

1. Description

- 1.1 Name of society, language, and language family:** Chenchu. They speak Chenchu [4], a variant of Telugu which is a Dravidian language of their region. [2] Their language is also known as “Chenchucoolam”. [16]
- 1.2 ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com):** cde [5]
- 1.3 Location (latitude/longitude):** They mostly live in the dense Nallamala forest [4] in the southern India state of Andhra Pradesh [2] which is at Latitude 17.3585 and Longitude 78.2988. [1] They also can be found in the India states of Telangana (Latitude 18.6176/Longitude 78.2128), Karnataka (Latitude 15.3173/Longitude 75.7139) and Odisha (Latitude 20.2376/Longitude 84.27). [3][1]
- 1.4 Brief history:** In the census of 1891, the Chenchus were listed as a subdivision of the Yanadi Tribe. Most said they were actually one in the same. [15] The Chenchus are considered to be Hindu Aboriginal tribes and live the traditional life of hunters and gatherers. [4] Most live in the state of Andhra Pradesh, [2] though they are divided into 3 groups – the Konda or Adavi who moved to the Nallamalai forest, the Dasari or Krishna, and the Bontha which are located in towns and villages. Though they only marry other Chenchus, they do not marry within the same clan. [15] The government has tried working with the Chenchus to farm, but have not been successful. [4] Instead, the Chenchus prefer to remain in the Tiger Reserve and migrate to other places when the seasonal resources for food changes. [11] Alcoholism is a major problem, and life expectancy is very low, with only very few living past 40 years old. [16]
- 1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors:** The Chenchus are reluctant to the government’s efforts to introduce them to farming. [4] Some children are sent to government schools, but there are very few educated Chenchus that leave their clans to live in modern society. [8] The forests they are living in are dwindling because they have been declared as a tiger reserve sanctuary, and the Chenchus are getting forced by the government to be displaced which they have been refusing to be. [8] They are no longer allowed to hunt big game in the sanctuary and must only hunt small wildlife. [13] The state-sponsored Public Distribution System forces rice into the Chenchus’ homes as part of their supplemental diet. [9]
- 1.6 Ecology:** Scrub forest. [21] A typical day is spent gathering fruits and roots to be eaten that day. They may work in small groups while gathering. However, it is mostly a solidarity activity and there is usually no cooperation between the members of the tribes. Cooperation is not found either when they hunt. [6] They live amongst the tigers and share peacefully the reserve sanctuary/forest. [8]
- 1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density:** At the turn of the 21st century, there were approximately 59,000 Chenchus. [2] Villages varies from 3 to 13 houses, with an average of 6 or 7 homes. [6] The Chenchus live in remote areas and are subjected to land alienation. The houses are not scattered over large areas, but are more concentrated in a single place inside or near a forest. [16] Density is 1.25 people/km². [21]

2. Economy

- 2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s):** Tubers and roots. [2]
- 2.2 Main protein-lipid sources:** They have a lack of access to large protein sources and that leads them to have skin and malnutrition diseases. [7] What protein they do get comes in the form of small game and insects. [9]
- 2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?** They use a bow and arrow to hunt, a metal-tipped digging stick for digging, as well as an ax and a simple knife. [2] Some may have a gun. [6]
- 2.4 Food storage:** They do not have any kind of developed technique for preserving food. They eat and live day by day. [10]
- 2.5 Sexual division of production:** Gathering is done by both male and female, but men go further out in the fields. They will spend 2 to 3 days away from the tribe. Men also hunt, gather honey and make baskets. Women prepares most of the food. [6] They are also responsible for the housekeeping. [15]
- 2.6 Land tenure:** The forests that they once considered theirs has been taken away from the Chenchus by the government and made into a tiger reserve sanctuary. [8]
- 2.7 Ceramics:**
- 2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:** There is no cooperativeness between the

Chenches. Each individual is responsible to provide for his own family. [11]

2.9 Food taboos: There is a rule that they must set the hunted animal free if it has not attained a certain age, so young mother lizards and birds are often let go if caught. [9]

2.10 Canoes/watercraft?

3. Anthropometry

3.1 Mean adult height (m and f): They are of short stature, [8] somewhat because of the adaptation to the hot and humid forest conditions, but many are stunted because of malnutrition. [21]

3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f): Slender build. [10] Many are underweight because of malnutrition issues. [21]

4. Life History, mating, marriage

4.1 Age at menarche (f): When a girl attains menarche, she is kept in a corner of the house. The room is cleaned and then plastered with cow dung. The girl is then given 2 arrows. One covered with cow dung and one covered with turmeric powder. A lime is stuck to the tip of the arrow. An elder female helps the young girl with her menstrual cloth that is covered with turmeric as well as help cover her body with the powder too. [15]

