

PATWIN HOUSES

BY

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## THE SUDATORY HOUSE

Young men before marriage, and older men at times, slept in the sudatory house. Its principal use however was that of a sweat-house. A number of men would gather in the house, close the entrance and smoke hole with mats, and sweat around a hot fire. When the heat became almost unbearable, they would open the door and run from the house to the river for a short swim.<sup>5</sup> This practice was called ča'poho.

The sudatory house (čapa'qεwε), was, in point of structure, a qε'wε built on a large pattern. The maximum diameter of the pit is said to have been from forty to fifty feet. Other dimensions, aside from the depth of the pit and the size of the doorway, were increased proportionately. The single doorway was normal in all particulars.

## THE MENSTRUAL HOUSE

Customarily women during menstruation or childbirth spent a period of time in confinement in a menstrual house (qu'la). This house is described as having a pit three feet in depth and twenty feet in diameter at its greatest length. Two house posts, from eight to ten feet apart, stood in such a position as to equally share the weight of the superstructure. These two posts and the single doorway followed an east and west alignment. From a single stringer, supported by the house posts, rafters radiated to the top of the retaining wall where the interval between them was about four feet. The remainder of the superstructure was as in other houses. The door invariably faced eastward. The fireplace lay equidistant between and in alignment with the house posts. The smoke hole held its usual place on the south central side of the housetop. The nomenclature for all house parts was identical with that of the qε'wε.

There were no permanent elements of furniture or equipment in the qu'la.

## THE CEREMONIAL DANCE HOUSE

All ceremonial dances were held in a large house called hut. This was the largest house in the village. The true pit was from four to five feet in depth. The pit measured by the author was forty feet wide and fifty feet long.

<sup>5</sup> A. L. Kroeber, *The Indians of California* (in press as a Bulletin of the Bureau of American Ethnology).

Eleven upright posts supported the superstructure. Of these a center post (*se'ktu* = chief) stood in the center of the pit. In line with this post and the two opposite doorways stood two end posts, each equidistant between the center post and the wall. Four side posts stood on each side at equal intervals, forming opposing arcs between the center post and the wall. The space between these side posts and the wall was from seven to eight feet across. The center and end posts were perpendicular; the side posts inclined slightly toward the wall. Side posts were all of equal height. Accurate heights can not be given, but the center post is described as being from one-fifth to one-fourth higher than the side posts, and the end posts as intermediate in height between these two. The length of the center post was about half that of the house pit, measured from doorway to doorway.

Side posts and end posts supported a connecting line of stringers circling the center post. At each end above the doorways this line of stringers was bent upward in gable formation, due to the difference in the relative heights of the end posts, on the one hand, and the side posts, on the other (see fig. 2).

Rafters radiated from the top of the center post across the stringers to the retaining wall as previously described. Four short heavy pieces of wood, stoutly tied end to end to form a square, surrounded and were solidly fastened to the near top of the center post a few inches below its otherwise characterless summit. This shoulder supported the superior ends of the rafters just below the point where they were clustered and tied. The remainder of the superstructure was identical with that of other houses.

A peculiar feature of the hut was its two doorways. The main entrance to the east agreed with the general type of passageway described above. It was called *pu'inabepes* (< *pu'i* = east, *pēs* = doorway). All spectators used this door for entrance and exit. The performers, also, after donning their ceremonial dresses outside, entered the hut by way of this door and left by the same door after dancing. The second doorway was on the west end of the house, directly opposite the *pu'inabepes*. It was called *noino'ibepes* (< *no'i* = west, *pēs* = doorway). This entrance was merely a rectangular break in the retaining wall, six feet high by three feet wide, through which a steep unprotected incline led to the exterior level of the ground. By way of this door, the performers, when not in costume, entered to take their places in the audience, or left to re-attire themselves for the next dance.

