

Whitney Goldberg

1. Description

- 1.1 Name of society, language, and language family: Shasta, Shastan (Sastean), Hokan. In pre-contact times there were an estimated 2,000 Shastan speakers. Today, there are no first-language Shastan speakers. (2)
- 1.2 ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com): sht (3)
- 1.3 Location (latitude/longitude): The traditional homeland of the Shastan people is the wilderness of northern Californian and southwest Oregon. The territory in California divides itself topographically into three sections: Klamath River Valley, Scott Valley, and Shasta Valley. The three sections had slightly different customs and languages. Each division was pretty much its own political unit. (1, 301)
- 1.4 Brief history: There are many groups recognized as part of the collective Shasta tribe. Most sources group the Shasta, Okwanuchu, New River Shasta, and the Konomihu together because they only differ slightly in culture and language. (8) The California Gold Rush of 1849 brought many settlers into Shasta territory. Disease and conflicts with gold miners and settlers caused many deaths. In some cases, miners organized volunteer companies to hunt and kill the Indians. The government abolished the Shasta reservation in 1967. Today fewer than 500 Shasta live in the region. (5)
- 1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors:
- 1.6 Ecology: There were 3 major fresh-water fisheries within Shasta territory. (4) Most Shasta territory was located in heavily forested mountainous regions. (7)
- 1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density: Pre-contact in the 1800s, there were about 3,000 Shasta living in small settlements. (4) The Shasta lived in small villages of about 40 people. In many cases all the people in a village were related, either as blood or fictive kin. (8)

2. Economy

- 2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s): Berries, roots, acorns, pine nuts. (4)
- 2.2 Main protein-lipid sources: Salmon was the main protein source. Deer, antelope, elk, and bear were also important proteins. (4)
- 2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?: The bow was their primary weapon. (6) None of the original Shasta bows survive, so there's uncertainty about how it looked. They used different bow and arrows for small and large game and war. Small game bows were made with 2 small cross pieces, which would sideswipe and wound the animal if the arrow missed. Feathers were used to increase precision. The Shasta crafted elk-hide and stick armor and shields. (1, 313) Bows and arrows were adorned with different colors and markings to identify the owner. (6)
- 2.4 Food storage: Salmon was dried to save for the winter. Salmon was also smoked in smokehouses built of rocks on the stream banks. (7) Deer, elk, and bear meat was also dried and stored. (6) A lot of acorns were gathered in the fall, immediately shelled and dried, and kept in storage baskets for later use. (7)
- 2.5 Sexual division of production: Men made all spoons and mush paddles because women didn't do any carving. Both men and women tanned skins. Old men sometimes made moccasins worn for everyday use, but the fine work was done by women. (1, 303-304) The men hunted game of all sizes and caught fish. The women gathered acorns, berries, tubers, and roots. (7)
- 2.6 Land tenure: Villages tend to be located on or near major streams, particularly along the Klamath, Shasta, and Scott Rivers and tributaries. The Shasta people occupied lower elevations during the winter and then moved to higher elevations for the summer. (8)
- 2.7 Ceramics:
- 2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns: Even though only one or two men technically owned the fishing weirs, they were still obliged to let other men fish at the weir and to give anyone who asked for fish as many as he could carry. (4) It was the Shastan custom to share food equally between all members and to trade any surplus food with neighbors. (6)
- 2.9 Food taboos: The Shasta practiced a strict ritual to ensure their fishing success. Part of this was allowing the first salmon to swim upstream unharmed. As soon as it passed, fishing could officially begin. No one could eat any of the salmon until the men fishing ate the first salmon. Furthermore, salmon and steelhead couldn't be eaten before the Karuk *pikiyawish* ceremony was completed. (4) There were many food and hunting taboos associated with death. (8)

2.10 Canoes/watercraft? The Shasta traveled mostly on foot. Their few canoes were mostly purchased from other groups. The occasional ones the Shasta made were rough imitations of Karok and Yurok canoes. (1, 312)

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: There are not figures relating to divorce rate. A man could divorce his wife by sending her back to her own family. But if he did this then he forfeited the bride price he had paid. In cases of infidelity or infertility, a man could either get a divorce, and regain the bride price, or demand that his wife be replaced by her sister. (8)

4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously:

4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?: Because the bride price exchange affected the status of future offspring, both sets of parents negotiated for as high a value as possible. The bride wealth was proportionate to the woman's rank, beauty, and moral status. The average amount was 15-20 long dentalia shells, 10-15 strings of clamshell disk beads, 20-30 woodpecker feather scalps, and 1-2 deerskins. (4)

4.9 Inheritance patterns: The headman title was inherited patrilineally and succession was only based on the inheritance of the family wealth. Shasta children inherited their social rank from their mother. The amount was equivalent to their mother's bride wealth. Fishing weirs were inherited along patrilineal lines. (4)

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict:

4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals:

4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy): Marriages were exogamous. (8)

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): Not a blood relative. (8)

4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?

