

Andrew Guild

Cocopah/Cocopa Indians

## **1. Description**

**1.1 Name of society, language, and language family:** Cocopa(h) (alternate name Kwapa) speak Cocopah language, from Delta-California branch of the Yuman language family

**1.2 ISO Code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com):** coc

**1.3 Location (latitude/longitude):** Baja California(30.0000° N, 115.1667° W) Sonora, Mexico(29.6461° N, 110.8689° W)

**1.4 Brief History:** Known as “Those who live on the river” because of their location near the lower Colorado River region, the Cocopah are some of the few indigenous people left in the southeastern California, northwestern Sonora and northeastern Baja California area in Mexico.

**1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/government/powerful neighbors:** Other groups like the Yuma, Kahwan, and Halyikwamai all occupied the Colorado River delta along with the Cocopa during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

**1.6 Ecology:** Ranging from Yuma, Arizona to Baja California and Sonora, Mexico, the Cocopah reservation is in one of the world’s driest climates, the Sonoran Desert.

**1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density:** 1,025 total in all countries, 519 solely of Native American heritage.

## **2. Economy**

**2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s):** Since they were agriculturalists, the crops they grew most were corn, tepary beans, pumpkins, gourds, watermelons, muskmelons, and cowpeas.

**2.2 Main protein-lipid sources:** Fishing provided their main source of meat while hunting game animals and birds brought in far less food.

**2.3 Weapons:** Bows, arrows, quivers, clubs, shields, lances, scalp knives, spears, and daggers were all used in warfare.

**2.4 Food Storage:** “Ideal pattern for each family was to store enough agricultural and wild plant foods to last through winter” (Kelly) Some years that plan would work and in others, it wouldn’t. Families consumed most food by March or early April and went off rations until May.

**2.5 Sexual division of production:** Young aged boys were pushed in the direction of responsibilities while the girls were treated like children for a prolonged period. Men had the responsibility of hunting and fishing with a little gathering mixed in.

Women did the majority of gathering while there was also heavy importance on child birth.

**2.6 Land tenure:** South of Senora, Mexico and Baja California is the desert-type land the Cocopa occupied

**2.7 Ceramics:** Water jars, cooking pots, dishes, parching pans, cups and ladles were all manufactured through pottery.

**2.8 Specified sharing patterns:** No data found

**2.9 Food taboos:** No data found

**2.10 Canoes/Watercraft:** Rafts were used while gathering wild rice and bird eggs along the river.

### **3 Anthropometry**

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

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

### **4 Life History, Mating, Marriage**

**4.1 Age at menarche (f):** No data found

**4.2 Age at first birth (m and f):** No data found

**4.3 Completed family size (m and f):** No data found

**4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f):** No data found

**4.5 Age at first marriage (m and f):** Male: 16-18, for a girl marriage occurred soon after first menstruation.

**4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce:** Marriage lasted for a couple of months up to about a year until the marriage was broken

**4.7 Percent of marriages that are polygynous/percent of males**

**married polygynously:** There were not many polygynous marriages because the male only kept his wife for a few months and then could remarry after the first marriage was broken.

**4.8 Bride purchase (price)/bride service/dowry:** When “proposing”, man is expected to visit the girl’s father with a horse, some money, wearing apparel, or a combination of these gifts.

**4.9 Inheritance patterns:** No data found

**4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflicts:** Family came to and left the delta when they saw fit.

**4.11 Homosexual activities/social attitudes towards homosexuals:** No data found

**4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy):** Not noted

- 4.13** What is the belief of the role of males in conception, is it paternity partible? Are these “other fathers” recognized? : No data found
- 4.14** What is belief of the mother’s role in procreation exactly? No data found
- 4.15** Is conception believed to be an incremental process? : No data found
- 4.16** Occurrence of sexual coercion/rape: No
- 4.17** Preferential category for spouse: No data found
- 4.18** Do females enjoy sexual freedoms: No data found
- 4.19** Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring: Not noted
- 4.20** If mother dies, who raises children: Not known
- 4.21** Adult sex ration; number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females: No data found
- 4.22** Evidence for couvades: No data found
- 4.23** Different distinctions for potential fathers: Yes, as soon as a boy becomes a man by the group’s terms, he is eligible for marriage.
- 4.24** Kin avoidance and respect: It is the duty of the mother and father to direct and teach the children of the household. A grown boy owes a certain allegiance to the father for teaching him skills needed to become a man.
- 4.25** Joking relationships: No data found
- 4.26** Patterns of descent for certain rights/names/associations: No data found
- 4.27** Incest avoidance rules: Incest is not usually acceptable
- 4.28** Is there a formal marriage ceremony: Yes, man simply goes to bed with woman, with consent from both families.
- 4.29** In what way does one get a name/change their name/obtain another name: No data found
- 4.30** Is marriage usually within or outside the community: Within
- 4.31** Are marriages arranged? Who arranges? Man and Father of girl he seeks to marry
- 4.32** Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who: No data found