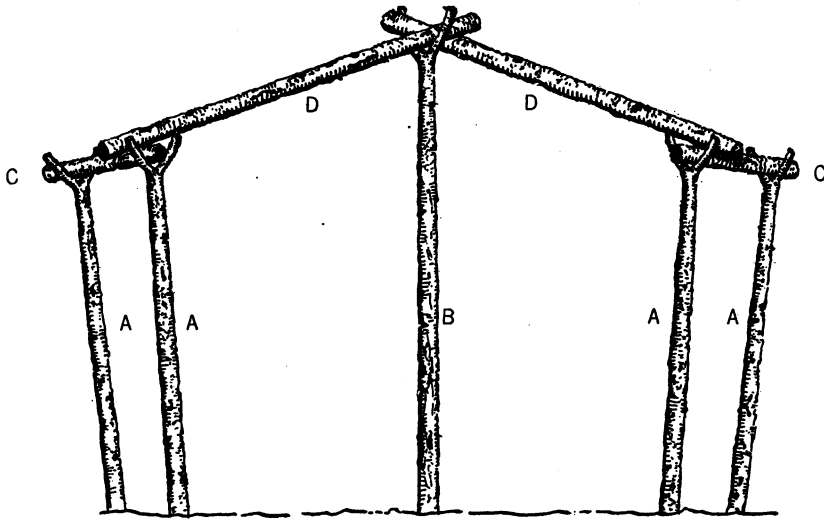


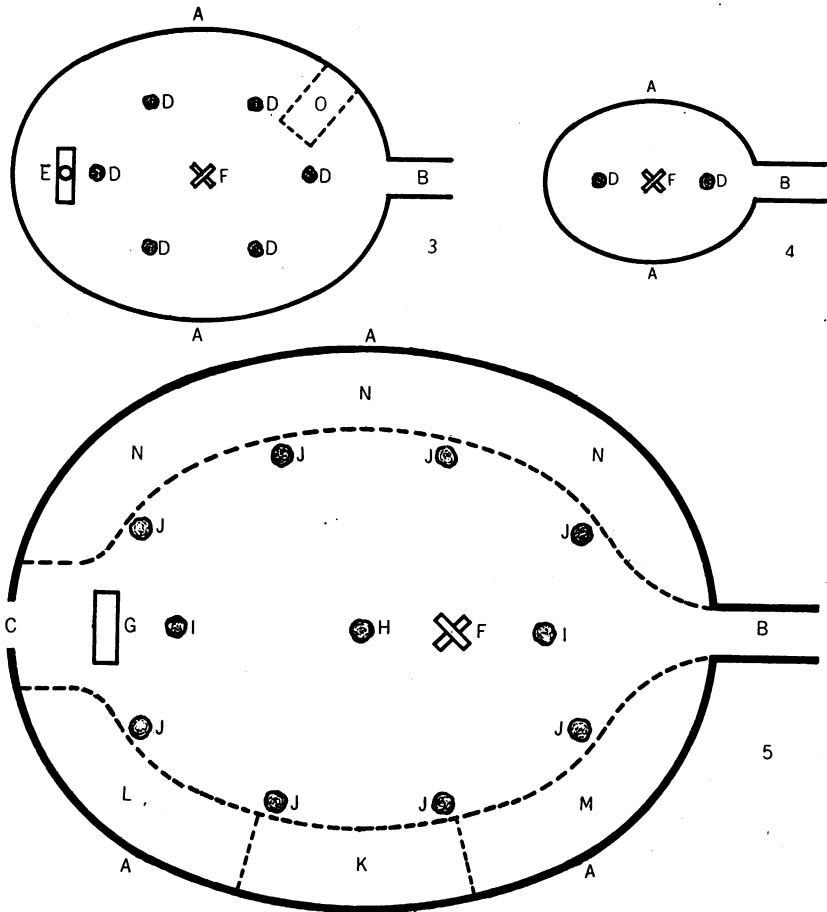
Figure 2. Stringer connections between end posts and side posts of ceremonial dance house.

- A. Side house posts.
- B. An end house post.
- C. Stringers connecting side house posts.
- D. Stringers connecting end house posts with extreme eastern or western pair of side house posts.

The ceremonial drum, a peeled and hollowed sycamore log, some six or seven feet in length and said to have had at times a diameter of two feet, held a position in the hut relatively the same as that of the mortar in the *qe'wε*. It lay at the west end of the pit, intermediate between the western doorway and the westernmost of the two end house posts. Its greatest dimension extended north and south. It was held in place by four stakes driven, two on each side, near the drum ends. This drum was commonly called *ho'lwa*, but in the *he'si* dance, the principal ceremony of an esoteric society bearing the same name as the dance, this identical drum was called *hwa'la*.

The fireplace lay east of the center post intermediate between it and the most eastern of the two house posts. The smoke hole, unlike that of any other house, was situated on the north central side of the housetop about six feet below the crest.

During a ceremony the space between the retaining wall and the outer circle of house posts was well carpeted with small green willow boughs, furnishing a soft clean area on which to sit or recline. This sitting circle was called *ha'mla* (= sitting place).



Figures 3-5. Ground plans of Patwin houses: (3) dwelling house; (4) menstrual house; (5) ceremonial dance house.

- A. Pit wall.
- B. Entrance, pes.
- C. West entrance, noino'ibepes.
- D. House posts.
- E. Mill, *óbo'k*.
- F. Fireplace.
- G. Drum, *ho'lwa, hwa'la*.
- H. Center post.
- I. End posts.
- J. Side posts.
- K. *ha'mla* reserved for chief's family.
- L. *ha'mla* reserved for ceremonial participants.
- M. *ha'mla* reserved for *he'hetu* entertainers.
- N. *ha'mla* reserved for non-participants.
- O. Bed scaffold, *ta'wai*.

There was a definite seating arrangement in the hut. The entire northern half of the hamla, from door to door, was reserved for the non-participating element, the audience. Families sat together, a certain paternal group being assigned to a definite place in the semi-circle. A space in the center of the southern half of the hamla was reserved for the village chief, his family, and his distinguished guests. To the chief's left, extending to the western doorway, the seating space was reserved for ceremonial officials, dancers, drummers, and ceremonial singers. A group of singers, whose part it was to entertain the audience between dances, sat to the right of the chief close to the eastern doorway.

All house parts not expressly named above shared the nomenclature of those of other houses.

#### TEMPORARY DWELLING STRUCTURES

During seasons of food gathering the entire community might be engaged in some occupation necessitating a continued absence from the village for a considerable length of time. Such occupations included the gathering of acorns and wild blackberries, and the catching and drying of sturgeon, salmon, and other smaller fish. The places where these supplies were to be obtained in greatest quantity varied from year to year. For this reason the village moved to the local centers of supply in season, taking with them the necessary equipment for work and livelihood. A period of time extending from midsummer well into the fall season was in this manner spent away from the village by the majority of its inhabitants.

During this period of absence from the permanent dwelling houses, temporary dwelling sheds were roughly constructed and used at the various camping grounds. These sheds served as sufficient shelters from sun and summer rains. Their building involved so small an amount of time and labor that no loss was felt at deserting them after a short sojourn.

Such sheds consisted of complexes of the following element: a low, flat, rectangular brush roof, supported by four corner posts, without walls or wall substitutes. Any available materials were used in their construction. A large family, remaining in one place for an appreciable length of time, would add now and again new elements to the original structure, each element like the first. The difficulty experienced in readily obtaining long strong stringers is given as the cause preventing the building of one large shed.