

1. Description

1.1 Name of society, language, and language family:

- Yokutsan, Yokuts

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

- Yok

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude):

- Central California (Stanislaus, Merced, Fresno, Madera, Kings, Tulare, Kern Counties, southern San Joaquin County) 37.1661° N, 119.4494° W (1)

1.4 Brief history:

- The Yokuts occupied a strip about 250 miles long in the central San Joaquin valley and a smaller strip of the eastern foothills that rise along the southern half of the valley. The Yokuts are sometimes divided into the Southern Valley Yokuts, the Northern Valley Yokuts, and the Foothill Yokuts. Their languages were much alike. About 40 or 50 separate tribes, each with its own name for itself, are included in what is now known as the Yokuts. Each tribe had a certain territory and some differences in language from the other tribes. (1)

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

- The Southern Valley Yokuts first encountered Europeans in 1772 when Spanish missionaries penetrated the region. Owing to the remoteness and inaccessibility of the region, however, both they and the Foothills Yokuts were spared intensive contact until the 1820s when Mexican settlers began to invade the area. The early contact experience of the Northern Valley Yokuts was quite different. Early in the nineteenth century many of the Northern Valley Yokuts were drawn into the Spanish mission system, and large numbers were lost to the combination of disease and cultural breakdown that was characteristic of the Spanish mission experience. Following the discovery of gold in California in 1848, White settlers flooded into the San Joaquin Valley and carried out a ruthless campaign to drive the Yokuts off their land. In 1851 the remaining Yokuts groups ceded their lands to the United States, and after resistance by Californians was overcome, a reservation system was eventually established for them. The demoralizing conditions suffered by the Yokuts gave way in 1870 to widespread but short-lived participation in the Ghost Dance. The Ghost Dance promised the return of dead relatives, freedom from sickness and death, peace and prosperity, and the disappearance of Whites. By 1875 interest in the Ghost Dance had died after the new world envisioned by the cult failed to materialize (3).

1.6 Ecology:

- All tribes lived near water. Streams and rivers were important, especially for hunting and fishing. Animals came to drink water, and that meant more food for the tribe to eat. Also, transportation by boat was often easier than walking long distances (2).

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

- “Generally, each family lived separately in its own dwelling, but among some groups of the Southern Valley Yokuts as many as ten families shared a single large communal home.” (10)
- “Prior to European contact the Yokuts numbered in excess of 18,000 and perhaps as many as 50,000. In 1833 epidemic disease, probably malaria, devastated the Yokuts, claiming as much as 75 percent of the population. In the late 1970s the Yokuts numbered several hundred, including 325 living on the Tule River Reservation and another 100 living on the Santa Rosa Rancheria.” (10)

2. Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s):

- “Among the Northern Valley Yokuts the major food staples were salmon, taken in great numbers with nets and spears during fall spawning runs, and acorns, gathered in significant quantities in the late spring or early summer and fall. The hunting of waterfowl, such as geese and ducks, was also of major importance. The subsistence pattern of the Southern Valley Yokuts focused on lake and river fishing with nets, basket traps, and spears, hunting waterfowl from tule rafts, and gathering shellfish and tule roots.” (10)

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources:

- “The hunting of waterfowl, such as geese and ducks, was also of major importance.” (10)

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?:

- “Their primary war weapon consisted of the bow and stone-tipped arrow, probably carried in a skin case” (12)
- “The subsistence pattern of the Southern Valley Yokuts focused on lake and river fishing with nets, basket traps, and spears, hunting waterfowl from tule rafts, and gathering shellfish and tule roots. The Foothills Yokuts emphasized hunting deer by means of stalking, ambush, and collective drive techniques, trapping and shooting quail, and gathering acorns; fishing, employing spears, weirs, and poisons, supplemented this pattern during certain times of the year.” (10)

2.4 Food storage:

- “Green acorns were peeled with the teeth and sun-dried; they kept longer in storage than acorns gathered dry, up to five years.” (12)

2.5 Sexual division of production:

- The men hunted and fished, and the women took care of the children, gathered nuts and seeds, and prepared the food (2).

2.6 Land tenure:

- Local or subtribal territories were owned collectively. Each member of a local group possessed rights to utilize the resources of the group's territory; however, in some instances some seed-producing areas were owned by individual women (6).

