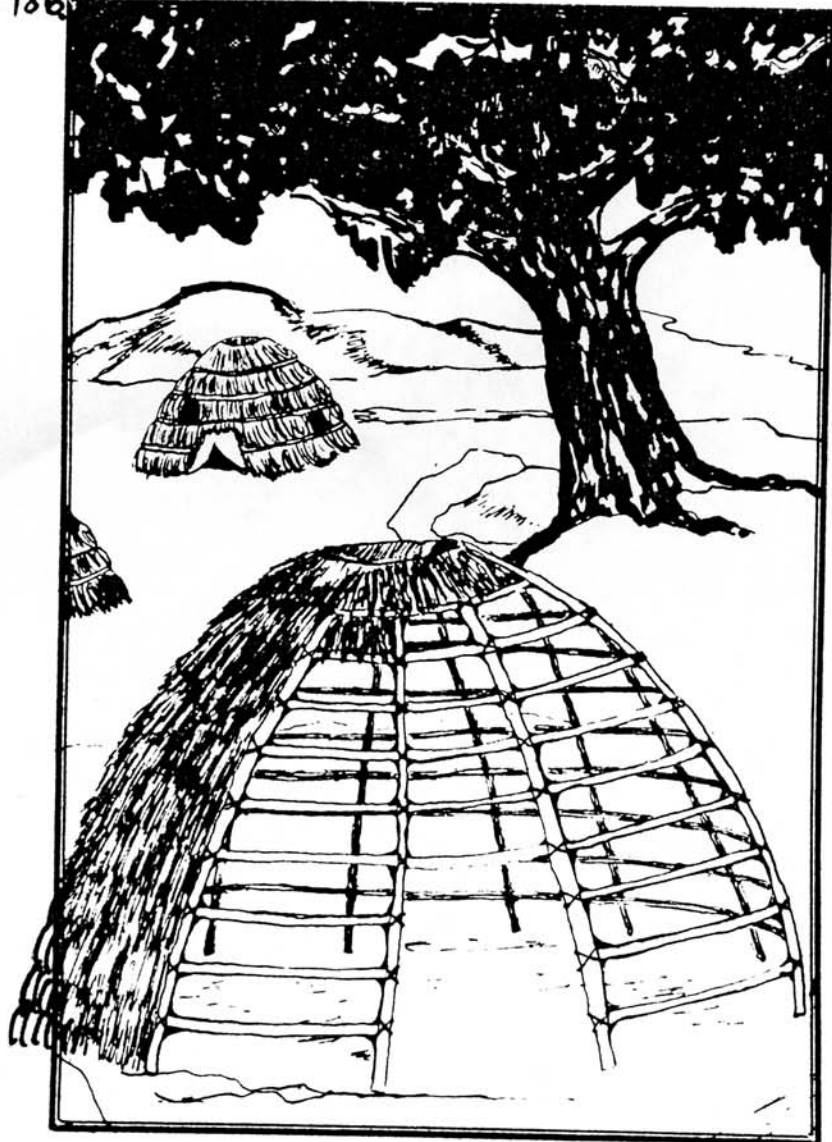


California's Chumash Indians

Lynne McCall and Rosalind Perry;
John Daniel, Publisher, Santa Barbara,
CA, 1986.



N. Kent
10-3-88

chief's house:

12 feet
20 feet
35 feet

Historical Building Heights Houses

THE CHUMASH Indians lived in round thatched houses. To make a house, they set willow poles into the ground in a circle. Then they bent the poles toward the center to form a dome shape and lashed them together at the top. They tied smaller saplings around this frame, parallel to the ground, to form a lattice structure. They made an arched doorway, sometimes using large whale rib bones for this purpose.

The outside covering or thatching of the house was bulrush (Spanish: *tule*) or cattails, which they gathered in marshy areas. Large bundles of thatching were draped over the horizontal cross-pieces and tied on to prevent the wind from blowing them off. By starting at the bottom and working toward the top, each layer fell over the one below like shingles, and kept the rain out. At the top of the house a hole was left open for ventilation. In rainy weather, it was covered with a skin.

Each house had a fire pit in the center for heat or for cooking in bad weather. In fine weather, cooking was done outside. Twined *tule* mats were used to cover the doorway in cold weather, or to show that the owners of the house were not at home. In some areas people slept on platforms raised above the floor and covered with mats. The interiors of the houses were sometimes partitioned into rooms by hanging mats.

Single-family homes were usually twelve to twenty feet in diameter, depending on the size of the family. The chief's house was much larger, up to thirty-five feet across. An extended family, including relatives of different generations, shared living quarters.

Diameter
4.25 inches

Height
3 inches (in drawing)

8.47 feet
14.12 feet
24.71 feet for elected officials