

Klamath-Modoc

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1. Description

1.1 Name of society, language, and language family: Modoc, Klamath-Modoc, Penutian language family

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

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude): The Modoc inhabited about 5,000 square miles (James) of the plateau country, east of the Cascades in Southern Oregon and Northern California. This area is at the edge of three culturally distinct Indian groups: the Plateau, the Great Basin, and California peoples.

1.4 Brief history: The Modoc were a hunter/gatherer tribe. They lived on Little Klamath Lake, Modoc Lake, Tule Lake, Clear Lake, Goose Lake, and in the Lost River Valley. The tribe came into contact with Whites at a relatively late period. They had conflicts with the Whites, their closest relatives, the Klamath, and they conducted slaving raids against the Achomawi. They were defeated in the Modoc War at the Lava Beds in California and many were removed to Oklahoma.

1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors: In 1864, the Modoc Indians were living on their ancestral tribal lands near Tule Lake, on what is now the Oregon-California border region. However, because white settlers wanted the rich Modoc lands for themselves, the US Government relocated the Modoc people to the Klamath Indian Reservation in southwest Oregon.

Unhappy with how Modocs were being treated on the Klamath Reservation, Captain Jack led his people back to their tribal lands in 1865. In 1869, U.S. Army soldiers again rounded up the Modoc people and moved them back to the Klamath Reservation, but conditions there had not improved for the Modocs. This conflict eventually led to the Modoc war in which US forces eventually rounded up the remaining Modoc warriors.

1.6 Ecology: The Modoc Plateau, at about (4593 feet) above sea level, has had a long volcanic history, one that produced a landscape of lava flows, fissures and basalt plains. The area, fed by Klamath River and its tributaries, has many lakes and streams. The major lakes are: Goose Lake, Clear Lake, Tule Lake, and the Lower Klamath Lake. Although a relatively harsh environment, characterized by long, harsh, snowy winters, it was also rich in plant foods, fish, waterfowl and large mammals.

1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density. 400-800 although some estimate around 3,000 during their prime. The permanent villages of the Modoc consisted of 3-7 earth-covered lodges. Occasionally the number reached 10-15 but normally when population began to grow in a village another settlement was established. In most settlements 2 or 3 of the houses were considerably larger than the others. The average family size averaged 5 people. The Modoc villages clustered around good lake and river spots with plenty of natural resources. However, the Modoc were less densely compacted than say the Natives in the lower lands because of their higher altitude.

2. Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s): Water lily "wocus" seeds were ground in to flour

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources: mule deer, pronghorn antelope, bighorn sheep, and many types of waterfowl.

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?: Bows were constructed from juniper limbs with deer sinew bowstrings. Arrow shafts were constructed from tule reeds, while the arrowheads were razor-sharp pieces of obsidian gathered from the highlands and worked with deer antler tools. Both bolas and atlatls were used in hunting prior to the introduction of the bow and arrow about 1200 to 1600 years ago. Arrowheads were made of wood and obsidian.

2.4 Food storage: Wokas or yellow pond lilies, a Modoc staple food, were harvested in summer, after the "first-fruits rite" was held. All members of the community participated in the harvest. The pods were gathered from dugout canoes, and put in tule bags to transport them back to the village where they were put in pits to decompose. The seeds were then separated from the decomposed plants, parched, hulled, winnowed and stored in sacks. Fish were dried and smoked over fires and stored for winter use. The food that was stored for winter was put into underground caches, a quarter mile or more from the village, and great care was taken to keep the location secret. The surface indications were obscured so thoroughly that most families used a secret sign to enable them to find the pit again. Even so, caches other than one's own were sometimes discovered, and theft was common.

2.5 Sexual division of production: Women: plant gathering and preparation, making baskets and cordage, and they tanned hides, which they used in making clothes. Men: Modoc men hunted-The hunt was an important part of a Modoc man's life, and preparation for the hunt usually involved time in a sweat lodge. They also, made nets, and tools from wood, bone, and stone

2.6 Land tenure: Villages "owned" favorite hunting, fishing and gathering places.

2.7 Ceramics: No ceramics but use of baskets and basket weaving was extensive. Using tule reeds the modoc constructed incredible baskets and were incorporated with fishing, transporting, and many other facets of their life.

