

1. Description

1.1 Name of society, language, and language family: Wintu, Wintu, Penutian, California Penutian, Wintuan

1.2 ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com): wit (1)

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude): 39°N-41°, 121°W-122.5°W

1.4 Brief history: The Wintu are one of three Wintun-speaking peoples of the Sacramento Valley. Their habitat lies along three major drainage systems, the Pit-McCloud, the upper Sacramento, and the upper Trinity. On the Sacramento river the series of tribelets designated as Wintu extended from a point five or six miles south of Cottonwood Creek to a point slightly north of La Moine, a total distance of approximately fifty miles north and south. (2) Ethnic population: 2,244 (1997 A. Shepherd) (1). Like most other native Californians, the Wintu practiced a diversified and relatively intense form of foraging. They hunted both small and big game, and the gathered plants, roots, seeds, acorns, grubs and grasshoppers. They also fished, especially for the seasonally plentiful salmon in the rivers along which they lived.

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

1.6 Ecology:

1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density: A village consisted of a loosely scattered collection of bark houses numbering four to five to several dozen. Each bark house contained a biologic family of three to seven people, so the population might run of a settlement might run from twenty or thirty to 150 or 200 people.

2. Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s): Acorns, buckeye, berries (2)

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources: Deer, brown bear, rabbit, salmon, and other small game. (2)

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?: Bow and arrow, spear, sling, club, dagger (2)

2.4 Food storage:

2.5 Sexual division of production: Women were the providers of vegetable foods although men helped them in gathering acorns (men would mark the tree, climb it, and shake down the nuts, and help carry the loads back to camp. Young men and women shelled acorns in the evenings; but this was more of a social gathering. Women were responsible for food preparation and gathering of fuel (men may help fell trees and break up larger logs). Men provided the animal foods which entailed hunting, snaring, and fishing. Social pressure demanded that they be good providers. Making of bows and arrows, fighting apparatus, and the like were also made by men. Women had the important craft of basket-weaving. Men tanned the hides. (2)

2.6 Land tenure: Would burn small patches of grass to collect grasshoppers for food. (2)

2.7 Ceramics:

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:

2.9 Food taboos: During periods of pregnancy and menstruation. (2)

2.10 Canoes/watercraft? No canoe. Raft, 2 or 3 logs, or bundles of poles, lashed in 3 or 4 places with grapevines or withes. Chiefly to cross streams. (2)

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: Monogamy, however brittle, was customary. Polygyny was permitted. Men of importance had two or more wives. (2)

4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?: No. Once a marriage was had been determined upon, it was customary for families to exchange gifts, the value of which was commensurate with the economic status of the young people's relatives. The gifts were practically equivalent in value and no feeling of bride-purchase was entailed. (2)

4.9 Inheritance patterns:

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict:

4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals: Homosexuality in both men and women was a recognized phenomenon but it had no association with shamanism, either actually or ideologically. Female homosexuality [was] supposedly nonexistent at present. (2)

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) The second wife was often, though not necessarily, a sister or female relative of the first.

- 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
- 4.26 Incest avoidance rules
- 4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony?
- 4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name? Names were inherited from either the maternal or the paternal line, but no child received one until he was old enough to understand what it signified. It was customary after the death of parents for a woman to inherit her mother's name, and for a man to inherit his father's. One might obtain "nicknames" throughout life, as well. (2)
- 4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?)
- 4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)? Marriage for most Wintu was a casually contracted relationship. If a man and woman were attracted to each other, they simply lived together and thereby established themselves as a married couple in the eyes of the group.
- It was not infrequently that marriages were more formally contracted. The suitor would supply the girl's parents with game for several months, and if the gifts were accepted it was understood that the suit was considered favorably. If they were rejected, he desisted. It was not uncommon for a girl to go of her own accord to a man's house and assist his mother in grinding acorns and gathering seeds.
- 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): Had relations with neighboring tribes but depended on geographic location. I.e. A Wintu subarea to the north will have a better, and less antagonist, relationship with a different tribe to the north as compared to a Wintu settlement in southern subareas.
- 4.18 Cannibalism?

5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

- 5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size: See 5.8
- 5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality):
- 5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes): Chieftainship among the Wintu was in theory hereditary from father to eldest son, but this rule did not obtain in a strict sense. The son succeeded the father only if his talents and inclinations fitted him for the post and if the people he was to lead approved his personality and qualifications.
- Wealth and chieftainship were correlated, but whether a chief had particular opportunities to enrich himself is problematic.
- 5.4 Post marital residence: Residence after marriage might be either patrilocal or matrilineal. It was considered preferable, however, to establish an independent household—either in the man's or the woman's local group. (2)
- 5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense): Had no determined boundaries. (2)
- 5.6 Social interaction divisions? (age and sex):
- 5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships:
- 5.8 Village and house organization: A village consisted of a loosely scattered collection of bark houses numbering four to five to several dozen. Each bark house contained a biologic family of three to seven people, so the population might run of a settlement might run from twenty or thirty to 150 or 200 people. A village containing 12 to 15 bark houses might have an earthen lodge. The favorite sites were flats on the banks of streams.
- During the food gathering season it was customary to go into the hills and establish temporary camps, which were inhabited for only a few weeks at the most.
- 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:
- 5.12 Trade: Method most frequently used to obtain an exchange of property within the tribe was to ask for a gift. Thus, if an individual saw an object he desired, he either admired it highly or asked for it outright. It was then presented as a gift, but naturally with the tacit understanding the its equivalent would be returned at once or in the near future.
- Barter among men was carried on occasionally in terms of clam-disk money and dentalia, which were recognized as men's money. They were the only beads that men would wear. Women also owned both dentalia and clam disks, but baskets were their chief medium of exchange.
- Large scale exchanges of food and goods took place at gatherings. Each subarea brought its food specialties and after the feasting the surplus was divided among the departing guests. This custom is reported most frequently for girls' puberty dances, but it probably obtained for all gatherings. (2)

