chukchi culture, though it is said to be bad luck for a male to be present during the pregnancy.
- 4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older)
- 4.24 Kin avoidance and respect?
- 4.24 Joking relationships? No information on joking relationships.
- 4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations? No explicit patterns of descent were available.
- 4.26 Incest avoidance rules. In the sexual communism practiced, the only relations disallowed from marriage trade were of brother/sister, father/daughter relationship [sex source]
- 4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony? There is a marriage ceremony performed for marriages outside kindred. A reindeer is slaughtered for the ceremony, and the groom paints his families hereditary signs on the brides face in an act to relinquish he old families gods and traditions in the way of her new families. The ritual is much the same for a groom marrying into the brides family. [1]
- 4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name? For most of Chukchi history a single name was given to a person at birth. Names were influenced by animals such as “Umqy” (meaning polar bear), events happening at the time of birth such as “Tynga-gygrn” (meaning sunrise), or of traits the parents wish for the child to embody, “Omryn” (meaning robust fellow). Pressure from the government in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century caused Chukchi people to create family surnames, and before then name changing was not part of normal culture. [11]
- 4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?) Marriage is preferred to be within the community, and marriages of similar kindred are considered strongest. Marriages outside of family groups are acceptable as well, but at times one member, normally the groom, will have to leave his kindred to join his brides kindred for years at a time in order to serve the family of the groom in exchange for marriage.
- 4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)? Often marriages are arranged while the to be husband and wife are still infants. They will be raised together, and sleep together far before either party reaches maturity. Arranged marriages of this type are considered have the strongest bond and consequentially be the strongest marriage.
- 4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who: While there is certainly interest over who marries who, there is little reported conflict.

### **Warfare/homicide**

- 4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare: While percentage data is unavailable, the Chukchi people were no strangers to war. Chukchi people viewed death as a right, and thought death in warfare to be admirable. This view resulted in constant, and often quite successful warfare between neighboring communities, not limited to small native communities. Warfare between Chukchi people and Russians lasted 150 years, where Chukchi were reported to have lost a significant number of battles to the Russian Cossack warriors.
- 4.15 Out group vs ingroup cause of violent death: While there is significant details of out group violence between Chukchi and other nations, ingroup violence does exist. This violence occurs on a far smaller scale, and is rarely punished due to the community viewing the problem of the village, not the individual.
- 4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing:
- 4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations): Significant relationships between neighboring societies existed. These societies included Russia, America, Lamut, Yagamir, and Chuvanzi people.
- 4.18 Cannibalism? No reports of Cannibalism

### **5. Socio-Political organization and interaction**

- 5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size: While no exact value is found, in nomadic groups, a village contained 100-250 people on average. [5] Data is less available on population of maritime Chukchi but from information given on village structure, it can be guessed that villages ranged from 50-100 people.[6]
- 5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality): Maritime Hunters were sedentary, and changed housing from winter homes to summer homes during shifts in seasons. [14]
- 5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes): No defined political systems were set in place, but members gained status and had more political sway. The most respected members of a village were normally male due to the gender roles of males which allowed more interaction between villages and surrounded civilizations. [14] Individuals gained notoriety from either displayed skills during war, experienced captains of boating vessels, achieving great wealth, and successfully predictions of shamans through divination. [14]
- 5.4 Post marital residence:
- 5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense): While territories were clearly defined, they were rarely enforced. [4] A reason problems rarely occurred may stem from the exceptionally low population densities of Chukchi peninsula.
- 5.6 Social interaction divisions? (age and sex):
- 5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships:
- 5.8 Village and house organization: In nomadic groups, villages were divided into camps usually containing 2-5 families (10-25 people). Each camp had a tent made up of reindeer pelts called a “yaranga”. and a village contained 8-12 camps (100-250 people). One camp moved frequently and was used to follow closely behind the reindeer, while the others moved sporadically and infrequently, following the leading camp. [14]

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5.9 Specialized village structures (mens’ houses): Reindeer Chukchi homes were aligned in a straight line running east to west. Wealthiest groups were positioned at the east, and poorest in the west. Camps were structured by close relations and wealth.

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?

5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc:

5.12 Trade: Trade was especially important in Chukchi culture. While Reindeer Chukchi and Maritime Chukchi were economically independent, they relied heavily on each others good. Trades of pelts, blubber, and oils took place regularly. Additionally, Chukchi were actively trading with surrounding communities, as animal pelts were a high demanded commodity in both Russia and America. A fair was held at a Russian fort each spring, where trade with Chukchi reached \$154,000 dollars a year. [2]

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies?

