

1. Description

1.1 Name of society, language, and language family: The Alyawarra people are an Aboriginal society from the Northern Territory of Australia. Also referred to as Aljawara, Alyawarra, Alyawarre, Iliaura, Yowera

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

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude): Mainly found in the Northern territory of Queensland, but also recognized in the Sandover and Tennant Creek areas (14° 27' S, 132° 15' E)

1.4 Brief history:

1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors: The European Colonization of Australia affected the lifestyle of the Alyawarra around 1923 to 1971. The industrialization of the new white man left the people searching for new solutions to foreign problems, including; a) Black-White conflict concerning access to land and resources; b) introduction of bores or permanent water supplies that encouraged sedentarization; c) introduction of motor vehicles; and d) distribution of government subsidized rations that supplemented traditional foods. Often times leading to an unusual dependence.

1.6 Ecology: The ecology of their landscape was a constantly changing cycle based on the irregular weather patterns. Unlike the 12-month solar cycle utilized by the incoming European expansion, the Alyawarra predicted weather irregularities through events like El Nino and La Nina. Leading to a constant shift between wet and dry seasons which ultimately determined their strategy of hunting and gathering. They also border the Pacific Ocean supplying readily available resources.

1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density: Population: 1,660 (according to a 2006 census). Village size were significantly smaller than their total population. Mainly for less mouths to feed and higher accessibility to game and gathered materials.

2. Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s): Alyawarra people ate many kinds of roots, tubers and bulbs. The ones that stand out are the Dioscorea species (yams), and Ipomoea costata (wild potato), Cyperus species (native onion), the yam daisy, Microseris scapigeris. Many of the roots contained a poison which was removed by extensive leaching in running water. However, seeds and vegetables/fruits were preferred when they were available in the warmer seasons.

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources: The Alyawarra relied heavily on the gathered materials for their main protein source. But they still ate whatever small game they could hunt or seafood/crustaceans found on the coast.

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?: Spears were the primary weapons used by the Alyawarra. They were multifunctional with hunting on land and hunting off the coast. Additionally, gathered materials were almost always found with digging sticks.

2.4 Food storage: Utilized storage vessels for gathered seeds and nuts. Intended for their reserves.

2.5 Sexual division of production: Women and children (if they were above the age of 8-9) stayed nearby their camp and used sharp sticks or whittled bones to dig for resources. While the men would go out and hunt. Most of their food came from the women and children.

2.6 Land tenure: They had bordered territories initially, but were challenged by the Europeans in the early 1930s to 1940s. Often times establishing sheep farming on their lands. However, most territorial conflicts happen through in-group disagreements of unmarried men.

2.7 Ceramics: They do not use ceramics.

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns: Typical Hunter and Gatherer food sharing system. Everybody received a fairly equal amount of food. Unless a big game animal was killed which the "main killer" would get a heavier portion.

2.9 Food taboos: Nothing was off limits unless there was a recent death in the society. Mourning times dramatically altered their usual living styles (additional information provided below).

2.10 Canoes/watercraft? Canoes were used for used for spear fishing during the wet seasons.

3. Anthropometry

3.1 Mean adult height (m and f): No anthropometrical data found.

3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f): No anthropometrical data found.

4. Life History, mating, marriage

4.1 Age at menarche (f): Recorded age between 11-14. Only recorded evidence comes from the 1970s leading some possibility for variation.

4.2 Age at first birth (m and f): 12 is usually when a married couple will begin trying to have a child. Average age documented was around 14 for women. However, most men did not have a child until their late teens early twenties.

4.3 Completed family size (m and f): No information found.

4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f): Females had an average IBI around 4 years in the 1970s. Carrying was done entirely by the female leading to a longer time period between children.

4.5 Age first marriage (m and f): Males waited until around 18-22 to get their wife (if they were lucky). While women could have an arranged marriage since their birth. Typically, older men "called dibs" on recently born women in their tribe.

4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce: There was no information found on divorce. The only escape from marriage was through death.

4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously: The Alyawarra were a polygynous group. Multiple wives per husband.

