

1. Description

1.1 Name of society, language, and language family: The society is called the Karankawa, whose name means “people walking in the water,” according to the language of the neighboring Lipan Apache tribe (1, p. 210). They spoke a Coahuiltecan language (2, p. 9). The language that the Karankawa spoke was Karankawa, and there are less than 100 surviving words of the language, today (8).

1.2 ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com): ZKK (9).

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude): Because of their nomadic tendencies, there is no reliable data as to the exact latitude and longitude of the Karankawa, only rough geographical estimates. They were located on the Gulf of Mexico. The Copanes were located near the Copano Bay, the Coapites were located near the San Antonio Bay, the Cujanes were located near the convergence of the San Antonio and Guadalupe Rivers, the Caranguagues were located near the Matagorda Bay and the Cocos were located near the mouth of the Colorado River (2, p. 13).

1.4 Brief history: The Karankawa tribes, having thrived on the Texas Gulf Coast for years, are now extinct. The first contact that has been recorded was in 1528 by a shipwrecked Spanish explorer, [Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca](#) (8). There were several groups that have been studied under the name “Karankawa” because they share culture and language similarities. There are five groups that are studied are the Cocos, Cujanes, Guapites, Copanes and Caranguagues (“Karankawa proper”). For the intents and purposes of this document, “Karankawa” will refer to all of these groups as a collective whole, unless otherwise noted per the source’s distinction (2, p. 13). The Karankawa were nomads, and often packed up to move to a new location to follow the food sources. The Karankawa primarily survived off of the fish/shellfish that were abundant in their coastal environment. The Karankawa frequently traveled between the barrier islands off of the coast of Texas and mainland Texas (8). Spanish missionaries made great effort to Christianize the Karankawas, the native people did not welcome newcomers. They engaged in a considerable amount of warfare with the Spanish and Texans, as well as Jean Lefitte’s pirates. It is unclear what became of the Karankawa’s, though some reports state that they were driven into Mexico by the mid 1800s where they dissolved into various native groups (2, p. 2). Other reports state that the Karankawa were obliterated completely (1, p. 211).

1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors: At the beginning of the 16th century, Spanish missionaries attempted to convert the Karankawa to Catholicism with limited success (4). Missionaries tended to be met with resistance and violence, likely because of the harsh treatment they experienced when they were first contacted by Spanish missionaries (3, p. 22). There were several attempts made by missionaries to “civilize” the Karankawa. The first attempt was made the Spanish in the form of the La Bahia mission in the Matagorda Bay. The Karankawa rebelled, so the mission was forced to relocate to the Guadalupe River. Here, the mission remained for about 10 years, and nearly 100 Karankawa resided there, though they eventually would all desert that mission, too. The last mission to be discussed was that of the Nuestra Señora del Rugio, which remained in operation for nearly 30 years until repeated attacks from neighboring tribes forced the mission to be abandoned permanently (8). There was some trading that occurred between the Karankawa and their neighbors, the Atakapa (1, p. 55).

1.6 Ecology: The Karankawa lived in southern Texas. The coastal groups lived in a more swampy and marshy climate, while the more inland groups lived in a more dry and arid environment. All groups lived near water sources in the form of various rivers and bays, so they were able to fish, as well as hunt larger game like deer and bison (2, p. 21). Southern Texas

experiences all 4 seasons, and the Karankawa traveled according to the seasons to follow their food sources (1, p. 210).

1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density: As of 1685, sources say that the population of the Karankawa was around 8000 people. The population steadily declined thereafter, until around 1822 when there were only about 1000 Karankawa left. By 1850 the population had dropped so sharply that only 50 Karankawa were left, and today there is no evidence of remaining Karankawa (2, p. 140). A band had 55.3 people in it, and bands were a subgroup of a “macroband” which had between 110 to 500 people in it (2, p.

140). “Macrobands” typically met during fall, late winter and early spring during the height of the fishing season (2, p. 22). “Macrobands” were then parts of tribes which numbered 1600 in 1685, but declined to 120 in 1836 (2, p. 140). The average population density was 1.1 persons/square kilometer (2, p. 130).

2. Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s): The Karankawa ate a high protein diet that had to be balanced by carbohydrate consumption. They ate a lot of fruits, like the prickly pear, persimmon, hackberry and mustang grape (2, p. 22).

