

California Tribal Arts
Pacific Western Traders
WOMEN'S DICE GAME – Yokut and Miwok

A favorite game of the Yokuts and Miwok, the game varies only slightly from group to group. In his **Handbook of Yokuts Indians**, Frank Latta describes a Yokuts version as follows:

“It was played by four women, two pairs of partners. The players were seated upon the ground, partners side by side and their opponents opposite. Between them was placed a large flat tray made of basketry material and having slightly upturned edges. This tray was called **tiwon**. The dice, called **hoo'utch**, were thrown upon the tray. In some localities the dice were made of acorn caps, but in most instances they were made from nuts of the native black walnut. The nut was split in half, the kernel removed, and the hollow filled with pitch or asphaltum. Into the pitch were pressed small bits of abalone shell or white shell beads. In this way the dice were numbered from one to eight; in some instances to as many as twelve. The dice were gathered from the mat between the two hands and sometimes rolled together. They were then thrown upon the mat.

Four combinations were recognized in scoring.

Three flat sides remaining up counted one point and one of the twelve (counting) sticks was awarded to the partners making the point.

Two flat sides up counted one point.

All flat sides up or all flat sides down counted five points each and awarded five of the counting sticks.

When only one dice lay upon the tray with the flat side up, the thrower lost one point and the dice were awarded to the two opposing players.

Either of the partners could throw the dice. Considerable skill was thought necessary in throwing them. A **moke** (woman) who could roll the dice most rapidly and who could pour forth the most convincing entreaties was usually accorded this privilege.

A **huuhchuish** game has been known to continue without interruption for several days and nights.”

Dice Game
Handcrafted walnut dice and pouch
Walnut, cloth. Bag L 10, W 6.5 cm, Dice H 1.5, W 2.5 cm
Yosemite National Park, YOSE 35426



How to play the
Chumash Walnut Shell Dice Game

http://www.rain.org/camp96/chumash_do1.html

What you need:

- 1} Twelve clean, empty Walnut shell halves-
- 2} Tree seal tar (the chumash used natural tar)-
- 3} Abalone shell chips or bright beads (optional)-
- 4} Popsicle sticks-
- 5} Turpentine and a rag for cleanup-
- 6} Ten sticks (for keeping score)-
- 7} two players-

Preparation:

- 1} Use a popsicle stick to fill each shell half with tar-
- 2} Press a few chips of abalone shell or beads into the soft tar quickly*-
- 3} Allow dice to dry-

*Abalone chips/beads are for decoration only.

Playing the Game:

- 1} Decide who will go first, and who will be even and who will be odd.
- 2} The first player rolls the dice three times, counting how many land with the flat side up, then adds them all together. If the number is even and the player chose even or it's odd and the player chose odd she gets a counter stick.
- 3} The second player does the same as the first.
- 4} The players take alternate turns, keeping their odd or even choice for the whole game.
- 5} When all the counter sticks from the pile are gone, players win sticks from each other; the first one to get all the sticks wins