

Description

1.1 Name of society, language, and language family:

The name of this group is the Washoe. Their language is known as the Washo, but some also speak English. They are part of the Hokan language family, which is written in a Latin script form and is to be considered language isolate. They were also called the Great Basin Indians.

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

The 3 letter code is "was".

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude):

The Washoe tribe is located in the states of Nevada and California. Their territory spanned between four different natural landmarks including the Honey Lake in the north, the Walker River in the south and 2 different mountain ridges in the east and west. The latitude and longitude of this area is about 37.7305048 N , 119.56929450000001 W. An area of about 10,000 miles.

1.4 Brief history:

Due to the Washo language not falling into the same category of other neighbors, it is believed that they must have settled prior to other neighbors in the area. It is believed that this tribe has been present for the last 6,000 years in the same area where they were neighbored by the Northern Paiute people who were very different from them. This neighbor often enslaved the tribe. This tribe was believed to have been in contact with the Spanish Explorers early in the 19th century when they were exploring the areas but no consistent contact was established until the California Gold rush that began in 1849. Over time they started to need the use of other people to live in their area, such as working on White farms. Where they settled became known as the Indian Colonies. As lives have continued their population has dropped down to around 1,500 people all of who exist between 5 colonies and communities that have been developed in the last century.

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

The only stated influence that made a lasting impact on this tribe was that of the Gold Rush, which brought in so many Whites to the area, whom took their space and land forcing them into a smaller area and therefore making them rely on the Whites for food, resources and jobs. This push caused the downfall of their group, including disease and illness.

1.6 Ecology:

The Washo tribe believed that they were one with nature. This idea can be seen in how they pray before they kill and eat any animal. How they believe the earth around them decides their fate and the way they understand illnesses and death.

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

As of today, the population size of the Washo tribe is only around 1,500 people. The tribe owns around 64,300 acres of land throughout the West, mainly in Nevada and California, which are found mostly in the

5 communities of the tribe. These communities are; Carson Colony, Dresslerville Colony, Stewart Community, Washoe Ranch and the Woodfords Community.

Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s):

During most they relied on roots and berries.

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources:

Each Washo family relied heavily on fishing as they were close to many lakes including Lake Tahoe and many streams. Each family even had it's own specific area, but due to contact with Western culture, this process was destroyed. If fishing was bad, due to their knowledge of the land, the tribe could choose upon what to hunt so there would be plenty still for the environment. The rabbit was also known as their other main protein source. This animal was also important in deciding chieftdom. The pinon nut was another major source of protein, especially during the winter months.

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?:

For hunting, the Washo tribe relied mostly on the bow. Bows were strengthened with sinew and the arrows were made from branches and rose bush thorns. They also relied heavily on nets for catching fish, which were woven from the fibers of the sage bush.

2.4 Food storage:

The Washo would dry meats to be added to nuts and seeds to create soup for the winter (Galais). They also heavily relied on the pinon nut harvest that would occur in the Fall (O' osh) in order to keep them fed in the winter months. Hunting meats during this time was the most important thing, as dried meat became a staple.

2.5 Sexual division of production:

Men spent most days either on Lake Tahoe fishing, or out hunting for rabbits, squirrels, marmot, sagehens, quail, waterfowl, deer, antelope and big horn sheep. The small game was hunted using dogs, an animal they managed to domesticate for hunting uses. When the men would bring back the food, women and children would spend the day drying, boiling and roasting meat for food when they would come home for the day. Skins were preserved at this point and used for clothing, shoes and more.

2.6 Land tenure:

The Washo believed in being part of the land, working as part of nature, they never specifically claimed any land as their own only would protect the people that were theirs. This love of the land could be seen in the lack of hunting for sport, praying for every animal when they killed it and protecting the land they lived on by not over hunting one area too much.

2.7 Ceramics:

The Washo tribe relied mostly, and would eventually become popular for their use, on basket weaving to store food and eat off of. The baskets were used to catch fish, carry pinon nuts, holding and carrying water and even for holding the young children.

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:

It is taught at an early age that all food gathered or hunted but be shared between all members of the group. This is incredibly important to how the group works, they hunt together, gather together and all in all work as a whole.

2.9 Food taboos:

I couldn't find any that were stated, the only sacred animal in the Washo lifestyle were "Water babies" and the giant man eating bird named *Ong*.

2.10 Canoes/watercraft?

They had few boats. Most of the fishing they did was by wading in the water with nets and baskets to catch fish that came into less deep waters in order to spawn.

Anthropometry

3.1 Mean adult height (m and f):

Not documented.

3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f):

Not documented.

Life History, mating, marriage

4.1 Age at menarche (f):

This age is unknown.

4.2 Age at first birth (m and f):

This age is also mostly un-documented. I can assume that this would most likely occur once the girls have gone through the "girls dance" and have been married. This often would happen at a much younger age than we are used to in our society today.

4.3 Completed family size (m and f):

Families on average were about 5 people per family. This was decided by who stayed with who during the winter months and could change each year.

4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f):

This idea is undocumented.