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns: The game a man took- and the roots, seeds, and berries that a woman gathered belonged to the family. A man took pleasure and pride in distributing meat to his neighbors, but only in the summer time when the meat was fresh. When or if people did ask for food seeing that a family was bringing back their cache of food it was considered improper and the request was seldom granted. The only persons privileged to ask for food from another family during the late months of winter were the ill.

2.9 Food taboos: Pregnancy, childbirth and postpartum periods were times of dietary and hunting taboos. By the historic period (after European contact), the Modoc no longer consumed dogs or coyotes, as they were considered taboo.

2.10 Canoes/watercraft? They fashioned boats and rafts for transportation and fishing from tule reeds, and hollowed out sturdier dugout canoes with fire and scraping. The sturdier canoes were made of pine, fir or cedar, which they hollowed out using fire. They fashioned two types of these canoes: a large canoe, "vunsh", suitable for open water navigation which was paddled and could hold four or five

people; and a smaller canoe, "vunshaga", which held two people and was propelled by poling. The "vunshaga" was used for "gathering wocas seeds, duck eggs and basketry materials in places the larger canoe could not be maneuvered"

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): The average was about 5.

4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f): 2-4 years, 2 years being the minimum time spacing between births.

4.5 Age first marriage (m and f): Usually occurred a few months after puberty for both males and females. Seldom was the delay more than a year or two.

4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce: Most marriages lasted for life and men often did not remarry after the death of a first wife.

4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously: Polygyny was accepted but the majority of marriages were monogamous. At any one time 4 or 5 families out of 100 would be married polygynously. A male could marry up to 6 different wives.

4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?: yes, females especially were showered with food and gifts. See 4.3

4.9 Inheritance patterns:

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict: Deep parental affection was very evident. Often during the first few years of an infants life the mother and the father would take turns staying up and making sure the baby was ok. This was most likely because of an infants high mortality rate that they experienced. Also the first and last children are said to have been the favorites of most parents. Fathers frequently fondled the youngsters, holding them, hugging them, and performing amusing antics. Mothers seldom or never did likewise.

4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals: none I don't think.

4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy): exogamy was encouraged but did not mean that one must marry outside of the community.

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. No mention of rape but there was mention of domestic violence, specifically whipping or lashing the wife on the back of the legs. Immediately after however, the wife normally went away for a few days to live with her mother.

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

4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms? No. If mother was found sleeping with a man, or pregnant before marriage she was either forced to marry that man (if he was known, or could be found), or if the father couldn't be found/she was not willing to give up his name the parents of the pregnant girl raised the child which was thought to be "illegitimate". Later in life this "illegitimate" was made fun of and ridiculed all the way up through adulthood.

4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring. Yes *4.30

4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children? If the mother died during childbirth, or during a child's nursing period, or she proved incapable of nursing, a relative was sought to serve as a wet nurse.

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

4.22 Evidence for couvades: none

4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older): They were mostly either arranged or if not, there was no attraction having to do with age that was ever mentioned.

4.24 Kin avoidance and respect? Parents-in-law taboos. (doesn't specify what)

4.24 Joking relationships? Minor joking were permitted between a man and his wife's unmarried sisters and his brothers wives.

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

4.26 Incest avoidance rules. According to cultural standards, marriage between individuals of any known blood relationship was considered undesirable, but no punishment was suffered except social disapproval and laughter. Incest procured the worst insult ever: "Paiute-like."

4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony? Yes normally this included a small feast between very close relatives.

4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name? Children received names, entirely without ceremony, during the first months of their lives. These were conferred by the father or mother or nay other relative, particularly the grandparents. The names were meaningful, usually descriptive of some peculiarity of the child. Ancestral names or those of living relatives were not taken, but names were sometimes duplicated because of parallel traits and limitations of the pattern.

4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?) Extratribal marriages were extremely uncommon however, village and community exogamy were desirable. About ¾ of marriages were to individuals of other localities.

4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)? Marriages were arranged and accompanied by ceremonial visits and gift giving between the families. If a boys parents felt it desirable for their son to marry a particular boy, they would visit the girls family often and present them food. After at least 3 times the parents then with an impressive array of gifts then presented them to the family and proposed a marriage between their son and the daughter.

4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who: Co-wives were characteristically quarrelsome. Hair pulling was common but death was extremely infrequent.

-The ideal bride stared at the floor for the first 5 days of marriage and did not speak above a whisper. However in reality, brides were more curious, impatient, rebellious and hysterical.