4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring

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: Shasta descent was bilateral with a preference for patrilineal descent. (8)

4.26 Incest avoidance rules: The Shasta always kept track of their genealogy. An elder woman in the village would keep track to ensure that a person didn't marry his or her blood relative. (6)

4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony? Marriage feast. (6)

4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name? A child was named a year after birth. (6) Boys were named for a deed or major occupation of his father or grandfather. Girls were named for a deed or major occupation of her mother, grandmother, or father's sisters. (8)

4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?) Marriage is preferred to be with someone outside the village or tribe. Marriages were supposed to strengthen economic, social, and political ties between villages. (8)

4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)? Marriages were arranged through an intermediary, and children of wealthy Shasta were often betrothed while still very young. (8)

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:

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

4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations): The Shasta Valley and Klamath River Shasta feared the Modocs and Klamaths because both tribes often raided Shastan villages and took captives. The captives were sometimes sold as slaves at the slave markets on the Colombia River in Oregon. (7)

4.18 Cannibalism?

5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size: About 40 people (8)

5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality): They had permanent winter settlements where there was at least one dwelling structure (*umma*). Small bands or family groups traveled to and from the mountain ridges to the lower river terraces to take advantage of animal migrations and seasonal vegetation. (7) The dwelling and sweat houses were occupied only for about 5 months out of the year. In the spring, winter houses were abandoned, and all the people went up into the mountains. They lived there through the summer in open, roofless brush-shelters. After they had gathered, hunted, and dried enough berries and venison for the winter, they returned to their winter village. (8) This mobility pattern is called seasonal transhumance.

5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes): Each village was integrated into a larger band, each led by a headman. (4) The headman was from the richest family in the district. (4) The headman functioned as peacemaker and advisor. (8)

5.4 Post marital residence: The Shasta practiced patrilocal residency. (6)

5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense): Each village had exclusive rights to specific territories while individuals and families owned preferred hunting, fishing, and gathering spots. Oak trees located next to family dwellings were considered to be the property of that family. The Shasta did utilize naturally growing tobacco. Specifically among the Shasta Valley group, tobacco plots were "owned" for one season. Within this group, tobacco plots, and fishing spots weren't privately owned. (8)

5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex): Young women armed with knives sometimes went along and tried to cut the enemy's bowstrings and slash their quivers. Women were allowed to partake in warfare because it was considered a great dishonor to kill a woman. (1, 313)

5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships:

5.8 Village and house organization: Villages included the dwelling house (*umma*), a "big house" (*okwa-umma*), the sweat house (*wukwu*), and the menstrual hut (*wapsahuuma*). (4) The *umma* had a central fire pit. The "big house," or assembly house, resembled the dwelling houses, but it was deeper and larger. The big house was used as general gathering areas, sweathouses, guesthouses for visitors, and a place for shamans to practice their dances. (8)

5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses): Separate men's sweathouses were built in larger villages. They could seat 15-20 men and were used daily. Women were forbidden to enter these. Families also had their own steam houses that both men and women could use. These family-owned steam houses were primarily used for women after menstruating, childbirth, and during mourning. Shasta women also had menstrual huts. (8)

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere? Sweathouses were also used as sleeping quarters for boys older than 10 and for bachelors. Sweating was thought to bring good luck before hunting. (8)

5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc: The most important social and political unit was the family.