4.2 Age at first birth (m and f):

4.3 Completed family size (m and f): The family consists of the husband, wife and any unmarried children. [6] The average range of the family is 3 to 10 members. [16]

4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f): The stoppage of menstruation is the sign that a woman is pregnant. They believe that pregnancy lasts 9 months for a boy and 10 months for a girl. They go through a period of post-partum or "pollution" as they call it. After 5-8 days, they are considered done with the pregnancy/birth. [15]

4.5 Age first marriage (m and f): Marriage is done upon maturity [2] which is after attaining puberty. [15]

4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce: Marriages are expected to last, and couples are expected to live together ever-after, though divorces are allowed on the grounds of incompatibility. [10] Divorces are also allowed if adultery has been committed. [15] If a Chenchu woman wants a divorce, she has to pay the total expenses from the start of their marriage back to the husband. [12]

4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously: The tribe follows Monogamous marriage rules, and each person is allowed only to marry once in their life time unless widowed, or divorced and the ex-husband grants the re-marriage or is deceased. [12]

4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry? 101 peacock feathers are given to the bride's father, and rice, spices and several bottles of liquor are given to the mother. [15]

4.9 Inheritance patterns: Hunting and collecting grounds are owned communally, but the moveable assets such as clothes, cattle, dress and ornaments, household utensils and other items, along with the homestead land and house that sits on it, are considered private property and belongings, and therefore, are inherited by the sons upon their father's death. Daughters inherit nothing. [14]

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict: Sons stay in the parental houses permanently, while daughters move out when they marry. Married sons live in separate hutments, but within the domicile as their father. Adult sons help their father with work and hunting outside the home, while daughters stay and help the mother with her inside duties. [14]

4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals:

4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy): Exogamy. [6] Young people are free to marry whomever they like as long as it is from a different clan. [8] However, they must stay within the Chenchu race. [14]

4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these "other fathers" recognized? Sex is only done during the day, because if a child is conceived in the darkness, they believe the child will be born blind. [17] They also have to have sex deep in the forest because they believe their home is not a hygienic place to have sex. [18]

4.14 What is the belief of the mother's role in procreation exactly? (e.g., "receptacle in which fetus grows") Though there is no special ceremonies performed prior to childbirth, pregnant women are not allowed to go

to burial grounds, nor are they allowed to see or touch a corpse. She cannot take food from the house of a dead man. Delivery takes place in the woman's mother's hut or in her husband's hut. The mid-wife helps deliver the baby with natural childbirth. Postpartum continues 5 to 10 days afterwards and food is served on a leaf or separate plate. Once the blood stops, the mother takes a purification bath and turmeric is applied to her body. After this process, the baby can be named. [15]

- 4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)?**
- 4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape:** It is not unheard of for girls to be forcibly carried away and married to have sexual relations. [15]
- 4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin):** Any man outside of their clan, but within their own race. [8]
- 4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?**
- 4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring:**
- 4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children?**
- 4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females:** Due to alcoholism issues in men, life expectancy is fairly low. Only less than 10% of household members were above 40 years of age. Overall, there is a 980 female per 1000 males ratio. [16]
- 4.22 Evidence for couvades:**
- 4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older):**
- 4.24 Kin avoidance and respect?**
- 4.24 Joking relationships?**
- 4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations:** Patrilineal. [6]
- 4.26 Incest avoidance rules:**
- 4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony?** The marriage ceremony is a traditional one that the entire community gathers at to witness. Elders from the "Uttalui" clan must preside over the marriage and officiates as the priest, or "Kalaraju". [10] The maternal uncle of the bride performs the giving of the hand of the bride (sampradaan). A large feast takes place at the conclusion of the ceremony. [8]
- 4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name?** By marriage. [10] A newborn may be given a name prior to birth if named after a deity or saint. Otherwise, they acquire their names at about 5 years old. Generally, a boy's name ends with "adu" or "lu" or "aiah" or "anna". Female names end in "amma". [15]
- 4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?)** Outside the community/clan [8], but within the Chenchu race. [14]
- 4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)?** Young people can choose who they want to marry, or elders may arrange the marriage for them. [8]
- 4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who:**

Warfare/homicide

- 4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare:**
- 4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death:**
- 4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing:** In the past it was reported that they would rob travelers and kill them if they would not give in. [19]
- 4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations):** Non-tribe people who live among the Chenchu rents land from them, paying them with portions of their harvests. The nomadic herding tribe of Banjara are also given permission for their cattle to graze in the forests where the Chenchu resides. [4]
- 4.18 Cannibalism?** No