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies? It was significant that the first wife was called older sister (la) by the subsequent spouses, and that she referred to them as younger sisters (laikut), even though no kinship may exist between them. (2)

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

6 Time allocation to RCR:

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine): Shamanism among the Wintu was the most important socio-religious aspect of their culture and probably their chief preoccupation with the supernatural. Yet it existed in a society so simple that there was never any need for great elaboration. The shaman initiation ceremony of former days was the nearest approach to such elaboration. (2)

6.2 Stimulants:

6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal): When the period of delivery was imminent, the woman withdrew to a specially constructed hut, or menstrual lodge, at some distance from the family dwelling. Men carefully avoided her. An older woman, usually a relative, acted as midwife. The mother stayed in the lodge for one month. During this time she abstained from flesh, salt, and cold water. Meanwhile the husband observed similar food taboos. If the mother died in childbirth, the offspring was frequently killed or buried with her. (2)

A girl at the time of her first menses was called batlas. She notified her mother or grandmother, who then built her a small brush shelter some twenty or thirty yards away from the family dwelling. Here the girl remained in seclusion for a period varying from one to several months. During that time she ate from her own baskets, which were never put to any other use. Flesh of all types was forbidden. The parents might avoid deer meat at this time. The diet of the adolescent was limited to acorn soup. She was not allowed to cook even for herself and was done by the girl's mother or grandmother. She was not allowed to leave her hut except at night. If she left during the daytime she used a basket or hide to cover herself. Sleep during five days of the first menses was forbidden, since dreams at this time were considered prejudicial to health and sanity. Above the lodge, yellow-pine bark might be burned. Its crackling was supposed to frighten away evil spirits. The girl was cautioned not to touch herself. Combing her hair might also be forbidden in a conservative family. Her cheeks were streaked with vertical lines of charcoal or red and blue pigment.

Throughout the period of isolation, young people might sing and dance outside the adolescents lodge at night. The dances were lay in character. Many of the songs were said to be obscene. These occasions, if a puberty dance were not called, constituted the only ceremonial and social recognition of her maturity.

At the end of the menses, or at the end of one to three years, a "big time" might be called to give public recognition to a girl's adolescence. This was not obligatory. The social status of her family and the economic surplus of the local group were factors in determining the occasion. It was usually planned for fall, that is, when food was plentiful, and could be held for several girls at once. The climax of the ceremony was the xiwili dance but the girls took no part in this. After the termination of the ceremony, or after the first prolonged period of seclusion, the girl bathed, discarded old garments, and was at liberty to resume ordinary habits and diet. (2)

6.4 Other rituals:

6.5 Myths (Creation):

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games): Gambling games were played at gatherings with much zeal. Men attended gatherings with all their valuables, which they gladly staked on games. Honor required the individual to continue playing as long as anyone would bet against him. These games were referred to as hand games and three forms of the hand games were reported – Bohemtucus, Xení, and Datedope. A minor ceremony was observed to celebrate the return of the mother's month in seclusion. (2)

6.8 Missionary effect:

6.9 RCR revival:

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs:

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people? Any relative or old person was entitled to bestow a name which was his to give through the death of a relative. This lifted the taboo on the name of the dead. (2)

6.12 Is there teknonymy?

6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.) The Wintu had the concept of a supreme being, who was variously called Ole lbe s, Nomle stowa, or, more, rarely, Pantewintu. The Supreme Being was an uncrystallized concept to which few positive attributes may be attached. Informants, however willing, are at a loss to characterize him. (2)

7. Adornment

7.1 Body paint:

7.2 Piercings: Shell pendants for earrings. Nose pieces, shells or bone.

7.3 Haircut: Both sexes wore their hair long. Men tied it in a topknot and often wore a bone dagger or an awl thrust through it. Women parted their hair in the middle, brought it in two strands over the shoulders and wrapped it with strips of hide. (2)

7.4 Scarification:

7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.): Feather work (yellowhammer headbands; netted down caps. Used for dance and ornamental purposes. Turkey feathers customary for skirts and capes.) (2)

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:

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

9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):

-Deliberate murder demanded a blood revenge by the relatives of the murdered man. Payments, however, might compensate for a killing.

Numbered references

1. ethnologue.com

2. Du Boise, C. "Wintu Ethnography". *American Archaeology and Ethnology*. University of California. V. 36, No. 1. 1935.