2.7 Ceramics:

- “The most important of the Yokuts religious rituals was the annual mourning ceremony, a six-day rite held in the summer or fall to honor the dead who had passed away during the previous year. The ceremony, which involved the participation of visitors from other villages, included symbolic killing, the destruction of property, and the ritualized washing of mourners, and concluded with feasting and games. Other ceremonies included simple first-fruit rites held for various seeds and berries as they became available for harvest.” (10)

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:

2.9 Food taboos:

- During her first menstruation a girl was isolated in her home and prohibited from consuming certain foods and drinks. (7).
- “From the definite onset of pregnancy the expectant mother observed several food taboos: on meat, salt, hard or dried foods.” (12)

2.10 Canoes/watercraft?

- “Rafts fashioned by lashing together bundles of tules provided the means of water transportation. The light buoyant watercraft probably served fishermen as well.” (12)

3. Anthropometry

3.1 Mean adult height (m and f): N/A

3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f): N/A

4. Life History, mating, marriage

4.1 Age at menarche (f):

- “At menarche, girls were kept indoors until cessation and they were also tattooed shortly after with the family totem.” (11)

4.2 Age at first birth (m and f): N/A

4.3 Completed family size (m and f):

- Valley Yokuts group kin terms followed the Omaha pattern; Foothills Yokuts terms followed the Hawaiian pattern.” (10)
- No particular number was provided, but many families would live together under the same hut.

4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f):

4.5 Age first marriage (m and f):

- “The girl might be betrothed, though not irreversibly, at puberty; marriage would take place some years later.” (12)

4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce:

- Divorce was discouraged by the pressure of relatives but could occur on the volition of either party. Grounds for divorce included infidelity (especially of the wife), barrenness combined with refusal to countenance a second wife, improvidence, sloth, garrulousness, slovenliness, and general incompatibility.” (12)

4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously:

- Polygyny was allowed but infrequent (7).

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

- “Although the mother's totem receives respect of her husband and his family, only the man's totem passes down to the children. Groom's parents offered gifts to the family of the bride (shell money).” (11)
- “Marriages arranged by families were preceded by gift giving to the family of the future bride and concluded with a feast. If the bride's family approved, they give female goods back in exchange.” (10)

4.9 Inheritance patterns:

- “Subtribal political offices and certain ceremonial functions were inherited patrilineally within lineages.” (10)

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict:

- “At marriage, the couple moved into the wife's parents house for the first year, after which they either permanently moved into their own home or into the home of the husband's parents. The husband was not allowed to have a conversation with his mother-in-law.” (11)

4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals:

- “An old Yokuts, born about 1840, who know the social functions of the tranvestites quite well –they were corpse-handlers or “undertakers” among his people-told me that his opinion they were men took on female dress and occupation in order to have free association with women and special opportunities for secret heterosexual activity with them. While this may have occurred now and then, it is obviously in the main a rationalized misconstruction by and unimaginatively normal heterosexual.” (14)

4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy):

- “Beyond the family, the most important kinship groupings were patrilineal exogamous totemic lineages, each of which was connected to one of two patrilineal moieties; only among some of the Foothills Yokuts subtribes was the moiety organization absent. Subtribal offices and responsibility for certain ceremonial functions passed within lineages.” (10)

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

- “The step children were thought to belong to the second marriage of the parent who retained them. There were few fixed rules governing property and children involved in a divorce, but the details were settled, case by case, by the affected families.” (12)

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

- Some of the birthing process was accomplished independently. Shamans might participate if the birthing process was too difficult. (10)

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

4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape: None found

4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin)

- Often the parents would make the selection thought the offspring would have input.
- “Marriages arranged by families were preceded by gift giving to the family of the future bride and concluded with a feast. If the bride's family approved, they give female goods back in exchange.” (10)

4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?

- It is inferred that sexual freedom did exist from this text: “To reform Indian sexuality and protect unmarried female neophytes from Spanish assaults, friars closely watched their charged by day and kept them under lock and key at night. Unmarried men and women slept in separate quarters, although sexual segregation seems to have done little to halt illicit sexual behavior.” (13)

4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring

- Groom's parents offered gifts to the family of the bride (shell money). If the bride's family approved, they give female goods back in exchange. Marriage arrangements were sometimes made before puberty. At marriage, the couple moved into the wife's parents house for the first year, after which they either permanently moved into their own home or into the home of the husband's parents.

4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children?

