

## The Tonkawa

### 1. Description

#### 1.1 Name of society, language, and language family:

- Tonkawa, “peculiar clucking, expressed more by signs” (W. Jones 65). Today, their language is extinct; they speak English.

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

-tqw

#### 1.3 Location (latitude/longitude): 36.6803° N, 97.3092° W

#### 1.4 Brief history:

- They call themselves *Titskan watitch*, which means, “most human people” (Jones). The Tonkawa, as a whole, are made up of many different smaller groups. The Tonkawa were nomadic so many small tribes joined the Tonkawa, some that joined were the Awash, Choyopan, Haiwal, Hatchuknni, Kwesh, Nilhailai, Ninchopen, Pakani, Pakhalateh, Sanukh, and Talpkweyu (Hodge). They were mainly from parts of Texas and Oklahoma. They were a nomadic group, who were famous for their warriors. The women were also known to be “strong physically and vindictive in disposition,” according to their tribal website.

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

#### 1.6 Ecology:

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

- In 1778 it was estimated Tonkawa had 300 warriors until there was a small pox epidemic which cut them down to 150 warriors. By 1828, the Tonkawa had around 80 families. In 1862, Tonkawan enemies stormed into their camp killing 137 men, women, and children (Hodge). According to access-genealogy, in 1884, the Tonkawa had about 92 people left in their tribe. Overall they were a smaller tribe because of loss due to war, epidemics, and loss of tribal identity (Jones 65).

### 2. Economy

#### 2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s):

They collected a number of different herbs, edible roots, pecans, acorns, and wild fruits.

## 2.2 Main protein-lipid sources:

- Buffalo/Bison, deer, small game, fish, and shellfish were their main sources of protein according to Jerry

Withers who wrote "The Tonkawa Story"

## 2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?:

- They were notable warriors who used bows, firearms, and spears to hunt. According to William Jones, they were able to obtain firearms at this time because of trades they made with the Spanish (Jones 68).

## 2.4 Food storage:

- After the men came back from hunting, the women would work hard to skin, clean, dry, and cook the meat for dinner. If food wasn't finished the meat would be dried to stay preserved and fresh (Jones 68).

## 2.5 Sexual division of production:

## 2.6 Land tenure:

- The Tonkawa were a nomadic tribe until around the 1820's. In the late 1700's, the Tonkawa lived with other groups along what is today the San Gabriel River. The 1820's marked little movement for the Tonkawa for the first time. They settled by the bank of the Brazos River. (Jones 66)

## 2.7 Ceramics:

- The Tonkawas are known for their hide paintings and copper jewelry.

## 2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:

## 2.9 Food taboos:

- wolves and coyotes are not allowed to consume because they look up to them as mythological creatures.

## 2.10 Canoes/watercraft?

- Traveled mostly by foot or horse.

# 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:

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

4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children?

- If the mother dies, the Tonkawa believed that as a society they should “always stay together.” The Tonkawa created a system that makes sure all widows widowers, and orphaned children were taken care of if their family member died (Godfrey). The way I interpreted it is basically like becoming a “ward” of a clan.

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?

- It is widely known that the clan is the most important unit in the Tonkawa. Therefore, someone in your clan is off limits when talking about reproduction.

4.24 Joking relationships?

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

- The patterns of descent for the Tonkawa were matrilineal family groups, which means women had great status (Campbell & Newcomb).

4.26 Incest avoidance rules:

- Each clan saw itself as a family unit, so marriage within the clan was discouraged.

4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony?

There is not as formal of a ceremony like death's ceremony. They do

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?)

- Marriage is usually within the community for a female.

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:

- During the Civil War, the Delaware, Shawnee, Wichita, and Caddo Indians attacked the Tonkawa, killing off half of their population.

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):

- Lipians, Karankawa, Apaches, Comanches, and even some Anglo settlers (Godfrey & Jones pg 68).

#### 4.18 Cannibalism?

- In the book by William Jones on page 69, it states that there was a case of cannibalism in the mid 1840's. In the book, it talked about how a Tonkawan man was eating a Comanche.

### **5. Socio-Political organization and interaction**

#### 5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size:

#### 5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality):

- From what I gathered from all the readings I have done about the Tonkawa, they follow the buffalo herds and deer. So basically whenever food is scarce in the area, they pick up their things and continue on to find food.

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

- There are many clans in the Tonkawa tribe that make up a band. Each band has its own chief who acts as a leader. If there is warfare or problem more chiefs are appointed to help. The clan is the most important part of Tonkawa.

#### 5.4 Post marital residence:

- When a couple got married, the man would go live with his wife's clan, and the children would become members of their mother's clan.

#### 5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense):

- The Tonkawa have an active defense, meaning, that since they are always moving they have no defined area that is theirs. Wherever they are they are always actively defending the village and people.

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

#### 5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships:

#### 5.8 Village and house organization:

- Since they were nomadic, at times, their villages were easy to disassemble. They lived in Tipi villages. In the center of most tipi's was a fire. The men of the family were usually resting while home, while the women were working hard preparing the food the men caught for dinner. In the average Tonkawan family, the eldest women usually worked the hardest because "the younger women have a few moments of rest at the expense of the wretched elders' (Jones pg 67)

5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses):

-

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?