- 4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?: The Alyawarra men would prove themselves based on their importance to their civilization. Additionally, gifts could be given to the parents of a recently born women in an attempt to arrange a future marriage. No dowry was recorded.
- 4.9 Inheritance patterns: The inheritance pattern was through the next of kin model. But the men had an extreme advantage on the women. The oldest men to youngest were recognized first, then the oldest women would be considered.
- 4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict: The young children would be cared for by the women and older children who were too young to hunt yet. The Alyawarra tend to move around quite often but the young children were always held at the center of the tribe. To protect them from dangers they were not accustomed to yet.
- 4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals: No evidence over the social attitudes of homosexuality was discovered.
- 4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy): Almost always endogamy. They avoided outsiders as potential marriages and focused mainly within the group (because old men wanted more wives). They stayed within their community, but avoided most types of incestuous relationships. The closest they married was through first cousins.
- 4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these “other fathers” recognized? They didn’t necessarily view fathers as the contributor to the life of a child. More like a vessel that provided them with the spirit. In a similar sense to reincarnation, every child was viewed as a previous member of their civilization. Their souls waited around until a new child was available.
- 4.14 What is the belief of the mother’s role in procreation exactly? (e.g., “receptacle in which fetus grows”) Women were viewed in a higher regard during/after their pregnancy. Especially if the mother had multiple children over an extended period of time. Their role was basically as life givers.
- 4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)? No, viewed as a by chance type of occurrence.
- 4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape. Unfortunately, rape occurred in the Alyawarra civilization. Mainly through younger unmarried men who grew frustrated at the number of wives to an elder vs none for him.
- 4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin) First/second cousins were the social norm when observed through the 1970s. Although there could have been a shift in spousal preservation.
- 4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms? Not really. Neither men/women really cared too much about their uniqueness through sexual freedoms. The role of female/male was already established.
- 4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring. No, it seems the only gift giving occurred after a pregnancy or before the marriage of two individuals.
- 4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children? Initially, the mother’s sisters were expected to care for the children. If she had none, then the wives of the same partner would then care for the children.
- 4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females. There wasn’t enough statistical evidence to provide an exact ratio. However, the males usually outnumbered the women with the occasional exception of a smaller community.
- 4.22 Evidence for couvades. No, the fathers did not display this behavior. Probably because they were not present throughout the entirety of the pregnancy. Often moving around to many areas.
- 4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older) No, fathers were not viewed differently based on their age.
- 4.24 Kin avoidance and respect? Nobody avoided each other in the group unless there were altercations (usually between an unmarried man and a married man). The level of respect was much higher in the community. Throughout the life of the Alyawarra people gradually receive accolades just for surviving and giving birth/growing into a man. Therefore, elders were highly regarded while youth were interpreted with great potential for the future.
- 4.24 Joking relationships? Unfortunately, there was no evidence for joking relationships with the Alyawarra people.
- 4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations. Patrilineal was the main patterns of descent. If the father were to relocate to a different civilization, his previous children adopted the matrilineal descent line. But this was only taken up on issues of abandonment.
- 4.26 Incest avoidance rules. Yes, but to a degree. Brothers/sisters, Uncles/nieces, Aunts/nephews, were all to be avoided. But cousin loving was okay for 2nd cousins and occasionally 1st cousins.
- 4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony? Yes. The ceremony consists of elders dressing up in religious paints. The process begins with the new couple tearing down their old house. Then (immediately following the tearing down ceremony), the new couple would build their new house together.
- 4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name? The children are named by their parents. This name is the one used by members of the tribe. Additionally, their “birth totem” (totem pole placed at the area of conception of the child) holds the name of their “essence” as a person. Although not a regular occurrence, some members of the community (mainly the elders) referred to new children as their totem essence name.
- 4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?) Women always will marry from within their civilization. Older men will typically do the same while younger men are expected to find a wife from a neighboring tribe if possible.
- 4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)? Yes. Parents and potential spouses usually arrange marriages right after the birth of their daughter. The newborn sons are expected to find a mate on their own.
- 4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who: No evidence over marital conflicts was found.

Warfare/homicide

- 4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare: Very rarely. Only occurred through 1932-1970s and only 24-32 deaths were documented by the new Europeans.
- 4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death: Outgroup deaths were entirely uncommon. In-group deaths were a little more prevalent. Always occurred when an unmarried male challenged the male of multiple wives. Unsurprisingly the unmarried male typically died.
- 4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing: Like I mentioned previously, an unmarried man wanting a wife of his own. Nothing substantial occurred to suggest a different killing motive in in-group or out-group killings.
- 4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations): External relations were always skeptically viewed through the eyes of the Alyawarra. They feared what they didn't know and usually came up with crazy speculations of their neighbors. Such as possibility of cannibalism or dark magic. The Alyawarra almost always liked to consider themselves superior to their neighbors even though they didn't necessarily communicate with them.
- 4.18 Cannibalism? There was no accurate evidence of cannibalism discovered. Few accounts of endo-cannibalism after the death of a highly regarded member. But nothing conclusive.

5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

- 5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size: Population of the entirety of the Alyawarra was around 1,660. But the small territories occupied usually involved somewhere between 200-400 people at a time.
- 5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality): Always revolved around the climate they were in at the time. El nino/La nina controlled the mobility of the group. Men were almost 4x as likely of moving around and even 6x for the unmarried men of the group.
- 5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes): The leaders of the Alyawarra territories were always the older/proven members of their group. They were deemed as the most competent individuals to make the decisions for the group.
- 5.4 Post marital residence: During the marriage ceremony, the new couple would build their home. But, they often had to build a new one in the mobility time of the year. Husbands could go to bed with any of his wives, but the females had to stay in one particular sector.
- 5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense): In-group territoriality occurred through unmarried men challenging husbands of many wives. But they had an entirely different perception for out-group territoriality. Often letting them be unless they tapped into their nearby resources.
- 5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex): Men were always the leaders of the group. But the older you were, the higher amount of superiority you would have.
- 5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships: No interesting special relationships were found during research.
- 5.8 Village and house organization: Unmarried men usually bordered the outside of the group, while women and young children would be closer to the center of the village. For obvious reasons of protecting the women and children.
- 5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses): Unmarried men had smaller houses on the outskirts of the civilization. While the bigger houses were selected for the married couples with multiple children.
- 5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere? Everybody slept on the ground in the Alyawarra society.
- 5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc: Patrilineal/kinship relationships determined the social organizations for the Alyawarra.
- 5.12 Trade: Had one allocated day where trade with the neighboring Nyguanda would occur. The nyguanda had higher yields of small game.
- 5.13 Indications of social hierarchies? No social hierarchies based on familial relationships, only hierarchies of age.