- In the event of a divorce, evidence shows that children might go to a grandparent. This may also be partially true for a death. “The wife with several children was left in possession of the house and its furnishings. The wife might return to her parental home with very young children. Older children sometimes went to either grandparental home.” (12)

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

- “Plural marriages occurred in which a man had two wives at a time. While both wives might be in the same village, they usually lived separately or in different settlements. No formal ranking of wives occurred, but favoritism was manifest in the division of time and support between them.” (12)

4.22 Evidence for couvades: N/A

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

4.24 Kin avoidance and respect?

- From the information that I have gathered I can tell that respect could be an influential factor, however, there is not certain evidence surrounding the topic.

4.24 Joking relationships: N/A

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

- “Tribal names are given first in the anglicized spellings used by Kroebe (1963:237)” (12)
- “The child was named within a few days or weeks of birth. The Name was conferred by the paternal grandmother or another senior paternal female and was customarily that of the older relative in the male line.” (12)

4.26 Incest avoidance rules: N/A

4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony?

- Marriages arranged by families were preceded by gift giving to the family of the future bride and concluded with a feast. (7).

4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name?

- “The child was named within a few days or weeks of birth. The Name was conferred by the paternal grandmother or another senior paternal female and was customarily that of the older relative in the male line.” (12)

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

- “Even though intertribal marriages were frequent, at least in the ninetieth and twentieth centuries, and some involved alliances with non-Yokuts peoples, there still existed a strong tribal identification with the father’s group.” (12)

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

- Family arranges marriages (7).

4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who:

- “Plural marriages occurred in which a man had two wives at a time. While both wives might be in the same village, they usually lived separately or in different settlements. No formal ranking of wives occurred, but favoritism was manifest in the division of time and support between them.” (12)

Warfare/homicide

4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare: This number is unknown, however this source states:

- “Relations between subtribes were usually peaceful and cooperative, although warfare between local groups was not unknown. In some instances subtribes united in warfare against common enemies.” (10)

4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death:

- “Relations between subtribes were usually peaceful and cooperative, although warfare between local groups was not unknown. In some instances subtribes united in warfare against common enemies.” (10)

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

- Socially disruptive persons, such as shamans believed to practice sorcery, were sometimes murdered by an execution squad hired by the village headman.(8).

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

- Relations between subtribes were usually peaceful and cooperative, although warfare between local groups was not unknown. In some instances subtribes united in warfare against common enemies.(8).

4.18 Cannibalism?

- No evidence found.

5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size:

- The average number of people in each tribe was 350, sometimes living in one village and sometimes in a group of villages. (1)

5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality):

- The Yokuts lived in permanent houses most of the year, leaving only in the summer for trips to gather food (1)

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

- Leadership within the village units was provided by a headman whose position was inherited patrilineally within a particular lineage and whose responsibilities included directing the annual mourning ceremony, mediating disputes, hosting visitors, sanctioning the execution of social deviants, and assisting the poor. The headman was aided and counseled by a herald or messenger, whose position also was inherited patrilineally.(8).

5.4 Post marital residence:

- Matrilocality was customary for newlyweds, but after a year the married couple shifted residence to the husband's father's home or set up their own residence nearby in his village (7).

5.5 Territoriality? (Defined boundaries, active defense):

- Yokuts villages and hunting grounds had boundaries, but no fences. Mountains, rivers, and other landmarks usually marked the tribe's boundaries (2).

5.6 Social interaction divisions? (age and sex):

- "Both sexes contributed substantially to subsistence, with males primarily responsible for hunting and fishing and females for collecting shellfish and plant foods. In addition, men wove fishing nets and produced wood, bone, and stone tools; women cooked, cared for children, and wove baskets and tule mats." (10)

5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships: N/A

5.8 Village and house organization:

- Single families made houses that were oval shaped, framed with side poles tied to a central ridge pole and covered with tule mats. The Southern Valley tribes also built larger houses for as many as ten families. These houses had steep roofs, with roof and walls covered with tule mats. Each family had a fireplace and a door in the large house, but no walls separated one family from another. Houses in the foothills and dry valley places were sometimes built with the floor dug down a foot or two into the ground. In marshy areas, the floor was level with the ground (1). Among the Northern Valley subtribes dwellings were scattered in an irregular pattern in close proximity to one another, and among the Southern Valley groups they were arranged in a single, regular row (5).

