

1. Description

1.1 **Name of society, language, and language family:** Coosan or Coos

1.2 **ISO code:** CSZ

1.3 **Location (latitude/longitude):** (43.50/-124.17) Oregon-Umpqua Valley

1.4 **Brief history:** The Coos or Coosan Indians consisted of many groups that settled in the Southwest of Oregon. They lived near the coast as well as Coquille River. Depending on the location of the group, they either spoke Miluk or Hanis. They were able to hunt, fish and gather in the forests and nearby waters which made them very appealing for survival. The Coos signed a treaty along with the Umpqua and Siuslaw tribes in 1855 with the white invaders of their territory which was then broken the year later which resulted in a series of conflicts (Rogue River War). The white settlers forced most of the villages into the Siletz Reservation. ²

1.5 **Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors:** The native groups of the area began to create confederations to be recognized in terms of political representation. In terms of education, all of the people now are English speaking and have been westernized for the most part. As for most of the natives in their area, upon European interaction, conflicts arose and that resulted in their cooperation to more of the settlers' political values. The villages were run by two chiefs, one usually above the other. ²

1.6 **Ecology:** Oregon is rich with dense forests and it also has the ocean on the western side. These environments produced life to support both large and small mammals and an array of flora to pick from. The Coos were able to gather from the shores, rivers and forest grounds to produce food and crafts that they could trade and survive with. Fish and shellfish were plenty and the waters brought around beaver and other aquatic mammals which supplied fats and furs. The area has been described as a temperate paradise. ¹

1.7 **Population size, mean village size, home range size, density:** The first recording of the population was done in the mid-18th century and there were roughly 4000 people. The number declined to around 465 by 1870 and then recorded at around 2000 in 1991. The villages were about 50-60 people and were mostly located along the Coquille River. The population in 1991 was the population within the Siletz Reservation. ⁴

2. Economy

2.1 **Main carbohydrate staple(s):** Roots, shoots, grass called ye'et, and berries ⁴ (*3 pg 27)

2.2 **Main protein-lipid sources:** mostly fish (salmon), shellfish, marine mammals, elk and deer ⁴

2.3 **Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?:** Sharpened elk antlers were used for tools. Men made many things for fishing (boots, nets, ect) and there was also use of trapping larger game with pits. Most tools were wood, plant fiber, shell or bone. ⁴

2.4 **Food storage:** women made baskets to store roots and berries in with plant fibers. Their woven baskets were also used sometimes as art creations. ⁴

2.5 **Sexual division of production:** Men were usually the hunters and fishers and tool creators and women made mats and baskets and gathered. ⁴

2.6 **Land tenure:** With their adoption of their first constitution and by-laws in 1938, the Coos people were granted 6.1 acres in the Coos Bay area in Oregon.

2.7 **Ceramics:** no stone dishes were used, mostly wooden and woven utensils. ³(pg26)

2.8 **Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:** If a man was given a gift, part or all of it was given to the head chief who in return gave you privileged protection ^{3 pg (25)}

2.9 **Food taboos:**

2.10 **Canoes/watercraft?** Three main types of boats : Long narrow boats about 15ft-20ft long, larger/wider boats that were usually obtained from trade from the north which were used more commonly in the ocean , and then shovelnose canoes which were used for river transportation. Boats were typically made of Red Cedar wood. ⁴

3. Anthropometry

3.1 **Mean adult height (m and f):**

3.2 **Mean adult weight (m and f):**

4. Life History, mating, marriage

4.1 **Age at menarche (f):**

4.2 **Age at first birth (m and f):**

4.3 **Completed family size (m and f):**

4.4 **Inter-birth-interval (f):**

4.5 **Age first marriage (m and f):** Since brides were purchased, a father could buy a wife for his son as young as 3 years of age. The children would not live together until a more marriageable age. ^{3 (pg 26)}

4.6 **Proportion of marriages ending in divorce:**

4.7 **Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously:**

4.8 **Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?:** Brides were purchased with things like canoes and otter furs. Chiefs daughters were worth more (scalps of woodpeckers were highly priced). If a women was caught cheating, the family of the bride would return whatever was used to purchase her. ^{3 (pg 26)}