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

- 6 Time allocation to RCR: They Alyawarra did not have a specified time in which religious actions occurred/lasted. Mainly determined by the significant point in time (like a birth or a recent marriage).
- 6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine): Shamanistic practices did occur, but only for the males. Females were not allowed to be depicted as shamans.
- 6.2 Stimulants: No recorded evidence in stimulant usage within the Alyawarra.
- 6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal): Yes. The rites of passage occurred at a variety of stages within the Alyawarra ages (both different for male/female). The birth of a new member involved the entirety of the civilization waiting outside the mure (household) where the child was being born. Death was viewed differently and involved wiping the slate clean. Tearing down the deceased houses and actively suppressing the mourning of the individual. If they did not forget their previous life, the spirit could not inhabit the newest vessels. Males often went through the rites of hunting where they would need to prove their endurance and toughness. Additionally, the first puberty signs of a female (menstruation) involved her moving into to her husband's household if she was married.
- 6.4 Other rituals: Nothing specific that wasn't mentioned above.
- 6.5 Myths (Creation): That everybody is intertwined through the spirit world which is not observable. This life is just one step in the many lives of the spirit itself. While death still involved mourning, anybody could take solace in the fact there would be another life.
- 6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games): Specific spiritual dances were practiced through the older men. While the children (both male and female) would have specific games in order to teach the importance of hunting/gathering.
- 6.7 Sex differences in RCR: Men were the only beings allowed to have spiritual tendencies. Females could only observe because these practices were deemed too dangerous.
- 6.8 Missionary effect: No evidence discovered through missionary effect.
- 6.9 RCR revival: No evidence discovered through RCR revival.

- 6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs: Death was permanent for the vessel, but not for the spirit itself. Regardless of what the spirit would inhabit next (because a spirit is in everything, including biotic factors in their natural environment), the spirit itself would live on.
- 6.11 Taboo of naming dead people? Dead people could not be referred to again after they died. The entire tribe of Alyawarra had to forget them completely in order to let the spirit live on.
- 6.12 Is there teknonymy? No teknonymy was observed.
- 6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.) All their religion was based off their ancestors. The previous beings were used religiously as well as philosophically.

7. Adornment

- 7.1 Body paint: White body paint made through a specific root found in the dry seasons. Always used for a religious ceremony.
- 7.2 Piercings: No piercings were documented.
- 7.3 Haircut: No special haircut was utilized. However, body paint could be used on the hair for specific ceremonies.
- 7.4 Scarification: No scarification occurred within the Alyawarra group.
- 7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.): Feathers from small game were used if they could be found. The Alyawarra had no evidence of beads or different lip plates.
- 7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment: Painting of the body was their only adornment.
- 7.7 Sex differences in adornment: The men were always the ones to be painted to convey a sort of deity figure. They even did this through ritualistic 'role playing' where they would re-enact spiritual events.
- 7.8 Missionary effect: No evidence was found.
- 7.9 Cultural revival in adornment: No evidence was found.

8. Kinship systems

- 8.1 Sibling classification system: Although the Alyawarra group was functioned through patrilineal lines. Everybody in their immediate proximity was considered related due to the reincarnation aspect of their birthing traditions. The previous spirit of another deceased member was thought to inhabit the next vessel available.
- 8.2 Sororate, levirate: None of these occurred within the Alyawarra.
- 8.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.): Cross-cousin relationships did occur within the Alyawarra albeit not on a regular basis.

9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):

The Alyawarra consisted of many odd cultural features, but the top interesting ones were;

1. After the death of an individual occurred, the entire group would tear down their housing structure. It was believed the spirit could not be reborn if they were confused in the afterlife. Therefore, the spirit would stay in the structure if it was not discarded of.
2. Unmarried men trying to challenge the elder husband were often times killed/maimed by the husband. Including a deliberation period where nearby affiliates of the situation would deem the appropriate response. Sometimes including banishment to another tribe (which was quite a scary conception in their mind), or even tossing a spear at the perpetrator while he could not move.
3. Men were the only recognized spiritual leaders in the group. Women could not be seen as some sort of deities.
4. They hunted through methods of stalking their prey. Often times involving multiple days of hunting for one carcass.
5. They only eat crustaceans as a last resort. They were viewed as eating undesirable sustenance.

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