5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses):

- Each village had a sweathouse, dug down into the ground and covered with brush and earth. Only the men used the sweathouse, both for sweat baths and for sleeping (1).

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?

- They slept on the floor (2).

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

- "Moieties occurred less frequently than lineages among the Foothill Yokuts. Only the tribes of the Fresno, San Joaquin, and Kings river drainages are believed to have possessed this dual organization. The Central Foothill Yokuts of the Kaweah and Tule River areas and the Southern Foothill Yokuts of the Kern River drainage had only lineages." (12)

5.12 Trade:

- The Yokuts got seashells from the people who lived on the coast, and made them into money, which they called keha. Cylinders of clamshell, called humna, were valued even more. Northern Valley Yokuts also traded with the Costanoans for mussels and abalone shells, and with the Miwok for baskets, bows and arrows (1).

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies?

- "Among the Yokuts there was no overarching political authority uniting the numerous subtribes. Rather, each subtribe was an autonomous unit composed of one or a few villages. Leadership within the village units was provided by a headman whose position was inherited patrilineally within a particular lineage and whose responsibilities included directing the annual mourning ceremony, mediating disputes, hosting visitors, sanctioning the execution of social deviants, and assisting the poor. The headman was aided and counseled by a herald or messenger, whose position also was inherited patrilineally. Relations between subtribes were usually peaceful and cooperative, although warfare between local groups was not unknown. In some instances subtribes united in warfare against common enemies."

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

6 Time allocation to RCR: N/A

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine):

- Part-time religious specialists, or shamans, with powers derived from visions or dreams cured the sick and conducted public rituals and celebrations. Most often males, the shamans were believed to be capable of using their powers for evil purposes and

might be executed on suspicion of doing so. Serious illnesses were treated by shamans employing supernatural powers received in visions and dreams. Cures, effected only for a fee, involved consulting with spiritual helpers and sucking the sickness-causing agents from the patient's body. (9).

6.2 Stimulants:

- “Adult status for both sexes was signified by a group ceremony intended to bring long life, happiness, and prosperity. The ritual involved the consumption of a hallucination-producing decoction derived from the root of jimsonweed.” (10)

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

- During her first menstruation a girl was isolated in her home and prohibited from consuming certain foods and drinks. Subsequently, a celebratory feast was held to which neighbors were invited. No special puberty or initiation rite was held for boys. Adult status for both sexes was signified by a group ceremony intended to bring long life, happiness, and prosperity. The ritual involved the consumption of a hallucination-producing decoction derived from the root of jimsonweed. (7).

6.4 Other rituals:

- The most important of the Yokuts religious rituals was the annual mourning ceremony, a six-day rite held in the summer or fall to honor the dead who had passed away during the previous year. The ceremony, which involved the participation of visitors from other villages, included symbolic killing, the destruction of property, and the ritualized washing of mourners, and concluded with feasting and games. Other ceremonies included simple first-fruit rites held for various seeds and berries as they became available for harvest.(9)

6.5 Myths (Creation):

- The Yokuts origin myth depicts a world covered with water, which is transformed by the action of Eagle, who takes mud brought from the depths by an aquatic bird, mixes it with seeds, and allows it to expand to form the earth. The Yokuts believed in a variety of localized spirits, some of whom were potentially evil.(9).

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games):

- The most important artistic achievement of the Yokuts was in designs woven into their baskets. Musical instruments included rattles, bone and wood whistles, and a musical bow. Music was expressed primarily as an accompaniment to ritual activities.(9)

6.7 Sex differences in RCR:

- “Part-time religious specialists, or shamans, with powers derived from visions or dreams cured the sick and conducted public rituals and celebrations. Most often males, the shamans were believed to be capable of using their powers for evil purposes and might be executed on suspicion of doing so.” (10)

6.8 Missionary effect:

- “The lack of information concerning the aboriginal inhabitants of the region is due to their rapid disappearance as a result of disease, missionization, and sudden overrunning of the country by American miners and settlers during the gold rush years. The process of extinction and cultural breakdown commenced when the valley peoples were drawn into the mission system.” (12)

6.9 RCR revival:

- “The mourners had been crying at intervals during these days, as befitted their status. On the last day or next to last day, the mourners were ceremonially stripped and washed. Their hair was cut and they were clothed in new garments provided by the washers.” (12)

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs:

- Cremation and burials were typical funeral practices for the Yokuts, with the latter becoming more common in the historical period as a result of White contact. After death the corpse was handled by paid undertakers and buried along with personal possessions with the head to the west or northwest in a cemetery outside the Village. Among the Southern Valley Yokuts cremation was reserved for shamans and individuals who died while away from home. After cremation, the remains of the deceased were buried in the village cemetery. The Yokuts believed that the soul left the body of the deceased two days after burial and journeyed to an afterworld in the west or northwest. Following a death, close kin maintained a three-month period of mourning, which included ritual abstention from eating meat and burning the hair short.(9)

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?