Warfare/homicide

4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare:

4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death: It was within the guidelines to kill the adulterer but the dead mans family might seek revenge via shamanistic channels.

4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing: If a shaman was suspected of causing an illness through sorcery, or if their patients died, they might be killed by the other villagers. The modoc were always in constant warfare with the Achomawi and took a great many slaves from them.

4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations): The Modoc conducted warfare to fend off raids, to avenge past losses, or as ventures to get resources from other neighboring tribes. Warriors wore armor made of serviceberry rods and helmets constructed of elk hide. Weapons included obsidian daggers, bow and arrows, and spears. Obsidian if you were curious (you most likely already know that it's incredibly sharp) is actually used as the cutting device by eye doctors when performing certain eye surgeries. Apparently the cut it can make is more fine than laser surgery. The only reason I know this is because I went to a workshop with a survivalist guy who taught us all sorts of cool things about arrow heads and native American gadgets. Bo Brown is his name if you are interested at all!

4.18 Cannibalism? No mention of it.

5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size: Lived in small bands rather than a large tribe.

5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality): A foraging people, the Modoc inhabited permanent winter settlements, and made seasonal rounds in search of food during the rest of the year.

5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes): Modoc leaders called lagi were heads of extended families whose members provided the lagi with foodstuffs, which were later redistributed to visitors and the needy. Leaders were successful hunters and warriors, and good at games and gambling; they were respected for their wisdom, good judgment and oratory skills. The successes of the leaders were often attributed to the aid of supernatural allies, and as a result, shaman often became influential leaders. The responsibilities of the leaders included: urging others to be respectful of each other and to avoid arguing, and they also provided lectures on morality to children. Also, Modoc society was stratified with the leading (wealthy) families at the apex. Marriage alliances were arranged between the leading families, consolidating wealth and power. Other members of society ranged downward to the poor and "ne'er-do-well" and slaves, which were women and children captured from other tribes, principally the Achumawi and Atsugewi.

5.4 Post marital residence: The newly married couple usually lived with the woman's family until they produced several children, at which time the family moved closer to the husband's family and constructed their own lodge.

5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense): Their boundaries were precisely defined and understood by the Modoc and transgression meant war. Automatically this was the case with the Pit River tribes, the Paiute, and the Shasta.

5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex):

5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships: The only mention of friend ship and joking was with the brides and in-laws noted in 4.24.

5.8 Village and house organization: The houses of a village were not arranged according to any restrictive pattern. In general houses were quite far apart, several hundreds of feet. If the village were located on a stream, the tendency was for the houses to form an irregular row. In the absence of a watercourse the buildings were randomly distributed.

5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses): Winter lodges were earth-covered circular pits (about 22' across, 4' deep). The entrance was through an opening in the roof or by way of an east-facing (land of the dead was to the west) ramp, steps or doorways. The wickiup, another kind of structure, popular in summer was dome shaped, "built on a frame of bowed willows", and covered with mats. Wickiups could be as large as 10 feet in diameter, but were usually smaller. The wickiups were used as summer homes, kitchens, during menstruation and childbirth, and for the elderly who might not be able to negotiate the ladders used to enter the subterranean earth lodges. Small matt-covered houses were constructed for the elderly and crippled persons who had to live in the village throughout the summer. The modoc also built sweat lodges

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere? Over the flooring mats were placed the sleeping mats of twined tule or robes of fur. These were kept rolled against the wall cept in actual use.

5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc: The family unit was a very important part of the Modoc society.

5.12 Trade: Both the Klamaths and the Modocs were important in the trade networks linking California to the Pacific Northwest. The Klamaths had direct access to major trade centers, especially the Dalles, while the Modocs played an important role in securing captives for the slave trade to the north. Contact with non-Indians further distinguished the Klamaths and the Modocs. The Klamaths came into contact with non-Indians first through material goods and then, beginning in 1826, with fur traders. The Modocs also came in contact with trade goods, but the volume of exchange in Modoc territory was minimal. The discovery of gold in the late 1840s changed this. The Klamaths and Modocs contended with thousands of miners and settlers moving through and settling in their territories. The Modocs took exception to the wagon trains moving through their lands and polluting the area. They sought to stop these incursions by **frightening** newcomers away. The Klamaths, reluctant to take action against newcomers, tried to develop friendly relations with them.

