

Michael Moldafsky

1. Description

1.1 Name of society, language, and language family:

The Pomo, Pomo, kulanapan [1]

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

Pomo, Southeastern: pom
Pomo, eastern: peb
Pomo, Northeastern: pef
Pomo, Southern: peq
Pomo, Northern: pej
Pomo, Central: poo
Kashaya (Pomo, Southwestern):kju

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude):

“Six of the linguistic groups lived in a compact area of northern California with a southern boundary fifty miles north of San Francisco (about 38°20' N), extending northward for ninety miles (to about 39°20' N), and from the Pacific Ocean inland for fifty miles to Clear Lake.” [6]

1.4 Brief history:

“The destruction of the Pomo began with the founding of the San Rafael Mission in 1817 and the Sonoma Mission in 1823, with the Southern Pomo the first to be severely affected. In the Russian River and Clear Lake regions, Mexican land grants, rapid settlement, and conversion of the land to grazing and farming deprived the Indians of their former livelihood. In 1833, an epidemic, possibly cholera, took many; in 1838-1839, many more died of smallpox. From 1834 to 1847, thousands died from these causes and from Mexican military campaigns. Survivors were pressed into forced labor, both locally and, later, in distant gold mines. Two White settlers particularly abusive of the Clear Lake Indians were killed in 1849; a U.S. cavalry punitive force swept through the area, northward along the lake and westward to the Russian River valleys, massacring along the way Southeastern, Eastern, Northern, and Central Pomo, most of whom had nothing to do with the killing of the pair of men. Especially infamous was the slaughter of an innocent fishing party at a place known since as Bloody Island. In the next few years, the surviving Pomo were rounded up and forced onto the Mendocino Indian Reserve and the Round Valley Reservation (considerably north of Pomo territory and mixed with non-Pomo groups). Some escaped to return to their ancestral homes, and the Mendocino Reserve was disbanded. These Indians could not renew their earlier life and became agricultural workers.

The Kashaya have a unique history among the Pomo. Their first contact with Europeans was not with Hispanic or Anglo-Americans but with Russians at the Fort Ross colony, 1811-1842. Because of their relative freedom from forced removal to missions and reservations and their isolation from the regions of densest settlement, they are now the culturally best preserved of the Pomo groups, with more speakers of their language (perhaps sixty) than all the rest of the Pomo combined.” [6]

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

The Pomo Indians dealt mostly with missionaries dating pre 1776 until 1834 when the Mexican government enforced the decree of secularization. The missionaries arrived with the purpose of converting the Pomo to Christianity. The Pomo were also persuaded to adopt Spanish dress, manners and eventually the Spanish language by the missionaries. [2]

1.6 Ecology:

“The Pomo groups lived in three ecological regions: coastredwood, river valley, and lake. Each region had hinterland mountainous areas used for hunting and gathering plant food. The Kashaya lived in the coast-redwood region, and the Southern, Central, and Northern Pomo, in the succession of valleys along the Russian River drainage, with territorial Extensions to the coast. The Eastern Pomo lived on easterly and northerly shores of Clear Lake. The Southeastern Pomo lived on three islands in the southeastern part of Clear Lake, with ownership and use of adjacent mainland. One Northern Pomo community had an extension to a portion of the Northwestern shore of the lake. The Northeastern Pomo lived on the east side of the Inner Coast Range” [6]

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

In 1770 there were about 8,000 Pomo people; in 1851 population was estimated between 3,500 and 5,000; and in 1880 estimated at 1450. [1]

Pop. Density: 2.31 per square mile [3]

Home Range Size: 2335 sq. miles [3]

2. Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s):

“Root stocks of the Yellow Pond Lily were dug up and baked, the seeds being used for bread and soup. The Squawroot or Yampah has roots that were gathered in the spring.”[4]

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources:

The Pomo eat many nuts and seeds especially acorns. When eating meat they often ate elk and deer but weren't restricted from hunting and eating any of the wildlife such as bear and mountain lions. The Pomo also did quite a bit of fishing to catch various salmon, catfish and bass. [4]

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?:

Standard bow and arrow, traps such as nets and noose snares when hunting. When fishing the Pomo would use basket net traps and scoop nets for scooping fish out of the water. [4]

2.4 Food storage:

Food often times stored in woven baskets made by the Pomo and kept in various huts. [4]

2.5 Sexual division of production:

Women and children often gathered seeds, berries, nuts and plants. Women would also fish and were experts in fine basketry. [4]

The men did the hunting, fishing, fighting, made the beads, rabbit-skin blankets, weapons, coarsely twined burden baskets, and quail and fish traps. [6]

2.6 Land tenure:

“Aboriginally, with few exceptions, land and hunting and gathering rights were possessed by the village community. Some Central Pomo had family ownership of certain oak trees, berry bushes, and bulb fields. For the Southeastern Pomo, land around their island villages was communally owned, but named tracts of land on the mainland were owned by individual families, who had exclusive gathering rights, although others might be allowed to hunt there. Of twenty-one small reservations existing in the middle of the twentieth century, fourteen were terminated in the 1960s and the land allocated to individual ownership. Many sold their land, and thus outsiders are living among these groups. Many have also left these reservations and bought homes in towns near and far.” [6]

2.7 Ceramics:

No major ceramic products. They focused more on weaving baskets than making clay pots. [4]

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns

2.9 Food taboos:

2.10 Canoes/watercraft?

The Pomo used Balsa canoes which were made out of tule rushes, which were hollow and would stay afloat [4]

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?:

“The man's parents presented gifts (food, beads, blankets, baskets) to the bride's parents, and gifts of nearly equal value were later returned.” [5]

4.9 Inheritance patterns:

“Homes were usually burned after a death, and personal possessions were cremated with the deceased, so that there was little to bequeath. Ceremonial paraphernalia might be passed on to an apprentice.” [5]

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict:

“Children are raised permissively; threats and warnings are used much more than chastisement. Behavioral restrictions are often taught by means of stories in which the principal character breaks a rule and suffers through supernatural means, severe retribution, or often death. Children are often raised by their grandparents. Households unable to care for all their children might let some be raised by related couples who are otherwise childless.” [5]

4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals:

4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy):

“The couple could be from the same village or different ones.” [5]

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?

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?

“There was a taboo about talking to your mother-in-law, which probably cut down on quarelling.” [4]

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?

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 partners could be arranged either by the young couple or by their families, though usually all parties would have to concur.” [5]

4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who:

Warfare/homicide

4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare:

One of the more “vicious” battles of the Pomo took place in 1850 between southeastern Pomo and eastern Pomo over fishing rights. It is said that 10 men were killed in this battle. 4 Seeing that in 1851 it was reported that there were between 3500-5000 Pomo I can conclude that the warfare death percentages were not very high. [1]

4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death:

The Pomo were so unorganized that their reason for in-group killing and out-group killing were essentially the same “Wars might start because of bad feeling over a trade, a reported poisoning, trespassing on another people's land Without permission, stealing of women or children, and so on.” [4]

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

“Most conflict was in the form of feuds between kin groups and might arise from poaching or suspicion of causing sickness by magical poisoning.” [6]

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

“Alliances with other communities, even non-Pomo, might be made to carry out conflict on a larger scale.” [6]

4.18 Cannibalism?

5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size:

“The village sizes varied from hamlets of fifty to major centers of over five hundred.” [6]

5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality):

“In summer the valley people often moved into the cooler hills, where they lived in temporary lean-tos or under brush shelters” [4]

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

“The largest political unit was the tribelet or village community, which could consist of several villages. There were chiefs on several levels, hereditary and elected. There were kin group chiefs and assistant chiefs; if there were several such units in a village or village Community, one might be chosen as head chief. Duties varied and included giving counsel, negotiating with other groups, presiding over ceremonies, feasts, and work parties, and distributing the fruits of communal labor.” [6]

5.4 Post marital residence:

“The young couple could take up residence with either set of parents, and they often moved from one to the other, returning to the woman's parents for the birth of the first child.” [5]

5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense):

5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex):

5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships:

“There was an institution of "special friend" (with a term that worked like kin terms), which could be established between two individuals by a ritual exchange of gifts.” [6]