4.5 Age first marriage (m and f):

This idea is undocumented.

4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce:

Divorce in the Washo tribe seems to not be truly documented, this may be due to the idea that unless the marriage was arranged, which never resulted in divorce, the wife or husband could leave if they were unhappy. This causes most cases not to be documented.

4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously:

The Washo only truly practiced monogyny.

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

Most Washo marriages were arranged. At that time, many gifts were given from both sides of the family to the husband and to the wife. For quite a long time after that, the couple would be watched by the parents to ensure a safe and loving situation.

4.9 Inheritance patterns:

Since most of the families belongings were to be burned in the case of death within a home, it can be seen that most of what one received through inheritance was only status and food. Even the chiefdom is mostly not by the family, but by the best member of the tribe in the rabbit hunt each fall.

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict:

This is undocumented.

4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals:

This is undocumented.

4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy):

Very few marriages occurred out of the Washo tribe. This often only occurred when intertribal relations were at their best and safest. This was their way of ensuring safe and good exchange.

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

This idea is undocumented.

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

This idea is undocumented.

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

This idea is not documented.

4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape

This idea is not documented.

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

Arranged marriages were the only common occurrence when it came to the decision of the spouse.

Reasons for why arranged marriages occurred are unknown, although it could be determined by the status of the families.

4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?

All evidence of polygyny was in the male counter parts. Very few women were free sexually.

4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring

Gift giving is an important part of their culture. In marriage, births and even death, gifts are often presented to the families.

4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children?

This idea is undocumented.

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

This is undocumented.

4.22 Evidence for couvade's

There is limited evidence to support this idea.

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

Most fathers were only found in the husband of the woman. If a woman becomes pregnant, only the husband is considered for the father.

4.24 Kin avoidance and respect?

There are few documents relating to how kin related to one another in the Washo tribes.

4.24 Joking relationships?

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

The Washo traditionally practiced bilateral descent. Once married, the couple could live with either family, depending on their own wishes. Also, property and material was passed down between both sides of the family.

4.26 Incest avoidance rules

In this tribe it looks as though incest isn't condemned, but it also isn't the most optimal choice. At no point in time is the Washo tribe larger than around 3,000 people, so some incest is most likely to occur. The amount of arranged marriages point to less incest in the tribe.

4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony?

There is no one formal ceremony, multiple types of ceremonies are used within the tribe. These include gift exchanges, living together and dancing beside one another while a rabbit skin blanket was draped over their shoulders. This dance wasn't used all the time, but when it was it was used as a symbol of them becoming one with each other and nature.

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?)

Most of the time, marriages would occur within the Tribe and community. Rarely, during times of safe and good relations, the tribe would marry intertribal to promote and maintain good relations. This allowed the group to continue exchange between these tribes.

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

In the past, before European expansion, the marriages of this tribe were almost all completely arranged and done so between parents of the couple. There was traditionally a very long engagement in which both groups of parents would watch the couple closely to ensure the happiness and safety of both parts.

4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who:

Warfare/homicide

4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare:

This is undocumented.

4.15 Out group vs. in-group cause of violent death:

Warfare between other tribes only occurred occasionally; although, in-group killing is also not documented. Most deaths may have occurred from natural causes.

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

These are undocumented.

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

There are very few groups surrounding the Washo tribe in the Nevada Sierra and around Lake Tahoe, this is due to the Washo seemingly appearing in the area before other groups. This can be related back to the language group in which they fall in. Their language is so different than all of those around them. They did have limited relations with neighboring groups, when relations were good, exchange and marriage would occur. Sometimes, lack of food and poor seasons lead to warfare, but this would eventually end. Often the groups just chose to keep their distance.

4.18 Cannibalism?

There is no true proof of cannibalism, but it is stated that as the tribe would reach it's downfall's peak after European invasion, it is stated in some books that they resulted to eating the dead after careful praying to the *Maker*.

Socio-Political organization and interaction

5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size:

Families on average were about 5 people per family, families were truly dictated on who stay with who during the winter months.

5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality):

The Washo tribe mainly stayed within their own lands. During the winter season they would retreat up the mountain to find better protection from the wind and snow. In the summer and fall months, they would spend most of their time near Lake Tahoe to have access to fishing and other wildlife that relied on the Lake as part of their daily lives.

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

Each village has it's own chief that is used to call for feasts, festivals, and ceremonies. This is the only true "social order" of the villages. The next chief is chosen by the closest bloodline and sometimes by who the chief thinks would be best in the position.

5.4 Post marital residence:

The Washo would stay with either family after marriage, often up to the choice of the couple.

5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense):

The Washo tribe did have very defined boundaries around their lands. Yet, many of their neighboring tribes rarely came in contact with them. It was as though there was mutual understanding not to interact. When there was interaction, the result was often in warfare.

5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex):

5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships:

5.8 Village and house organization:

As stated before, the Washo tribe had very little movement throughout the year. The only time they would move was in between the summer and winter months to ensure their safety farther up the mountains. In both places they would create homes similar to lean-tos. They were formed by leaning cedar bark pieces into one another and overlapping them to create protection from the elements. Each village's houses were created similarly, but none looked the exact same. Through time each village would specialize their own way to make their houses.