5.12 Trade: The Shasta traded with neighboring groups. They purchased canoes from the Karok and Yurok. They also traded buckskins, pine nuts, flint blades, juniper beads, Wintu beads, and salt with the Karok, Yurok, and Hupa for baskets, acorns, dentalia, haliotics, and other shells. As a sign of amity, when visiting other groups, the Shasta took traditional foods to their host and bring back foods that were traditional in the host's district. (1, 312) Women wore their hair like the Yurok women. (1, 305) The Shasta acquired disk-bead currency from trade with Wintu people. Woodpecker scalps were also used as currency. Shasta people borrowed the Karok and Yurok custom of wearing unusual deerskins to show wealth. Dentalium shells were traded from the tribes of the lower Klamath people and from the Rogue River people of Oregon. The Shasta did craft their own baskets, but the vast majority of them were from other tribes. (1, 303) Olivella, clam shells, and dentalium beads were the most popular but expensive trade items because they came from the coast. (7)

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies? Men wore buckskin caps for daily wear and fur caps for better occasions. A wealthy man would have a cap of otter skin. Men with less prestige had raccoon, gray squirrel, or any common skin. Men wore raccoon-skin robes, reaching from the neck to below the knees, when visiting and wishing to impress people with their wealth. Wealthy women decorated their braided hair with dentalia and haliotics. Sometimes women would use red feathers from the woodpecker, which were indicators of immense wealth and prestige among the Shasta. (1, 304-305) One or two prominent men were allowed to own the fishing weirs. (4) Headmen owned the public assembly houses. (8)

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

6 Time allocation to RCR: Spiritual beliefs dominated their life. (6)

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine): All tribes had shamans and doctors. Some were singing and dreaming doctors, some were predicting doctors, and others were sucking doctors or spiritual and herbal doctors. The spiritual and herbal doctors had the strongest powers because they were trained in all areas, enabling them to do all doctoring, no matter how serious the illness. (6) In the Okwanuchu Shasta group, the shamans were usually women who inherited their role from an older relatives. (7)

6.2 Stimulants: Wild tobacco was extremely strong and used during ceremonies. It was usually only smoked by the men. (6)

6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal): Coming of age for a boy entailed going on a vision quest and praying for blessings in hunting, fishing, gambling, and for his purpose in life. (6)

6.4 Other rituals: For 3 or 4 nights before setting out, the members of a raiding party danced the war dance. The dancers stood in line, facing a fire, and danced, stamping one foot only, and holding their bow and arrow as if they were about to shoot. (1, 313)

6.5 Myths (Creation): Early 19th c. ethnographers affirmed that the Shasta believed the world had always existed; that they had little concept of creation or a creator. The coyote seemed to serve as a "culture hero" in Shasta mythology. (8) The bulk of mythology is concerned with stories of magic and adventure often involving the trickster, coyote. The Shasta word *waka* means Great Spirit. It is believed by the Shasta that the Great Spirit brought their people to their ancestral homeland. (4) There is one major creation myth: "Long, long ago, when the world was so new that even the stars were dark, it was very, very flat. Chareya, Old Man Above, could not see through the dark to the new, flat Earth. Neither could he step down to it because it was so far below him. With a large stone he bored a hole in the sky. Then through the hole he pushed down masses of ice and snow, until a great pyramid rose from the plain. Old Man Above climbed down through the hole he had made in the sky, stepping from cloud to cloud, until he could put his foot on top the mass of ice and snow. Then with one long step he reached the Earth. The sun shone through the hole in the sky and began to melt the ice and snow. It made holes in the ice and snow. When it was soft, Chareya bored with his finger into the earth, here and there, and planted the first trees. Streams from the melting snow watered the new trees and made them grow. Then he gathered the leaves which fell from the trees and blew upon them. They became birds. He took a stick and broke it into pieces. Out of the small end he made fishes and placed them in the mountain streams. Of the middle of the stick, he made all the animals except the grizzly bear. From the big end of the stick came the grizzly bear, who was made master of all. Grizzly was large and strong and cunning. When the Earth was new he walked upon two feet and carried a large club. So strong was Grizzly that Old Man Above feared the creature he had made. Therefore, so that he might be safe, Chareya hollowed out the pyramid of ice and snow as a tipi. There he lived for thousands of snows. The Indians knew he lived there because they could see the smoke curling from the smoke hole of his tipi. When the pale-face came, Old Man Above went away. There is no longer any smoke from the smoke hole. White men call the tipi Mount Shasta." (6)

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games): Storytelling took place only on winter evenings because it was believed that telling stories during the summer would offend the rattlesnake. Dancing and songs were a big part of the rituals and ceremonies. (8)