- “When a person’s namesake died another name was taken or the one already recognized came into exclusive use.” (12)

6.12 Is there teknonymy? No.

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

- “The Yokuts origin myth depicts a world covered with water, which is transformed by the action of Eagle, who takes mud brought from the depths by an aquatic bird, mixes it with seeds, and allows it to expand to form the earth. The Yokuts believed in a variety of localized spirits, some of whom were potentially evil.” (10)

7. Adornment

7.1 Body paint:

- Some women had tattooing on their chins (1).

7.2 Piercings:

- “Piercing of the earlobe by men was reported as having been done in distant past. The nasal septum was pierced, but there is some conflict between authorities as to who did it. Probably both men and women had the option.” (12)

7.3 Haircut:

- “Men’s hair was worn long with a part in the middle. Women’s hair was likewise worn long. The hair of both sexes was singed short during periods of mourning.” (12)

7.4 Scarification:

- Attached to body paint. (1)

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

- The general pattern of dress among the Foothill Yokuts included a garment worn at the waist from puberty on. Older men might go naked as suited their convenience. Both men and women made some use of deerskin breechclout that was long enough to have the end, front, and rear, hang over the supporting belt as a short apron.” (12)

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment:

- Eagle feathers, especially from baby eagles, were an important part of ceremonial decoration. Eagle down was used to make ceremonial skirts, known as chohun. Tall headdresses, called djuh, used the tail feathers of magpies around a base of crow feathers (1).

7.7 Sex differences in adornment:

- “Piercing of the earlobe by men was reported as having been done in distant past. The nasal septum was pierced, but there is some conflict between authorities as to who did it. Probably both men and women had the option.” (12)
- “Footgear was not habitually worn by either sex in any season. Rude moccasins were made at one time, but informants’ accounts of their construction are vague.” (12)

7.8 Missionary effect:

- “The lack of information concerning the aboriginal inhabitants of the region is due to their rapid disappearance as a result of disease, missionaization, and sudden overrunning of the country by American miners and settlers during the gold rush years. The process of extinction and cultural breakdown commenced when the valley peoples were drawn into the mission system.” (12)

7.9 Cultural revival in adornment:

- “The mourners had been crying at intervals during these days, as befitted their status. On the last day or next to last day, the mourners were ceremonially stripped and washed. Their hair was cut and they were clothed in new garments provided by the washers.” (12)

8. Kinship systems

8.1 Sibling classification system:

- “Valley Yokuts group kin terms followed the Omaha pattern; Foothills Yokuts terms followed the Hawaiian pattern.” (10)

8.2 Sororate, levirate:

- “The sororate was found rare, only among the Central groups was found rarely. In each instance the bereaved person did not remarry until some time after the spouse’s death.” (12)

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

- “Valley Yokuts group kin terms followed the Omaha pattern; Foothills Yokuts terms followed the Hawaiian pattern.” (10)

9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):

- Ceremonies. The most important of the Yokuts religious rituals was the annual mourning ceremony, a six-day rite held in the summer or fall to honor the dead who had passed away during the previous year. The ceremony, which involved the participation of visitors from other villages, included symbolic killing, the destruction of property, and the ritualized washing of

mourners, and concluded with feasting and games. Other ceremonies included simple first-fruit rites held for various seeds and berries as they became available for harvest. (10)

- Arts. The most important artistic achievement of the Yokuts was in designs woven into their baskets. Musical instruments included rattles, bone and wood whistles, and a musical bow. Music was expressed primarily as an accompaniment to ritual activities. (10)
- Medicine. Serious illnesses were treated by shamans employing supernatural powers received in visions and dreams. Cures, effected only for a fee, involved consulting with spiritual helpers and sucking the sickness-causing agents from the patient's body. (10)

Numbered references

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