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources: The meat diet contained roughly 80 % fish, 16% mammals and 4% shellfish, with 1% of the meat diet containing birds. The primary mammal that was consumed was venison. They also consumed redfish, trout, catfish, scallops, oysters, clams and many other types of seafood. The primary bird that was eaten was the wild duck. Subcutaneous fat and bone marrow from bison contributed to the lipid consumption of the Karankawa (2, p. 20-21).

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?: Fishing was done with bow and arrow, as well as nets and fish traps, though the bow and arrow was the primary mode of fishing (2, p. 4). The bow and arrow were made out of red cedar, and the arrows were exceptionally long. The bows were up to six feet tall, and the arrows were around a yard long, with a diameter of one half inch. They had feathers on one end and a head made of flint or steel on the other. The bow string was made of sinew (7, p. 123-124). The long design of the arrow was intentional, so that the arrow would stick out of the water and make the fish easier to retrieve (5). Stone tools like arrowheads and drills were also used for various purposes. Knives and shell tools were used to clean game (2, p. 85).

2.4 Food storage: Did not partake much in much food storage. The Karankawa tended to live one day at a time in terms of their food gathering (1, p. 210). A major exception to this “day by day” way of life is in the storage of fish. The Karankawa would dry their fish without salt to preserve the meat (2, p. 22).

2.5 Sexual division of production: Hunting/fishing was considered to be a “male activity” and women tended to gather nuts, roots and berries (2, p.4).

2.6 Land tenure: The Karankawa were a nomadic people, so it is unlikely that any land was passed down at all (8).

2.7 Ceramics: Despite being unable to recover many complete pieces, ceramic pottery was a very large part of Karankawan life. Almost all of the pieces were round, made of very sandy clay (2, p. 178). Ceramics have been used by archaeologists to differentiate between boundaries of different subgroups of Karankawas. The treatment of pottery with asphaltum as a waterproofing agent is the primary means of determining where one group stops and another group begins in

terms of territory. Additionally, groups that spent significant periods of time on the coast had pottery that contained more shards of shell in it than other types of pottery (2, p. 178). Pipes to smoke from were also made of ceramic. Pottery was made using the coil technique, and the Karankawa traded their pottery for some of their neighbors food resources (1, p. 55).

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns: Food was shared between a newlywed couple and the bride's parents (7, p. 129). Food was also shared by the village with those who had recently had a close family member recently pass away (11).

2.9 Food taboos: None found.

2.10 Canoes/watercraft? Traveled in handmade dugout canoes that were not designed for traveling through open ocean waters, though the men were evidently very skilled at handling their watercrafts. These crafts helped the Karankawa travel from barrier island to mainland Texas and back again (2, p. 4).

3. Anthropometry

3.1 Mean adult height (m and f): Known for being relatively tall, with a mean group height of 167 cm (2, p. 9). Male vs female mean heights are not known, though based on studies done on recovered femurs, the tallest Karankawan was 183.4 cm (2, p.10).

3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f): None found, although the Karankawa were known for their "strong and robust physiques" (2, p. 9). It is noted that the Karankawa were likely large and "robust" due to the high protein diet they consumed year round, allowing them to grow to sizes unlike those of other native groups (2, p. 10).

4. Life History, mating, marriage

4.1 Age at menarche (f): None found.

4.2 Age at first birth (m and f): None found.

4.3 Completed family size (m and f): Family units typically consisted of a father, a mother and one child. It was rare to see parents caring for more than one child at a time (7, p. 124).

4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f): After having a child, the couple was supposed to practice abstinence for two years (7, p. 130).

4.5 Age first marriage (m and f): None found.

4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce: No true statistics are known about the number of divorces, though the Spanish explorer Cabeza de Vaca reported that marriage for the Karankawa was "binding" (7, p. 130). That being said, separations were common, though this number dropped after children were born (10).

4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously: The Karankawa practiced monogamy, though European explorers did occasionally comment on extramarital affairs that they observed (7, p. 124). Additionally, it was observed that Shamans were allowed multiple wives (10).

4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?: The couple was to give the things they procured via hunting and gathering to the bride's parents for one year after the marriage (7, p. 129).

4.9 Inheritance patterns: I could not find anything specific to say exact inheritance patterns, but all evidence suggests that all inheritance went to the male children.

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict: It was said that male children were particularly "indulged." In fact, it was not uncommon to nurse a child until the age of 12 (11).