5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc: The Tonkawa had many different clans. Maternal clans were the more basic unit. Children became members of their mother's clans, while the men lived with their spouse's clan. (Carlisle).

5.12 Trade: The Tonkawa relied heavily on trading, they traded tomahawks, traded for firearms,

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies?

## **6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)**

6 Time allocation to RCR:

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine):

- They wore medicine bags over their shoulders to protect them from an illness (Jones 70).

6.2 Stimulants:

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

- Right after a baby is born, a piece of wood is tied to the baby's head to flatten it.

6.4 Other rituals: According to Tonkawa website, they had many dances that were part of a ceremony or ritual.

The different dances that belong to the Tonkawa are the Buffalo Dance, Deer Dance, Wild Hog Dance, Turkey Dance, Dance of the Short Steps, Notched Stick Dance, and a dance called "Singing All Around" which later became known as, "The Back and Forth Dance." The Tonkawa also had dances that were about war. The "Scout", "Scalp", and the "Hold Shield dance were all associated with warfare. Their most sacred dance, the "Wolf" was performed to commemorate the beginning/creation of the Tonkawa.

6.5 Myths (Creation):

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games):

6.7 Sex differences in RCR:

6.8 Missionary effect:

6.9 RCR revival:

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs: Death was treated as a big ceremony. According to an article about the Tonkawa written by Andria Godfrey, when a member of the tribe died, there would be a three-day period of mourning. After the three-day period, a pipe cleanse would take place to purify those contaminated by death, which usually took about a day.

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?

6.12 Is there teknonymy?

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

## **7. Adornment**

7.1 Body paint: According to a brief history about the Tonkawa, the men and women Tonkawans tattooed and painted their bodies for religious purposes. A man's facial paint is considered his own and cannot be copied.

The women paint black stripes on their mouth, nose, back, and around the nipples.

7.2 Piercings:

The men have pierced ears while women can have piercings in multiple locations.

7.3 Haircut:

- According to their website, the Tonkawan women usually parted their hair in the middle and sometimes wore it long, other times short. The men also part their hair.

7.4 Scarification:

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

- Tinder pouch and striker, otter skin girdle, different kinds of head ornaments, and breechcloth

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment:

7.7 Sex differences in adornment:

7.8 Missionary effect:

7.9 Cultural revival in adornment:

## **8. Kinship systems**

8.1 Sibling classification system:

8.2 Sororate, levirate: The Tonkawa practiced levirate and sororate, which is when a brother would marry his deceased brother's wife. If the deceased had no brother, another male from his clan, usually the son of a sister, would perform the action (Carlisle).

8.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.): Anthropologists term the Tonkawa kinship as a Crow system of nomenclature, which comes from the brotherhood in each clan (Carlisle).

## **9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):**

- The Coyote plays a role of a mythological character who helps the hunters when they are about to go hunt. Before they would go out to hunt and gather food, it was believed that they prayed to the coyote for hunting success.
- The physical appearance of the Tonkawa is not as well known as other tribes during this time because the Tonkawa did not stand out. The Karankawa, who the Tonkawa lived with, were known to be very tall so it was believed that appearance was something that did not strike observers.
- After all my research, I found it odd that a tribal group did not emphasize marriage like the other tribes we have been learning about. But the Tonkawa death ceremony is very serious and long. In most deaths, the Tonkawa were quick to bury the dead out of respect, but before the dead was buried they did a few things to send them out. They would cut the dead person's hair; they put yellow paint on their face, finally wrapping the body in buffalo skin robes. The dead were also buried with some of their possessions (Jones 71). For three days after the burial, the band of the deceased is in mourning. A tribe who enjoyed to dance and sing, death was the one of the few times that was discouraged. The only time singing would take place was at sunrise and dusk when the band would wail. If you were very close to deceased, mourning took a lot longer because once one dies, their name can never be spoken of again. The Tonkawa believe this because they think the dead's spirits will come back to haunt them.

## **Numbered references**

1. Jeffrey D. Carlisle, "TONKAWA INDIANS," *Handbook of Texas Online* (<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/bmt68>), accessed October 02, 2014. Uploaded on June 15, 2010. Published by the Texas State Historical Association.
2. Hodge, Frederick Webb, Compiler. *The Handbook of American Indians North of Mexico*. Bureau of American Ethnology, Government Printing Office. 1906. AccessGenealogy.com. Web. 14 September 2014. <http://www.accessgenealogy.com/native/tonkawa-tribe.htm> - Last updated on Jul 24th, 2014

**Jones, William K. (1969). *Notes on the History and Material Culture of the Tonkawa Indians*. Smithsonian Contributions to Anthropology, 2(5). Washington, D.C.**

William W. Newcomb, Jr., and Thomas N. Campbell, "Tonkawa." In *Handbook of North American Indians*, Vol. 13, *Plains*, edited by Raymond J. DeMallie, 953–964 (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 2001); Barry Pritzker, *A Native American Encyclopedia: History, Culture, and People* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).