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies? Modoc society was divided up into three functional categories, each with its own distinctive leadership. They were: warfare, religious affairs and domestic affairs.

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

6 Time allocation to RCR:

- 6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine): Childbirth took place in a wickiup attended by a midwife or shaman if difficulty was encountered. Babies were not named until they were a year old. Both men and postmenopausal women could be shamans. As with other northwestern California cultures, the Modoc shamans were healing doctors and clairvoyants. They were paid a fee to facilitate cures, which they did by sucking illness-causing objects from the patient. Most Modoc illnesses were caused by "breaking taboos or being frightened by a spirit."
- 6.2 Stimulants: Tobacco was listed in the plant section that the Modoc knew of and used but nowhere was smoking tobacco a ritualized or extremely portion of society.
- 6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal): At puberty, girls were secluded in a wickiup for five days, attended only by their grandmothers. During this period of isolation, the girls observed dietary restrictions. Resting during the day and dancing at night, girls avoided sleeping and the fatal risk of dreaming about thunder. Most women observed menstrual taboos, as menstruating women were considered a danger to both themselves and others, especially hunters and the sick. The Modoc deceased were cremated after the bodies were washed, dressed in their finest clothes and wrapped in a tule mat. Once prepared, was borne headfirst out the hatchway and carried to the cremation grounds on which the body was laid with its head toward the west, the direction of the afterworld. The deceased's lodge was dismantled and fumigated by burning juniper, sage or cedar.
- 6.4 Other rituals: A newly announced shaman was to organize and prepare a large 3-5 day ceremony. Poles were erected which from them streamed colored tule reeds connected to various items such as different feathers, stuffed birds, arrows, bows, baskets, musical instruments, all assigned to a certain spirit. The shaman interpreted the voices of the spirits and told them to the people who then would dance in a simple step-like motion with outstretched arms in a counter clockwise direction.
- 6.5 Myths (Creation): The Modoc conceived the world to be a "disk floating on water". According to Modoc mythology, the world was transformed by Gopher and peopled by Gmukamps (Mythic Old Man). Gmukamps was also thought to be responsible for earthquakes, which were probably frequent during episodes of volcanic activity. Other reports claim that Gmukamps created the various tribes by an act of scattering seeds over the world. Other versions stated that Gmukamps plucked hair from his armpits and thus created human races. Races other than human beings were also produced. They were indistinguishable from humans only by the humans names.
- 6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games): Modoc rock art can either be in the form of [PETROGLYPHS](#) or [PICTOGRAPHS](#). While it is not known with any certainty, the purpose of meaning of rock art, many anthropologists and Native Americans believe there is some supernatural or sacred aspect to most rock art.
- 6.7 Sex differences in RCR: Women were permitted to participate in games and gambling but the teams were predominantly men. Certain games however were female dominated for instance, a gambling game with dice made from beaver teeth and the double-ball shinny game.
- 6.8 Missionary effect: As the influx of settlers spread into California and Oregon, the Modocs were discouraged to use their native language. Eventually their language was outlawed.
- [6.9 RCR revival:](#)
- 6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs: The Modoc afterworld, *no-lisg-ni*, was located past a mountain in the west.
- 6.11 Taboo of naming dead people? The name of the deceased was not spoken until after a mourning ceremony had been performed to remember those who had died since the previous ceremony.
- [6.12 Is there teknonymy?](#)
- 6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.) Religion was largely animism and often explained the unexplainable through the almighty creator K'mukamitch (there were many different spellings of this creator).