6.7 Sex differences in RCR: Both boys and girls underwent puberty rituals, but the girl's rituals were more elaborate than those of boys. Boys went off into the wilderness to practice skills and rituals for hunting, while girls were secluded in menstrual huts called *wapsahuuma*. Besides shamans, ordinary women, with special talents for nursing, cared for the sick and injured with an assortment of herbs and treatments. Males underwent a ritual whipping with a bow string by their fathers at the time of their first successful hunt. (8)

6.8 Missionary effect:

6.9 RCR revival:

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs: Many taboos were associated with death including certain foods that couldn't be eaten, hunting and fishing restrictions, seclusion, and sweating requirements. (8) The deceased were buried in family burials near but away from the villages. The person's belongings were burned or buried with them. The people who mourned cut their hair and hair belts were worn to show respect for the dead. (6) After death the soul was thought to travel west. The funeral dances assisted its journey. It eventually rises into the sky and passes into another world. (8)

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people? The Klamath River Shasta had a taboo against speaking the deceased person's name, and the Shasta Valley Shasta were not permitted to say the deceased's name until it had been given to a new child. (8)

6.12 Is there teknonymy?

6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.) Shasta religion is based on the belief in animism. Tribes had special sacred places within their territories. These could be pools of water, unusually shaped rocks or outcroppings, or mountain peaks which they believed possessed supernatural qualities. These places were sought out for spiritual quests, to obtain a vision, or as a place to go to get luck or special powers. Also, everyone paid close attention to the weather. (6) The Okwanuchu Shasta also believed that certain animals, particularly rattlesnakes and grizzly bears, had supernatural powers. (7)

7. Adornment

7.1 Body paint: For special occasions both women and men painted their faces and arms. Each person had an individual design. (1, 305)

7.2 Piercings: Both boys and girls had their ears and nose pierced at about the age of puberty. (1, 305)

7.3 Haircut: Women wore their hair in 2 braids. The braids were wrapped in buckskin, which could be heavily decorated. (1, 305)

7.4 Scarification:

7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.): Both men and women wore ornaments of beads, shells, and feathers. Necklaces and belts were also adorned with beading and shells. Compared to the many varieties of feather ornaments used in ceremonies by the majority of Northwest Indians, the Shasta had few, and these were relatively simple. They consisted of head, wrist, and shoulder bands, fringes and pendants, and single feathers worn in the hair. Feathers were important an important decoration for shamans, but even these were similar to the average person's. Notches in the feathers worn by shamans were the only distinguishing feature. Seams of clothes were often painted red. Shirts were fringed at the seams and leggings down the sides. (1, 304)

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment: Feathers were worn by shamans. Beads and shells were used to decorate clothing for ceremonies and rituals. (1, 304) Both sexes painted faces and arms for special occasions. During the puberty ritual, girls wore a visor made of blue jay feathers so that they see the sun, moon, or stars, which were thought to bring bad luck. (8)

7.7 Sex differences in adornment: Women sometimes wore a shirt similar to one worn by men. For special occasions women decorated theirs with beads and paint. An elaborate apron was also worn. This was made of mussel shells and the stems of a plant similar to bamboo. This created a shimmering effect when the women were dancing around fires. (1, 304) Girls had 3 or 4 red stripes painted on their cheeks. This was done until after puberty rituals. Girls were tattooed on the chin around the age of 10 or 12. A woman was ridiculed if she didn't have tattoos. Men used woodpecker scalps to make headbands. Women also used woodpeckers as ornamentation, but they had the bills removed. (1, 305)

7.8 Missionary effect:

7.9 Cultural revival in adornment:

8. Kinship systems

8.1 Sibling classification system:

8.2 Sororate, levirate: Because the groom's family had paid a high price for the bride, if she died her family would have to replace her with a sister of other female family member. If the husband died the widow would marry one of her deceased husband's brothers. (8)

8.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.):

9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):

Through the Termination Act the Shasta tribe was considered to be extinct, but the tribe has been petitioning the federal government for recognition since 1984. (6)

The Shasta were hunter-gatherers. The only crop somewhat cared for was wild tobacco. (6)

After childbirth, the women remained in the menstrual hut for another month. She didn't eat meat the entire time. Before returning to the community, mothers would sweat and bathe. During the first 5 days after birth, babies were steamed over baskets of boiling water. (8)

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