



KOYOOE TUKADU: PYRAMID LAKE PAIUTE KIT



◆ WE ARE ALL PEOPLE OF THIS EARTH

It was believed that the childbirth was an occasion filled with magical power. Because of this power, Men were not allowed near a woman who was about to give birth. At the birth of a child, the father would run to the east in the morning and the west in the evening for the first few days, he had to return from a running trip with water. He then would bathe, his old clothes would be discarded, and he would be painted with red clay. He would distribute his first kill among others, and during this period was sacrifice meat, salt, smoking, and gambling. These things were done in an attempt to tame the powerful magic of childbirth.

Babies were regarded as prizes, with both sexes being valued equally. In the case of twins, another mother might volunteer to care for one of the twins, but the children were never separated, as it was believed they might die from grief.

Diapers were made of a fine sage brush. The baby was carried in a cradleboard, made by its grandmother, and fed on breast milk long after it walked. Around this time the grandparents gave the child a name that described him/her.

Physically punishing children is not a practice of the Numu. Children learned how to help with work from a very young age. Parents and grandparents taught them the customs of the band. The parental grandparents often taught culture to the children. The orphans in the village were always cared for. Some children had dreams or visions around the age of eight or nine that would often decide their future.

Puberty was a very important time for traditional ceremonies. It was thought that a young girl was under the same kind of magic as a woman in childbirth. Around age 14, a young girl was sent away from others – especially men. The girl would eat only certain foods, and run each day for five days to get water or firewood as preparation for the future. Firewood was so scarce that the child was thought to be a good wife if she could find enough firewood. During this time she was kept separate and busied with chores. After this period she was bathed, given new clothes, and participated in the prayer ceremony.

Boys at puberty were taught the responsibilities of manhood by older relatives. The young boy, often feeling mystical during this transition, would fast and could not eat from his first kill. He was also not permitted to eat from his first kill before puberty because it was believed that he would not be a successful hunter if he did. He was then bathed, prayed for, and given new clothing.



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The Rabbit Drive was often a Courting time. Usually when a family wished to join, both parents reached an understanding here. The boy could show his ability as a hunter the wife he wants as well as her parents in old age. To impress a girl he likes the boy would bring her a duck or a rabbit. Accepting it meant she accepted the boy. A girl would bring food or water to a boy she likes. The boy would respond by catching her wrist to say that he preferred the girl more than her gifts.

When a girl was old enough to be married she slept by her grandmother. If a boy liked this girl he would sit all night in the girls camp near the place that she slept, moving closer each night. If the girl wanted the suitor to go away she moved her blanket closer to her mother.

Once married the man would move into the woman's home. Divorce was only permitted in the event of sterility, adultery, or irreconcilable differences. The man then moved back to his hometown and the children stayed with the mother – unless she was proven incompetent.

In the event of death the corpse was removed from the house, washed, painted, and wrapped in a blanket. The body was buried in the rocks and earth of the adjacent hills and mountains by relatives or friends.

Reverence, gentleness, and great sorrow were shared. Hair clippings were tossed toward the body. Grieving relatives whaled. Men abstained from gambling for 3-12 months. Women smeared their face with earth or abstained from bathing.

A widow or a widower waited 12-24 months before remarriage. Gifts were given to the deceased and their property was buried with them. Since grieving was a process of purging, nothing was kept to renew grief.

Birth to Death