#### **Warfare/Homicide**

- 4.33** Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare: No data found

- 4.34 **Outgroup vs Ingroup cause of violent death:** No data found
- 4.35 **Reported causes of ingroup and outgroup killing:** Not specified
- 4.36 **Number of diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations):** No data found
- 4.37 **Cannibalism:** No data found

## 5 Socio-Political organization and interaction

- 5.1 **Mean local residential (village) group size:** About 40-50 average group size for those living in the Sonora region. In the Baja California region, village had an average of 30-40 people.
- 5.2 **Mobility Pattern:** People came and left the various regions whenever they pleased
- 5.3 **Political system:** No data found
- 5.4 **Post marital residence:** After a marriage was ended, male usually kept house and the female would return to the house they resided in before the marriage.
- 5.5 **Territoriality:** Nothing was specified
- 5.6 **Social interaction divisions (age and sex):** Age grades were determined by how old each person was. Male: baby(0-2), child(3-5), boy(6-19), man(20-49), old man(50-death). Female: baby(0-2), child(3-11), girl(12-19), woman(20-49), old woman(50-death).
- 5.7 **Special friendships/joking relationships:** No data found
- 5.8 **Village and house organization:** No man housed more than 6 people including himself
- 5.9 **Specialized village structures (men's houses):** Every main house had smaller sub-housing anywhere from 1-3 people.
- 5.10 **Sleep in hammocks or ground elsewhere?:** No data found
- 5.11 **Social organization/clans/moieties/lineages:** No data found
- 5.12 **Trade:** They seemed very independent in the way they fished, hunted and gathered everything they needed.
- 5.13 **Indications of social hierarchies:** Egalitarian

## 6 Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

- 6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine):** The Cocopa are very reluctant to talk about sickness or death with outsiders, but when they do, they get very emotional.
- 6.2 Stimulants:** Sobriety was important to the Cocopa.
- 6.3 Passage rituals(birth/death/puberty/seasonal):** Death was their greatest cultural interest, but were reluctant to talk about illness and death with outsiders.
- 6.4 Other rituals:** No data found
- 6.5 Myths(creation):** "Sipa and Komat, the creator gods, were under water and in the ground, living the way a child lives in its mother." (Kelly) Komat being the elder, pushed Sipa out ahead of him, and when they both reached the outside Komat became the younger and Sipa became the elder.
- 6.6 Cultural material(art/music/games):** "Children's play hours were spent imitating the ways of the elders, for almost no games or toys are mentioned..." (Kelly).
- 6.7 Sex differences in RCR:** No data found
- 6.8 Missionary effect:** Missionaries were not allowed to be part of sick/wellness of the people, being outsiders.
- 6.9 RCR revival:** No data found
- 6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs:** No data found
- 6.11 Taboo of naming dead people:** No data found
- 6.12 Is there teknonymy:** No
- 6.13 Brief description of religion:** No evidence of religion

## **7 Adornment**

- 7.1 Body paint:** Boys and Girls used body paint when they were looking for a husband/wife. When men visit their youth, their faces are also to be painted.
- 7.2 Piercings:** A boy's nose was pierced in connection with mourning ceremonies.
- 7.3 Haircut:** Hair was not cut nor colored for any special reason.
- 7.4 Scarification:** Girls were tattooed on the chin as soon as the proper occasion for the ceremony presented itself.
- 7.5 Adornment(beads/feathers/lip plates):** When a boy was looking for a wife, he would wear egret feathers in his hair and a necklace. Girls dressed up, painted their faces, and wore necklaces.
- 7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment:** Not noted

**7.7 Sex differences in adornment:** Many differences, Male: put feathers in hair, paint face, have piercings, tattoos, etc. Females had tattoos, face paint, piercings and clothing.

**7.8 Missionary effect:** No data found

**7.9 Cultural revival in adornment:** No data found

## 8 Kinship Systems

**8.1 Sibling classification system:** Much respect is shown to elders while same age siblings treated each other as simple peers.

**8.2 Sororate/Levirate:** No data found

**8.3 Other notable kinship typology (esp. cross-cousin typology):** No data found

## 9. Other interesting cultural features

### Numbered References:

1. <http://www.ethnologue.com/language/coc>
2. [https://www.google.com/webhp?sourceid=chrome-instant&rlz=1C1SAVG\\_enUS525US525&ion=1&espv=2&ie=UTF-8#q=latitude%20and%20longitude%20of%20sonora%20mexico](https://www.google.com/webhp?sourceid=chrome-instant&rlz=1C1SAVG_enUS525US525&ion=1&espv=2&ie=UTF-8#q=latitude%20and%20longitude%20of%20sonora%20mexico)
3. <http://www.everyculture.com/North-America/Cocopa.html>
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6. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cocopah>
7. Kelly, William H. *Cocopa Ethnography*. Tucson: U of Arizona, 1977. Print.