- 4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals: “Berdaches,” or “two spirited” people, were common amongst the Karankawa, and all were treated as inferiors. They were “greatly despised by the others” (7, p. 134).
- 4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy): Exogamy was acceptable for the Karankawa. It was documented that the Karankawa merged with the Mayeyes, a neighboring group, and they began to “live together” and their members “intermarried” (2, p. 234).
- 4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these “other fathers” recognized?: None found.
- 4.14 What is the belief of the mother’s role in procreation exactly? (e.g., “receptacle in which fetus grows”): Females were permitted to commit infanticide if was desired, and they engaged in long periods of nursing after the child was born. Typically, infanticide occurred during famines, when women were concerned that they would not be able to take care of yet another baby (10).
- 4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time?): None found.
- 4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape: Women were traded with European explorers for various items, most particularly gunpowder and glass beads (7, p. 130).
- 4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin): Marriages are exogenous, so there is no kin that are preferred for marriage. In fact, it was considered to be extremely inappropriate to marry one’s own kin (10).
- 4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?: None found.
- 4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring: Extramarital partners were not necessarily given gifts, but it was not shameful to have an extramarital relationship (7, p. 129).
- 4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children?: None found.
- 4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females: Ratio of adult males/adult females was 16.2/15, or 1/0.8 (excluding young boys and girls) (2, p. 128).
- 4.22 Evidence for couvades: None found.
- 4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older): None found.
- 4.24 Kin avoidance and respect?: It was said that “to marry women to their own kinfolk was a bad thing.” In order to respect one’s own kin, one would ensure that their daughter marry exogenously to a man in another band (10). A groom was also required to avoid his in-laws following the culmination of the bride service (11).
- 4.24 Joking relationships?: None found.
- 4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations: The Karankawa were loosely organized, so descent was not strictly regulated, though some evidence suggests that it was patrilineal for all rights and associations, particularly because contact was more restricted with the female’s family after marriage (7, p. 130).
- 4.26 Incest avoidance rules: Incest was avoided in that marriages were exogamous and arranged during times when various bands came together for seasonal hunting and gathering (10). That being said, a woman often went to live with her husband’s family because she would marry her brother-in-law should her husband die (11).
- 4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony?: None found, although ceremonies and rituals were very important to the Karankawa so it would make sense for them to have had a formal marriage ceremony (7, p. 127).

4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name?: Children were given two names at birth, one of which to be kept secret from outsiders (7, p. 124).

4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?): Marriage was preferred to be outside of the community. It was preferred that marriages were between different bands, meaning the Karankawa married other Karankawas, just in other communities. Marriages were patrilocal in nature (10).

4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)?: Marriage was first thought about and arranged when bands came together during fishing seasons (10, 2, p. 23). Marriages were arranged by the bride's side of the family, seeing as marriage was considered a "loss" for the father of the bride (11).

4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who: None found.

Warfare/homicide

4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare: None found.

4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death: The primary cause of outgroup violent death was European explorers upsetting the Karankawa, though there is evidence to suggest that the Karankawa also engaged in warfare with their neighbors (6). It was said that the Karankawa "raided to kill and plunder" meaning they were not interested in capturing neighboring groups, they were merely interested in either revenge or an economic gain (7, p. 126). The Karankawa were so engrossed in their warfare, however, that it was not uncommon for them to travel miles to make raids on various peoples, like the Caddos to the north (11). There are few ingroup killings reported for the Karankawa (6). There is one major cause of ingroup killing, however, and that is in the case of a daughter wishing to marry an enemy. It was thought that if one's daughter were to marry an enemy, "the enemy would multiply" so it was actually thought to be better to kill one's own daughter than allow her to marry an enemy (10).

4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing: Most of the outgroup killings by the Karankawa were against European explorers, for example, when a group of shipwrecked Spaniards attempted to flee the Karankawa having stayed with them for a few weeks and failed, they were massacred brutally when the Karankawa realized that the explorers had tried to flee (5). Another example of outgroup killing is when a group of European explorers kidnapped a Karankawan woman, a group of more than 300 Karankawa set out on a mission to retrieve her and get avenge the wrong of her kidnapping (8). The Karankawa also were often engaged in warfare with their neighbors, so that was another cause of outgroup killing (6).