## **6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)**

6 Time allocation to RCR: The Chukchi were highly spiritualistic people, believing in shamanism, animism, divination, and astronomic lore. These beliefs are intertwined with there culture and result in a significant allocation of time toward their beliefs. Ritual filled festivals and holiday appear regularly

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine): Shamanistic powers are said to arise when a man chosen by the spirits reaches maturity, The man will suddenly act differently, sleeping away from home or failing to leave home, and going without food, water, or human interaction for days on end. If the young man does not train himself through “drum practice”, singing, and ventriloquism he will die. Shamans are present and can help cure illness through divine force. Shamans specializations can be divided into three categories, Ventriloquists, medicine men, and prophets. Sickness is believed to come from a person losing too great of a number of his many souls. A shaman helps to cure sickness of a man who has lost all of his souls by giving them part of his own spirit.

6.2 Stimulants: Hallucinogenic mushrooms were used as a way to enter a religious trance. [11] It is also suggested that these mushrooms held a religious symbolism due to sacred artifacts that were crafted into the shape of a mushroom [13]. Tobacco was heavily used throughout history, and members of the same village were obliged to share tobacco when available.

6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal): After a death, the dead are either set on fire or wrapped in large slices of reindeer meat and placed outside to be eaten by wildlife depending on the families tradition. After death, the body is stripped, covered in reindeer skin and placed inside an inner room (often very small) of a camp, keeping the flesh of the deceased from seeing the son or by a stranger as it is considered a sin. The body is watched for a night. The next day, the family of the deceased share a last meal, feeding the corpse while you ate. The corpse is then dressed in ceremonial clothes, remaining completely covered as place the body outside and begin divination, the process in which members of close relation use a staff or wand is tied to the wrap around the deceased head. A question is asked, such as where would you like your body to be placed, and if the staff lifts the head easily the answer is yes, and if the head is unable to be lifted the answer is no. After this process, the corpse is unwrapped, covered again in reindeer meet, and a kinsman cuts the throat and breast in order to “lay bare a part of the heart and the liver”. Gloves are used as touching a deceased body is seen as unclean. The body will then be left to be eaten by the animals of the area.

6.4 Other rituals: Chukchi people celebrate the changing of the seasons with ritualistic feasts of which are accompanied with sacrificial offerings of reindeer, dogs, and symbolic figures made of tallow, meat, edible leaves, snow and clay to replicate real animals

6.5 Myths (Creation): It is believed that the creator of the world is now the ravens, “He is the creator of the world and of man; he brings light – the sun, the moon, the stars, – he makes lakes and rivers ... After his work is done he becomes a thunder-bird and lives in the sky surrounded by clouds.” [1, pg 94]

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games): Social festivals consisting of sledge racing, foot racing, and wrestling are held and attended by most of the surrounding villages. These events, particularly racing has a ritualistic implications and is accompanied by sacrifices similar to those at holidays. [1 pg 94]

6.7 Sex differences in RCR: At feasts, it is a women job to prepare a sacrificial porridge mixture consisting of blood, fat, and edible roots. This dish is a cultural delicacy for the Chukchi people.

6.8 Missionary effect: Almost no missionary efforts were exerted on Chukchi until the mid-twentieth century, and as such as no missionary effect is prevalent. [14]

6.9 RCR revival:

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs:

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people? No information available.

6.12 Is there teknonymy? No rules of Teknonymy were available.

6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.) The religion of the Chukchi people can be summed up as a combination of Shamanism and animism. It is believed that everything, animate or inanimate, contains a soul. Spirits exist in the world that are evil and good, and these spirits can influence the souls of the world, such as wolves being instructed by the evil spirits. It is the job a the Chukchi to live their life in accordance to these spirits. People are said to have multiple souls that can be taken away from evil spirits, and these souls are responsible for the well being of the one who possesses them. Shamans are chosen by the spirits and represent the connection to the spiritual world. Sacrifices and rituals toward the spirits are part of Chukchi life.

## **7. Adornment**

- 7.1 Body paint: Body paint was donned at certain rituals such as a marriage ceremony, where the bride or grooms face is painted with the hereditary symbols of their new family.
- 7.2 Piercings: Ear piercings normal.
- 7.3 Haircut:
- 7.4 Scarification: Scarification was not part of Chukchi cultural tradition, but tattooing was. Lines were tattooed on the chin of women to guard against infertility, and small circles were tattooed at the corner of mens mouths. [11]
- 7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.):
- 7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment: Adornment is a normal part of rituals and ceremonies. At
- 7.7 Sex differences in adornment:
- 7.8 Missionary effect:
- 7.9 Cultural revival in adornment:

## 8. Kinship systems

- 8.1 Sibling classification system:
- 8.2 Sororate, levirate:
- 8.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.):

**9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):** Though the Chukchi people were regarded as fierce and ruthless warriors, hospitality and generosity were a prized trait among the Chukchi. They were culturally welcoming to strangers and neighboring tribes in need of food or a warm place to stay. It is the job of other members of group to take care of widows, orphaned children, and the poor.

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