4.9 **Inheritance patterns:** goods were broken and buried with the dead ⁴

4.10 **Parent-offspring interactions and conflict:**

4.11 **Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals:**

4.12 **Pattern of exogamy (endogamy):** Exogamy was present when brides were purchased from other villages ^{3 (pg26)}

4.13 **What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these "other fathers" recognized?**

4.14 **What is the belief of the mother's role in procreation exactly? (e.g., "receptacle in which fetus grows"):**

4.15 **Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)?**

4.16 **Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape:**

4.17 **Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin):** Wealth was the most preferred category for a spouse. Wives were purchased and the most valued wives were the daughters of the wealthiest men (chiefs) ^{3 (pg 26)}

4.18 **Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?** Unfaithful wives were sent back to their families in exchange for the price that was paid for them. There are consequences for out of wedlock sexual freedoms. I found no information about single women's sexual freedoms. ^{3 (pg26)}

4.19 **Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring?** Gifts were used as currency for buying wives to the families of those involved. Often in-laws would just continue the gift giving process. ²

4.20 **If mother dies, whose raises children?**

4.21 **Adult sex ratio:**

4.22 **Evidence for couvades:**

4.23 **Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older)** potential fathers were the sons of men who could purchase wives. The age was almost irrelevant, the main distinction would be the amount willing to purchase. ³(pg26)

4.24 **Kin avoidance and respect?**

4.24 **Joking relationships?**

4.25 **Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations:**

4.26 **Incest avoidance rules:**

4.27 **Is there a formal marriage ceremony?**

4.28 **In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name?** There was a large gather of guests and they would pick a name and present it to the mother of the child and two other gentlemen. If the name was agreed upon (usually during a five day feast), a loud voice would say the name and everyone would repeat the name, followed by another five day festival. The children of poor parents were usually just named by the parents. ³(pg26)

4.29 **Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?)** The Coos people were divided among 40-50 villages along the river. The villages would be able to purchase wives from one another. ¹

4.30 **Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)?** Marriages were arranged in terms of purchasing power. The Coos used dentalium shells, woodpecker scalps, abalone shells, grey pine seeds, and clam shell disk money as currency as well as different gift like furs and canoes to bribe families into marriage. This would then create an ongoing cycle of gift giving between in-laws. ^{5 & 4}

4.31 **Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who:** If the gifts were not satisfying to the family, the daughter could plea to not marry the man. ¹

Warfare/homicide

4.14 **Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare:**

4.15 **Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death:** The Coos were a self-sufficient people who lived in relative peace and tranquility. Foreigners brought conflict and diseases like smallpox that did a number on the population ^{1 & 4}

4.16 **Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing:** Murder did sometimes occur, and it was followed by a ritual that was meant to turn the murderer's blood black. ^{3 pg 25}

4.17 **Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations):** the Umpqua and Siuslaw tribes are currently under a confederation with the Coos tribe and they all live nearby and share culture with one another. ⁵

4.18 **Cannibalism?**

5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

5.1 **Mean local residential (village) group size:** 40-50 people ¹

5.2 **Mobility pattern: (seasonality):** The Coos had set up villages with log built structures where they stayed permanently because of fresh drinking water and food sources that could get them through the winter. ²

5.3 **Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes):** The village was the highest form of political power. Villages were usually ruled by 2 chiefs, one above the other. ³ pg 25

5.4 **Post marital residence:**

5.5 **Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense):** Defended against white's during the mid-19th century, but not typically known for aggressive territorialism. ²

5.6 **Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex):**

5.7 **Special friendships/joking relationships:**

5.8 **Village and house organization:** plank houses were built out of cedar wood and could house at least a family. There were also pit or underground houses and grass houses as well. ^{2 & 3} pg 26

5.9 **Specialized village structures (mens' houses):** There were clubhouses and dormitories set up for men. There were also beehive shaped houses that were heated by steam in the winter used by both men and women. ⁴

5.10 **Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?** Women made mats that were used for sleeping. Mats were made of cattail and tule ⁴