4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations): The Karankawa merged with neighboring groups, like the Mayeyes. It has been additionally documented that the Karankawa, ravaged by diseases brought by European explorers, may have "welcomed" encroachment by and merging with neighboring groups, like the Apache and the Comanches (2, p. 134). Additionally, the Karankawa traded their pottery for dried fish with the neighboring Atakapa (1, p. 55).

4.18 Cannibalism? The Karankawa participated in cannibalism, though they cremated the village doctors (1, p. 210). There is a discrepancy in when the Karankawa cannibalism began. Some sources state that cannibalism disgusted the Karankawa when Spanish explorers first made contact. The explorers were shipwrecked Spaniards who turned to cannibalism to survive, a practice that horrified the Karankawa at first, though they eventually would take up the practice

(4). Other sources state that the Karankawa had practiced cannibalism from their inception (1, p. 210). Cannibalism was not only reserved for deceased Karankawans, as they were known to roast and devour the flesh of their enemies, most notably European explorers (6).

5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size: As stated previously, the Karankawas were broken into various groups and subgroups. A band typically contained around 55 kin-related people. Several bands joined together to form a “macroband” which contained between 110 and 500 people. These “macrobands” combined to form a tribe of up to 1600 people at the peak of Karankawa population (2, p. 138).

5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality): The Karankawa followed their food sources depending on the season and what was available (1, p. 210). When fish and larger game were scarce, they would eat more carbohydrates (2, p. 101). For example, in the winter months of November and December, roots were collected and eaten as the primary food source (7, p. 130).

5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes): The smallest band had two types of influential males: “priests” or “conas” and “captains” or “tamas.” There were civil leaders that received their leadership position through blood right, and there were war chiefs that presided over the tribes during times of war (7, p. 124). Because macrobands were not strictly organized and had fluctuating numbers, they lacked strict leadership. The same principle applies to the tribes. Tribes also lacked leadership because of the fluctuation that occurred within the macrobands that made up the tribes (2, p. 138). It was extremely taboo to consider oneself better than another, so social rank and class were virtually nonexistent (10).

5.4 Post marital residence: The Karankawa lived with the female’s parents for about a year after marriage in order to give to the parents the food that was either hunted or gathered. The couple would then move into their own home with the groom’s family having completed this year (11).

5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense): There were not definitive boundaries for the Karankawa, as they were a nomadic people. That being said, there is archaeological evidence to suggest that the various tribes stayed within a loose boundary, according to the food sources that were available, though evidence does suggest that there were once much more strictly regulated boundaries prior to European contact. In fact, there is evidence to suggest that the Karankawa shared territory with other inland groups if the sharing was mutually beneficial (ie hunting and gathering practices were compatible) (2, p. 5).

5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex): Women were considered unfit to participate in rituals because they were believed to be incompetent (7, p. 127).

5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships: None found.

5.8 Village and house organization: The home consisted of immediate kin. Evidence suggests that parents only lived with one child (7, p. 124). Bands of several families traveled and camped together, which then made up a larger “macroband” (2, p.138).

5.9 Specialized village structures (mens’ houses): There is no evidence to suggest that there were specialized structures for the males of the community.

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?: They slept in wigwam type structures that consisted of a mat or hide covered pole frame. These structures were particularly helpful to the Karankawa because they were easy for the women to pack up and move at any given moment. The structures were also helpful for the Karankawa because they easily fit into the canoes that the Karankawa used to travel from barrier island to mainland Texas and back (2, p. 4).

- 5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc: Bands of those that were related traveled together to follow the food sources. Bands combined to make macrobands, which then combined to make tribes (2, p. 138). The smallest group, the “band” was primarily made up of kin-related individuals.
- 5.12 Trade: The Karankawa traded with their neighbors, the Atakapa. The Karankawa traded their pottery for dried fish (1, p. 55).
- 5.13 Indications of social hierarchies?: The Karankawa did not have much of a social hierarchy. Though women were thought to be “less capable” than men because they were not allowed to participate in rituals and ceremonies, there was very little social hierarchy. A “chief” or leader of macroband was in the primary person in charge, though even he had relatively small amounts of power. The Karankawa had such loose social organization that they did not have much of a hierarchy. That being said, homosexuals or bisexuals were thought to be the lowest of the low and were treated as inferiors to all members of society (7, p. 134).