5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses):

Each village had the Chief's house in the center of the village, surrounded by other forms of the houses. This was the only really structure.

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?

Only one of the articles refers to the form of sleeping habits, but it seems to refer to them sleeping on the ground of the houses they built. There are no poles in their houses for hammocks to be strung between.

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

The Washo had very little social organization besides the arranged marriages. Even the chief position was often not singularly passed down in one lineage.

5.12 Trade:

Trade between the tribes close to the Washo was very limited.

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies?

The only noted hierarchy seemed to be in the chief. Although, the arranged marriages could hint at some forms of hierarchy, since often that is a way of keeping status.

Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

6 Time allocation to RCR:

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine):

6.2 Stimulants:

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

Birth rituals in the Washo tribe were incredibly important. Births were highly celebrated, as female relatives and friends would take care of the mom, the baby was taken care of by the men. Once the baby was born, the mother and father refrained from eating meat or salts. Once the baby was around a month old the parents would hold a "baby feast", it was at this time that the mother would bathe herself and the child would receive their hair cut. This is also when the child was to be put in their cradleboard. This is where they would remain most of their time until they were old enough and big enough to walk on their own.

Girls and boys both had their own rites of passages. Girls practiced the "girls dance" which is incredibly important to this group of people and is still to this day practiced among those that still exist. The idea is that the girls dance over a four-day period and gifts are thrown into the crowd. At the end of the 4 days, the girls are officially seen as women to the tribe. Boys rite of passage is simply when they take down and kill his first full-grown buck. They must show good hunting skills and share their game with the entire tribe to promote and ensure food-sharing rules.

If someone in the tribe dies, the tribe mourns for at least a week if not longer. At this time, the family must burn the house, if the member of the family died inside of it. All of their belongings must be burned or buried with them. At this time, female relatives also cut off their hair to show mourning.

6.4 Other rituals:

All rituals are stated above.

6.5 Myths (Creation):

This idea is unknown.

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games):

It is believed that the Washo had a game similar to our version of football. With the idea of tackling each other for the ball and scoring points by throwing it and running it down the area they played in.

6.7 Sex differences in RCR:

Women's rituals were often centered around their ability to procreate while men's often centered around their ability to provide for the village as a whole.

6.8 Missionary effect:

As time passed the Washo tribe relied heavily on a new religion called Peyotism. This is the religion that was based on charity, honesty and enforced a strict lifestyle that allowed them to stay close to their roots. It was brought to the tribe by a man of the name Ben Lancaster.

6.9 RCR revival:

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs:

This idea is unknown.

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?

This idea is unknown.

6.12 Is there teknonymy?

There is no evidence of this occurring in the Washo tribe.

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

Most of the "religion" that presents itself in the Washo tribe stems from a love and belief that they tribe is one with nature. There are a few beliefs of Legend Creatures that are of the spirit world. These creatures are evil spirits that show strength in the tribe through stories of defeat. These Legend Creatures also acts as life lesson stories, such as the man-eating giant who lived in Cave Rock who would eat those of the tribe who didn't perform their duties. Water babies are their understanding of why people in the tribe become ill or even die. Healers in the tribe consult the water babies at Cave Rock where they are believed to live to understand how to heal.

Adornment

7.1 Body paint:

Most forms of body paint was only found on the face and was made by minerals crushed and added to the water. They only truly had two colors, red and white.

7.2 Piercings:

Whether or not the Washo tribe participated in the adornment of piercing their bodies is not stated.

7.3 Haircut:

Each Washo woman and men receive their own haircut at the time of their rite of passage ceremony, it is the haircut they will keep for the rest of their lives, their hair is usually kept long.

7.4 Scarification:

The practice of scarification is not seen with the Washo tribe.

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

Men mostly only wore a clout and belt. In the colder months they would wear buckskin blanket. Women wore a buckskin skirt. The buckskin blanket was universal in the tribe as a form of sleeping blanket. Both men and women wore buckskin moccasins that often were colored with red mineral paint on top.

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment:

During marriage ceremonies, a buckskin blanket was thrown upon the shoulders of the couple as they danced side by side to show them becoming one.

7.7 Sex differences in adornment:

Neither men nor women wore shirts, but women generally were more covered over their genitalia.

7.8 Missionary effect:

When studied in the early 1900's all of the remaining Washo tribes had began dressing almost identically to their European neighbors. Now, around 100 years later, Washo tribes are completely acculturated and dress like most of their surrounding neighbors.

7.9 Cultural revival in adornment:

Kinship systems

8.1 Sibling classification system:

This idea is unknown.

8.2 Sororate, levirate:

This idea is unknown.

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

This idea is unknown.

Other interesting cultural features (list them):

I think the most interesting cultural fact about this tribe is that even though they were surrounded by many other tribes, they had their own way of living and life styles. Their language was different, the way they ate and believed in nature was different and the limited amount of religion is very different.

Numbered references

1.

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