

1. Description

1.1 Name of society, language, and language family:

Esselen, Huelel Language (more commonly referred to as Esselen Language), it is derived from Hokan superfamily. (Shaul)

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

esq

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude):

Located around a coast near Carmel in Central California. It is considered a part of San Francisco Bay region (Moratto p.225) 37.6910° N, 122.3108° W

1.4 Brief history:

Due to their location the group was isolated geographically and linguistically. They were pushed by the Costanoan invaders into a mountain fortress. (Moratto p225) They are known as the first of the California tribes to have their language become extinct. (Shaul)

1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors:

Their culture was studied by Franciscan missionaries. (Shaul)

1.6 Ecology:

The Esselen people were living in Central California for over 10,000 years. (Esselen) They seemed to divided into five groups: Excelen, Eslenahan, Ekheahan, Imunahan, and Aspasniahan.

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

There was around 1300 people. They moved in small seminomadic bands. (Moratto p225)

2. Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s):

They would gather berries. They also harvested nuts and seeds. The acorn was often the most popular item gathered. (Moratto p.225)

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources:

Like their neighbors the Salinan, the Esselen would hunt deer, bear, and rabbits. They collected shellfish and would in certain seasons fish. (Moratto p.225)

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?:

Archaeologist have arrow shaft part. (Moratto p238)

2.4 Food storage:

There was no food storage. The Esselen would not stay in places long enough to collect food storage. They would just gather resources when they were seen. (Moratto p 251)

2.5 Sexual division of production:

The men would do the hunting and the women would gather the food. Also the women would work more on making the woven baskets. (Moratto)

2.6 Land tenure:

2.7 Ceramics:

The Esselen along with many other tribes around them did not have pottery. They had woven baskets instead. There were instruments made from elderberry that were similar to drums. (Breschini)

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:

The Esselen were an extremely egalitarian group. They would share their food equally among the tribe. (Esselen)

2.9 Food taboos:

The men would have to fast after a big successful hunt. (Esselen)

2.10 Canoes/watercraft?

There were no canoes or watercrafts apart of this group.

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):

4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce:

4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously:

Most men were married to just one woman. Only a chief was allowed to have multiple wives. However the wealthier villagers were known for having two wives (Williams, p26)

4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?:

4.9 Inheritance patterns:

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict:

4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals:

4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy):

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)

4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?

4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring

No evidence of this.

4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children?

4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females

4.22 Evidence for couvades

4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older)

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?

4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?)

Marriages did happen across the central American tribes. There was an increase in cross culture marriages when each tribe size dwindled. (Names)

4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)?

4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who:

Warfare/homicide

4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare:

4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death:

There seem to be more outgroup warfare. The Esselen did have bows and arrows and were considered great archers. (Williams p. 28)

4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing:

Most it was over resources. Though in one source it mentioned some fear of witchcraft as being a reason for certain ingroup murders. (Williams p27)

4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations):

4.18 Cannibalism?

5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size:

Esselen was around 500 people. Their group size was significantly less.

5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality):

The Esselen people would move where the greatest amount of resources were. They would move further into the woods during fall and summer. (Breschini)

5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes):

5.4 Post marital residence:

5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense):

They were not very territorial. They were much weaker than the tribes surrounding them. They were considered very peaceful by the first Spanish explorers. (Esselen)

5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex):

5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships:

5.8 Village and house organization:

While no settlement structure has survived, there still remains artwork from Spanish missionaries showing what their village houses looked like. They were hemispherical dome structures.

5.9 Specialized village structures (men's houses):

They had sweat lodges that men would go in for two days after a long hunt. (Esselen)

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?

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

There were chiefs and their sons were in the line of succession to become the next chief. The chiefs were given more privileges and allowed to have more possessions than the rest of the people. (Williams, p26)

5.12 Trade:

Traveling was difficult due to mountainous terrain however the Esselen must have traded to acquire some of their items. They had many special shells that could not have been collected where they were from. (Breschini)

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies?

Elders were given a great amount of respect and were looked to as leaders of the tribe. The elders knew the myths and legends and would pass them down to the younger generation. (Esselen).

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

6 Time allocation to RCR:

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine):

The Esselen tribe had both male and female shamans. The women would specialize in healing using certain herbs and chants to help cure the sick. They would also care for the women who were pregnant. The woman shaman would have a great understanding of plants. (Esselen)

6.2 Stimulants:

6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal):

Anthropologists determined that works of art depicting hand print were probably apart of a puberty ritual. (Esselen)

6.4 Other rituals:

6.5 Myths (Creation):

The creation myth is that the Coyote only has one child and wants more neighbors so he asks his wife if he can marry again. She says no but eventually gives in. The Coyote goes out and has five children. These five children represent the different tribes. There is the Ensen, Rumsien, Esselen, Kakonta, and Wacharones. (Coyote)

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games):

There has been a lot of discovery of rock art in areas that the Esselen people used to live. (Esselen)

6.7 Sex differences in RCR:

6.8 Missionary effect:

The missionary effect tore apart the Esselen Culture. They forced the people into missionaries where many of the people died of diseases. (Breschini)

6.9 RCR revival:

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs:

Archaeologist found a partially mummified child whose body was decorated and given Olivella shell beads and a necklace of shells. (Moratto p238)

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?

6.12 Is there teknonymy?

6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.)

The spirit world and reality were together on the same plan. The Esselen saw everything a part of nature as alive. Their spirituality would come forth in songs and chants. Dancing was another way for them to worship. (Esselen)

7. Adornment

7.1 Body paint:

7.2 Piercings:

7.3 Haircut:

7.4 Scarification:

7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.):

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment:

7.7 Sex differences in adornment:

The men would be mostly naked with some wearing fur from a killed animal. Women would have aprons covering them and to provide comfort while being on their knees gathering food. (Moratto)

7.8 Missionary effect:

The San Carlos and Soledad missions brought an end to the Esselen. They are considered the first California Indians to become culturally extinct. As the Spanish population grew the Esselen shrank. Many of the Esselen people who were forced to go live in the mission sites died of diseases. (Moratto p.225)

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):

There are many different types of pictographs found in Esselen territory. Somewhere said to resemble human hands.

These pictographs were created by the use of mixed bones and shells. (Moratto p246)

Their name is derived from the word rock. (Esselen)

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