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

- 6 Time allocation to RCR: Though there is not a set amount of time that the Karankawa devoted to rituals, ceremonies and religion, it has been documented that religion ceremonies and rituals were very important to the Karankawa and took precedence over everything else (7, p. 127). For example, the day after drinking the intoxicating brew made from the yaupon tree was unproductive and spent lazily hanging around camp (8).
- 6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine): Shamans (medicine men) were the ones who led religious ceremonies (11). Shamans and tribe doctors/physicians were known to take care of the sick (1, p. 211), though anyone who got sick on a “march” from one location to another was typically left to die. To heal any ill or diseased person, the ailment was “sucked out of their body” (7, p. 126).
- 6.2 Stimulants: One Karankawan stimulant was a tea brewed from the yaupon tree. The tea was drunk during rituals and ceremonies to thank the gods for successful hunts (8). The Karankawa also enjoyed smoking tobacco either from ceramic pipes or from corn husks (7, p. 123). Another popular stimulant for the Karankawa was whiskey obtained through European explorers (7, p. 127).
- 6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal): The Karankawa heavily mourned the deaths of their people. A child dying warranted a year-long ritual of wailing to mourn the child’s death. The parents of the deceased child would rise before dawn to begin the daily wailing, they would wail again around noon and then wail once more before dusk (5). If a man were to die, his family neither hunted nor gathered for up to three months after his death. Instead, members of the band would bring food to the family everyday (11). Additionally, when a physician died and was cremated, a ceremony which involved much dancing took place to “pulverize” the bones (7, p. 127). When boys turned 10, they were given a loin cloth to wear (7, p.127).
- 6.4 Other rituals: Children were given two names at birth. One of the names given to the children were known only to other Karankawa (7, p. 124). The doctors of the tribe were not to be eaten after death. Instead, these individuals who were considered to have high standing within the community were cremated upon their death (1, p. 210). Smoke and tea made of the yaupon tree helped ensure that raids or hunts would be a success. These rituals were considered to be “purifying” and often included considerable amounts of dancing and chanting (11).
- 6.5 Myths (Creation): None found.

- 6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games): The women primarily were involved in the arts, which consisted of crude paintings on wooden objects. The paintings were of inanimate objects, though humans and animals were occasionally the subject (7, p. 126). The Karankawa also enjoyed various games. They enjoyed trying to hit various marks with arrows, hatchet and knife throwing and wrestling. Because of their use of their bow and arrow for recreational games, the Karankawa were expert marksmen (7, p. 123).
- 6.7 Sex differences in RCR: Women were forbidden to participate in ceremonies, as they were at risk of “desecrating” the rituals (7, p. 127).
- 6.8 Missionary effect: Missionaries did not really have an effect on the religious and ceremonial practices of the Karankawa, as most attempts to “Christianize” them failed miserably. Often, the Karankawa deserted the missions shortly after arriving (8).
- 6.9 RCR revival: None found.
- 6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs: The homes of the deceased were left erect, not to be destroyed or dismantled. That being said, anyone not close to the family remained respectfully quiet for several days after the person passed away (7, p. 127). It was also believed that one could capture the courage of an enemy by consuming their flesh (8).
- 6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?: None found. That being said, the Karankawa were very respectful of their dead, so it is extremely possible that there would be a taboo of naming dead people (5).
- 6.12 Is there teknonymy? None found.
- 6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.): Medicine men were developed into priests who presided over the religious ceremonies (7, p. 127). A religious dance was done at the full moon to show thankfulness to the gods for a hunt or fishing expedition that had yielded a lot of food. The dance took place in a tent which had a fire in the middle to boil tea made from the yaupon tree. A single Karankawa would walk around the circle and chant while all the others drank the tea, until they, too, joined into the chant. Accompanying the chant were three things: “a rattle made of a gourd filled with small stones or shot, a fluted piece of wood, which was held upon the knee of the player, and over which a stick was drawn, producing a droning noise, and a rude flute blown softly in time with the chant” (7, p. 127).