5.8 Village and house organization:

5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses):

“Three types of houses were constructed: large semisubterranean ceremonial houses, semisubterranean sweat houses, and dwellings.” [6]

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

“Kin groups were the most important social unit. Such groups shared, and many still share, labor and its fruits, and support each other politically. The chief with the largest kin group was usually the most powerful. Having no kin was the ultimate in poverty: - See more at.” [6]

5.12 Trade:

“There was aboriginally a considerable amount of trade among the various Pomo communities and with Neighboring non-Pomo. Items traded included salt from the Salt Pomo, and from the coastal groups came shells, magnesite, finished beads, obsidian, tools, basketry materials, skins, and food that one group might have in excess and another need. Beads were the measure of value, and the Pomo were adept in counting them to the tens of thousands.” [6]

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies?

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

6 Time allocation to RCR:

“In May there is the strawberry festival for the blessing of the first fruits of the year; in the fall an acorn festival; in summer four nights of sacred dances ending with a feast on the Fourth of July; and in winter possibly another dance. At any time a feast might be pledged.” [6]

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine):

“Minor physical ailments like rashes, boils, sore eyes, diarrhea, constipation, or indigestion are often treated herbally by poultices or infusions of various plants and plant parts. For obvious physical injuries and recognized diseases, a White doctor is now usually consulted. Other ailments of unobvious origin might be attributed to the consequences of breaking some taboo or to poisoning (more magical than chemical) by enemies. A shaman, locally called an Indian doctor, is often successful in treating the latter problems by singing powerful songs, by the laying on of hands, or by sucking out the disease or poison.

Shamans may conduct Ceremonies and preach and prophesy or they may doctor. They may specialize in one function or the other, or do both. In the past, they may have inherited the position, but now the powers are usually received through dream inspiration plus apprenticeship. It is said that before 1870 most shamans were men, but now women predominate.” [6]

6.2 Stimulants:

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

The ceremony called the Guksu ceremony lasted 6 days with a different dancer appearing once a day. The 6 days included of the ceremony called 'The Scaryfying Ceremony' where children ages 5 to 10 were initiated with physical and mental tests administered by the dressed up dancers. [7]

6.4 Other rituals:

6.5 Myths (Creation):

“All the Pomo believed in a creator who made the world. Most equated this creator with Coyote, the animal and the mythological trickster. Some Eastern Pomo gave the creator a different name, separating him from the other roles of Coyote.” [6]

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games):

“Pomo baskets are considered by many to be the finest in the world. They are admired for the great variety of weaves and styles; the delicacy, evenness, and tightness of the stitching; and the artistry of the design. Most spectacular is the sun basket whose surface pattern is made of feathers of different natural colors. The art form still lives and appears to be expanding; the finer work sells for very high prices. In the past century the women have vied in producing the largest baskets (which take many years to complete) and the smallest (which approach pinhead size). The art of singing is well developed for almost any occasion: ceremonial dancing, blessing, doctoring, warding off evil, bringing good luck in the harvest, hunting, attracting a mate, gambling, and so on. Two-part singing is common: one sings the melody while another, called the "rock," keeps the rhythm vocally. Rhythm was also kept with a split-stick rattle, a foot drum, and a two-toned whistle.” [6]

6.7 Sex differences in RCR:

6.8 Missionary effect:

6.9 RCR revival:

“Even though most of their original land was taken over, this was the first turning point for the Pomo people. They had finally escaped the harsh road they were once a part of, and even though they had to settle on poor, isolated land, they finally got to make a stride towards tradition and basket weaving. From 1852-1878, many Pomo Indians tried to rekindle their cultures and find peace. Many people let this time be a learning and spiritual time, where they could have visions and see what the future would have in store. It was a time to build, a time to connect, a time of hope, and a time of change.” [1]

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs:

“The deceased were formerly cremated, but about 1870 a shift was made to burial. Mourners would bring gifts (beads, baskets, robes), some specifically designated to be burned with the dead, some to be distributed later; the bereaved family would later return an equivalent in value. The house and personal property of the deceased were also burned, lest the ghost linger around the objects. The Supernatural paraphernalia of a doctor, however, might be turned over to a successor apprentice. One year after the Funeral, the bones of the deceased were dug up and burned again, along with more gifts, thus terminating the period of mourning. Even now, after the shift to burial, valuable gifts may be thrown into the grave. All the Pomo believed in an afterworld. It was important to have a sacred

Indian name, bestowed from the family's ancestral stock (from either the maternal or paternal side, or from both), to announce on reaching the afterworld so that ancestors who were already there could greet the newly arrived family member.” [6]

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?