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

5.12 **Trade:** Traded furs and fish with neighboring communities and received other tools and sometimes boats in exchange. ⁴

5.13 **Indications of social hierarchies?** Wealth created a caste system. Chiefs were usually the wealthiest men of the villages. There was nothing above the headman or chief. ³ pg 25

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

6 **Time allocation to RCR:** Ceremonies were held when murder happened as well as naming ceremonies for children. The people regularly held large-scale ceremonies featuring dancing, feasting, games, and gambling. First salmon and first elk ceremonies were also held. ³ (pg 25-27) & ⁴

6.1 **Specialization (shamans and medicine):** Shamans were used for disease curing and ritualistic things. They achieved their powers by walking and swimming in the night. ³ pg 25

6.2 **Stimulants:** tobacco was cultivated but couldn't find anything other than that. ⁴

6.3 **Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal):** Birthing rituals lasted for 10 days with each day bringing something different. Around the time of puberty, both boys and girls went out on vision quests to find their spirit power. ²

6.4 **Other rituals:** (Murder ritual listed in 4.16 above)

6.5 **Myths (Creation):** *THE WOMAN WHO BECAME A BEAR:* There was a girl in a village that was so lazy that people decided not to even to bother getting her to work. She eventually became crazy and the village decided to lock her up for five days. Her little brother brought her food and water to help her while she was locked up. The girl began to grow hair all over her body and eventually became a bear. She was released after the five days and went and killed her family and some of the villagers. She then told her brother that she was going to drink and the river. She drank so much water she then became a rock and eventually a tree grew where she was. Her brother grew old and became very wealthy. The story shows that life favors those who work hard. ³ (pg32)

6.6 **Cultural material (art, music, games):** Games were played often at festivals and small gatherings. I found that they had a love for a game called shinny which is a form of Indian field hockey. They also played dice that were often made of

wood or bone. Foot and canoe races were also forms of competition. In terms of art, baskets and carved wood were used to express forms of creativity.^{2 and 4}

6.7 Sex differences in RCR:

6.8 Missionary effect:

6.9 RCR revival:

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs: The dead were buried with their belongings⁴

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people? Once dead a person's name is never to be spoken

6.12 Is there teknonymy?

6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.) Shamanism was the main practice^{3pg 25}

7. Adornment

7.1 **Body paint:** The women of the Coos tattooed rows of dots on the back of their hands at puberty. Some also tattooed designs on their lower legs. Red ochre was used as face paint as well.²

7.2 **Piercings:** Earrings made of shells²

7.3 Haircut:

7.4 **Scarification:** Some groups in the area practiced head flattening, which uniquely the Coos did not.²

7.5 **Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.):** beads made of shells (glass beads upon European trade), scalps of birds were used as decoration. Waterproof fur capes were worn on special occasion as well. Some red saps were used to decorate moccasins.^{2 & 4 & 3pg 27}

7.6 **Ceremonial/Ritual adornment:** they painted themselves for dances and ceremonies using red ochre²

7.7 Sex differences in adornment:

7.8 **Missionary effect:** The Coos try to maintain a very spiritualist way of life just as their ancestors did.⁵

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):

- By the twentieth century, most native languages were no longer spoken⁴
- A Three Rivers Casino and Hotel franchise was opened to give job opportunities⁵
- In Oregon, the Confederated Tribes of Siletz became the first Oregon tribe to be restored in 1977 and The tribes had never been compensated for their lost lands²

Numbered references

- 1) <http://www.oregon.gov/dsl/SSNERR/docs/EFS/EFS41indsettlement.pdf>
- 2) http://web.archive.org/web/20060906012103/http://www.ctclusi.org/cultural_historical.asp
- 3) St. Clair, Harry H., and Leo J. Frachtenberg. "Traditions of the Coos Indians of Oregon." *The Journal of American Folklore* (1888-2012): n. pag. Print..
- 4) <http://what-when-how.com/native-americans/coosans-native-americans-of-the-northwest-coast/>
- 5) <http://ctclusi.org/about-us>