7. Adornment

- 7.1 Body paint: In addition to painting their bodies with asphaltum, a black tar-like substance that washed up on the seashore, the Karankawa also tattooed their faces with circles on their cheeks and lines between their chins and eyes (5). During times of war, men were known to paint their faces half red and half black. To denote married vs unmarried women, unmarried women would paint a stripe down their forehead, nose and lips, yet married women were allowed to cover themselves with floral, animal or pastoral designs (1, p. 210).
- 7.2 Piercings: According to accounts from the shipwrecked Spanish explorer, Cabeza de Vaca, the men pierced their lips and then hung pieces of cane through their lips. This practice pulled the lips down to give the men an appearance of “perpetual grinning” (5). Ears and noses were also pierced (7, p. 134). Stripes were added to a woman’s body to denote that she was no longer a virgin (7, p. 134).
- 7.3 Haircut: Both men and women had short hair, though men’s hair was long enough to braid (7, p. 125).

- 7.4 Scarification: “Tamas” were in charge of religious ceremonies, etc. for the Karankawa, and they were known to be scarred from “the back of their head to the soles of their feet.” These scars came from fish spines (7, p. 133).
- 7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.): Though the Karankawa did not have lip plates, as previously stated, the men hang pieces of can through their lip piercings, similar to a lip plate (5). Men wore colored cloth in their braids, and they also wore shell beads around their necks. Occasionally, men would wear brass necklaces or rattlesnake rattles on the ends of their braids (7, p. 125).
- 7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment: During the ceremony to thank the gods for a successful hunt, the Karankawa performing the ritual would be completely covered from head to toe in animal skins so that even his face could not be seen (7, p. 127).
- 7.7 Sex differences in adornment: Women rarely participated in adornment, other than wearing a deer-hair bracelet on their left wrists, a practice which the men also partook in (7, p. 125).
- 7.8 Missionary effect: None found.
- 7.9 Cultural revival in adornment: None found.

8. Kinship systems

- 8.1 Sibling classification system: Children in general were given a lot of attention, though it is documented that special attention was paid to male children, most likely because the Karankawa were a patrilineal society (11).
- 8.2 Sororate, levirate: None found.
- 8.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.): Kin traveled in bands, and it was considered extremely taboo to marry within one’s own band, therefore there was little, if any, cross-kin marriage, etc. (10). The extent of cross-kin marriage was in the event that a woman’s husband should pass away. If a woman’s husband passed away, she would marry one of her husband’s brothers. This could happen multiple times if a woman had her second or third husband pass away (11).

9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):

The Karankawa ate in a seasonal pattern. When larger game and other protein sources were readily available, they ate a considerable amount of protein and few carbohydrates. When larger game was scarce, they tended to eat more carbohydrates. It is believed that this cyclic eating of more carbohydrates during one season while eating a more high protein diet during other seasons helped prevent the high amount of protein being consumed from becoming toxic. In fall, late winter and early spring, the Karankawa fished to meet their major caloric requirements (2, p. 22). The Karankawa practiced something known as “head flattening,” a type of body alteration that involved binding one’s head with a piece of wood to deform the skull. Often, head flattening was begun shortly after birth and continued on until around the age of 6 months (5). The Karankawa used shark and alligator liver to concoct a homemade mosquito repellent (5). The Karankawa traveled with dog like creatures similar to coyotes that did not bark (5). Because they traveled with their own specific band, smoke signaling was important to the Karankawa to keep in contact with the other bands that were traveling nearby (7, p. 124). The Karankawa practiced guerilla warfare, in that they would surprise-attack their enemies from a vantage point near the ocean, and then retreat to the ocean if necessary (7, p. 126).

The asphaltum that the Karankawa used to paint their bodies with was also used as a water-proofing agent for the inside of pottery and other water-carrying vessels (7, p. 123). The Karankawa were ravaged by diseases brought by the European explorers many times. The first incident was Smallpox brought in 1688. The next incident was measles brought in 1691. The next incident was typhus and smallpox brought in 1739. The next incident was smallpox and/or measles in 1746, 1749, 1750, 1751, 1759 and 1764. Bubonic plague was brought in 1777, and smallpox and/or measles was brought in 1778, 1780, 1801, 1803, 1816, 1820 and 1839. It is believed that any children that survived any of these outbreaks grew up with a strong immunity which they then passed down to their children, allowing the younger generations to be more resilient against foreign diseases (2, p. 132-133). After the allotted time of hunting and gathering for the bride's parents, newlyweds would then join the groom's band. After joining the groom's band, relations between the groom and his in-laws were very cool. The groom would not interact with his in-laws, and would actually have to turn away from them should he happen upon them (11). The Karankawa used thorns to tattoo themselves with ashes from the fire (11).

Numbered references

Note: Pagination denoted when available.

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