6.12 Is there teknonymy?

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

“The Pomo people participated in shamanism; one form this took was the Kuksu religion, which was held by people in Central and Northern California. It included elaborate acting and dancing ceremonies in traditional costume, an annual mourning ceremony, puberty rites of passage, shamanic intervention with the spirit world, and an all-male society that met in subterranean dance rooms. The Pomo believed in a supernatural being, the Kuksu or Guksu (depending on their dialect), who lived in the south and who came during ceremonies to heal their illnesses. Medicine men dressed up as Kuksu, their god.” [1]

7. Adornment

7.1 Body paint:

7.2 Piercings:

“Both men and women wore ornaments made of wood, bird bone, or feathers in their ears.”

7.3 Haircut:

7.4 Scarification:

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

“They used shells and colored stones to make neck and wrist bands and belts.” [8]

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment:

7.7 Sex differences in adornment:

“Women wore skirts that reached to their ankles. They also wore capes over their shoulders, covering the upper part of their bodies.” [8]

“Men often wore nothing” [8]

7.8 Missionary effect:

“The Pomo were also persuaded to adopt Spanish dress” [8]

7.9 Cultural revival in adornment:

8. Kinship systems

8.1 Sibling classification system:

“The Pomo groups have elaborate systems of kin terms, distinguishing father's father from mother's father, and father's mother from mother's mother. Although there are distinct forms for grandchildren, in many families reciprocal terms are used. For example, in Southern Pomo, a woman who addresses or refers to her maternal grandmother by a word built on the root -ka-, or her paternal grandmother by one with -ma-, would in turn be addressed or referred to with words constructed with -ka- and -ma-, respectively. The parents of the grandparents are often designated by the grandparent terms, or more specifically by a phrase, but Southeastern Pomo has unique terms for great-grandfather and great-grandmother. The Kashaya kinship system has been labeled as of the Hawaiian type, that of the Southern Pomo as Crow, and the rest as Omaha. Nevertheless, most share certain features: siblings of grandparents are called by the same terms as the grandparents. At the parent level, most of the languages have separate terms for one's father's older and younger brothers, and for mother's older and younger sisters, but only one term for father's older and younger sisters and one for mother's older and younger brothers. Descent is reckoned evenly on both the paternal and maternal sides. It was a grave insult to say the name of the dead in the presence of a living relative. In Kashaya, however, the dead could be referred to by a kinship term suffixed by -ya', to indicate Respect.” [6]

8.2 Sororate, levirate:

“The levirate and sororate were both known; in fact, the word for stepfather is usually the same as the term for father's younger brother, and stepmother the same as mother's younger sister.” [5]

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

9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):

Numbered references

1. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pomo_people#Language
2. American Archeology and Ethnology : The Ethno-Geography of the Pomo and Neighboring Indians, S.A. Barrett
3. http://books.google.com/books?id=AXgmN-PIrywC&pg=PA173&lpg=PA173&dq=pomo+population+density&source=bl&ots=gJrV2Iti13&sig=xen_XA7TVVo_Fsf1m1pC2UgqW3U&hl=en&sa=X&ei=KF4fVLHiEcuhyASTjoLQCg&ved=0CCEQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=pomo%20population%20density&f=false
4. The Pomo Indians of California and their Neighbors, Vinson Brown and Douglas Andrews
5. <http://www.everyculture.com/North-America/Pomo-Marriage-and-Family.html>
6. <http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/Pomo.aspx>
7. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pomo_religion
8. <http://factcards.califa.org/cai/pomo.html>
- 9.