7. Adornment

- 7.1 Body paint: Facial painting was practiced for decorative and protective purposes, but symbolic and ritualistic aspects were meager. The latter were concerned with shamanism, puberty dancing, and war. The shaman painted the parting of his hair with a red oxide pigment mixed with oil. The pubescent girl had her face painted black during her ritual. Warriors assumed white face paint in simple lateral striped patterns. Chalk deposits were plentiful and charcoal was easy to make resulting in mainly white face painting. As soon as trade with the Paiute became more prevalent, the red earthen pigment native to Paiute lands was supplemented with the traditional white face paint.
- 7.2 Piercings: Nose ornaments were considered desirable but many persons failed to have their septa pierced for the purpose. Piercing of the child's nose was done by a parent, using a gooseberry thorn or horn awl. The age in which it was done varied from 4 years to puberty. If the parents were disinclined or the child strenuously objected, the operation was omitted. Earlobes were also pierced to permit the adorning of ornaments. This procedure was done during the same time as the nose piercings and there were far many more girls who has ear piercings than men.
- 7.3 Haircut: Widows cropped their hair and covered their heads with pitch and charcoal; they also observed dietary taboos and stayed in the mourner's sweathouse for five days. After one year, the widow took a final purifying sweatbath, but she was only able remove the pitch when she remarried, two or more years after the death of a husband. There existed mainly 4 different styles of hair. The first and most common to kids before puberty and perhaps casual adults was free flowing long hair. The second style was one in which the hair was gathered in bundles or clubs. The hair was parted down the middle and bundled on either side of the head with strips of fur. Both men and women used this particular hairstyle mainly during ceremony. The third type of hairstyle was a three-strand braiding pattern common to both men and women and most common in recent times after contact. The fourth style consisted of a three-plait arrangement, two temple braids and one back braid. It should be noted that only the hair of boys, mourners and slaves was cut.
- 7.4 Scarification: Tattooing occurred although it occurred in lower frequencies and the patterns were mostly influenced by other surrounding tribes. Women sometimes tattooed their chin in distinct line patterns. The wrists were also common places to get tattooed. Men were tattooed on their chest in seemingly random lines.

- 7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.): The most valuable decorative beads were imported. At the top of the list was the long slender, tubular, marine shell dentalium. Dentalia were used as nose ornaments, necklaces, and clothing ornamentation. This particular decorative shell was traded for by the Modoc, some 600 miles away. They traded with the Shasta and Pit River tribes who acted as the last intermediate. The money bead and polished half shell were also popular and were restricted to the use of necklaces and wrist bracelets. Bear and eagle claws were also strung on to necklaces.
- 7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment: Distinctive ceremonial dress was never adopted or developed by the modoc. The better clothing, with added decorations, sufficed for special occasions.
- 7.7 Sex differences in adornment: women sometimes wore a skirt either made from buckskin or sagebrush bark which was shredded. A basketry hat of twined tule was habitually worn by women. Men also wore hats but it occurred rarely and their hats unlike the womens were undecorated.
- 7.8 Missionary effect: "White man clothes" were encouraged rather than the traditional dress of animal skins and furs especially after westward expansion and settlements of mining towns near modoc settlements.
- 7.9 Cultural revival in adornment: It should be noted that almost all of their clothing styles were similar to that of the plains Indians. This diffusion of clothing most likely was facilitated through trade. After all, the modoc were known to trade upwards of 500 miles to get particular beads and shells.
- Head flattening also occurred. Some parents neglected to flatten their kid's heads. These kids were taunted by the others and sometime avoided.

8. Kinship systems

8.1 Sibling classification system:

8.2 Sororate, levirate: Both of these institutions functioned extensively in the culture. The levirate was mandatory for both the man and the woman unless abrogated by mutual agreement. If the widow married without her brother in law's permission, physical revenge was taken by the man's relatives. But if the man shirked the duty of marrying his deceased brother's wife she or her relatives hired a shaman to bring about his death. The physical retribution for the woman was likewise death, in theory. The sororate operated in much the same way; it was likewise binding upon both the widower and the deceased woman's unmarried sisters unless specifically set aside. But in this case the abrogation could be arranged between the man and his parents-in-law. If observed, the man was privileged to choose any one of the available sisters.

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

9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):

cool myth: Eclipses were caused by Bear's attempt to swallow the sun or the moon, as the case might be. Whenever he tried this, Frog urinated on him and caused him to desist. Frog could be seen as the dark spot on the full moon. The people assisted Frog by shouting and yelling loudly during the eclipse.

-An arm twist indicates you will develop a sore at that spot.

-if one dreams about a grizzly bear he will have an enemy.

-If a water snake wraps around ones leg that person is assured a long life

-discarded skins of the water snake were worn around the arm as a magical aid to swimming.

-Dreams were incredibly important in the Modoc society

- Certain crises in the life of the individual were occasions for observance of a quest involving fasting, isolation, strenuous artificial activities, and ritual bathing. The occasions for such rituals were puberty, the birth or death of ones child, and consistent and serious losses in gambling. During these quests, tiring and pointless forms of exercise especially swimming were important followed by short periods of sleep and dreaming

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