5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

- 5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size:** An average village consists of 6 to 7 homes. [6]
- 5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality):** There are 3 seasons to their region: the hot, the rainy and the winter. Because of their dependence on a portion of the food that is only collected in the forest, the Chenchus have to

follow the seasonal patterns at certain times of the year and move to where there will be more water available as well as edible plants. [6]

5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes): Clans. [6] There is, however, a village elder called “Peddamanishi” who is generally responsible for maintaining order and harmony within the family and the village as a whole. His words are the final say so in authority. [8]

5.4 Post marital residence: A woman moves with her husband [14] and bears his clan name after marriage. [8] If a man lives in his wife’s village, he is only considered as a “guest”. [6]

5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense):

5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex):

5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships:

5.8 Village and house organization: When they are stationary and have a permanent settlement, which can last up to 10 to 15 years [6], they live in round houses of wattle walls, thatched roofs and bamboo beams, and are no different than those homes lived in by other people and tribes in that region. [2][6] The Chenchus name their villages “Penta”. Pentas include a few huts that are grouped together based on the kinship pattern. Close relatives live nearby and distant relatives live farther away. [8]

5.9 Specialized village structures (mens’ houses):

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere? When they hunt and gather and are away from the community for days, they roam and live under trees and in rock shelters. They may also build temporary dwellings such as low grass huts that are constructed from leafy branches. [6]

5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc: The social organization is 1) the clan, 2) the local group and 3) the family. [6] There are 4 principal clan groups including the Menlur and Daserolu, the Sigarlu and Urtalu, the Tokal, Nallapoteru and Katraj, and the Nimal, Eravalu and Pulsaru. Villages are mixed clans, and any individual may join any local group in which they have relations with. A Chenchu will continue to be linked, however, to his or her home village where he/she grew up and parents still live. [6]

5.12 Trade: They take portions of harvests from non-tribe members for the use of their lands. [4] They also sell and trade jungle products such as roots, tubers, fruits, honey, tamarind and mahua flowers to the government, traders or local markets. They also make liquor to sell. [8] Grains are not sold, but are exchanged within the tribe, or amongst relatives. The trade is used to strengthen relationships. [9]

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies? The Chenchus hold a relatively high caste, or social class, status so they prefer to remain segregated from other groups. They tend to live on the outskirts of multi-ethnic villages. [11]

6. 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): Chenchus follow certain traditions while performing funerals. There are 2 types of funerals, the Chinna-Dinal and the Pedda-Dinal. The Chinna-Dinal is performed in the death of a child or an unmarried person due to health or some other accidental cause. The Pedda-Dinal funeral is performed for the death of married persons, no matter the cause of death. [12] The body is washed by relatives and the feet are covered with turmeric while the legs are covered with ashes. The hair is loosened, washed and anointed with oil. The corpse is then wrapped in his/her own cloth and a coin is tied to it. All ornaments are removed from women, but they are buried with their glass bangles and other trinkets. Each clan has separated burial areas. [15] There are no special ceremonies performed before childbirth. [15]

6.4 Other rituals: They are considered the most removed Aboriginal people from the dominant Hindu civilization so their rituals are few and are considered simple. [2]

6.5 Myths (Creation): Lord Mallikarjuna who is a reincarnation of Lord Shiva of the Srisailam Temple, fell in love with a young Chenchu maiden called Chenchu Laxmi. The 2 of them got married. The Chenchus believe

that they are the descendants of this couple, and therefore, have a special place and mention in the temple records and chronicles of Puranas. Because of this, the Chenchus enjoy special privileges at the Srisailem Temple. [10]

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games): The Chenchus learn various small arts and crafts to make their lives easier since they prefer to do most everything for themselves on their own. [8] They play a musical instrument called the Kinnera. The Tordi honey wax is used to attach frets to the instrument. [9] They also make musical drums known as the thapetu that are made from bamboo and sheep skin. [14]

6.7 Sex differences in RCR:

6.8 Missionary effect: Missionary agencies have worked with the Chenchus for their alcoholism and other issues, but have had little success. They try to reach them through prayer. [11]

6.9 RCR revival: The rich folklore of their religion inspires and guides them to maintain solid traditions in their lives through their dance, gaiety, lyricism, joy and innocence. They live a life of rich contentment, and seek and aspire for very little. [10]

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs: The Chenchus have a well-defined concept of the soul. The transmigration of the soul, or the belief that the soul passes from one body to another, is responsible for death and rebirth. [14]

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?

6.12 Is there teknonymy?

6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.) They have a strong belief system, and worship their gods and deities with a great devotion. They love them so much that they pray to them in earnest and in endearing terms to a point that borders on a frenzy and passion. [10] The Chenchus worship “Bhagwan Taru” who lives in the sky and looks after them in all that they do. They also worship “Garelamai Sama” who is the goddess of the forest. It is said that she protects them from any danger. [8] Chenchus also believe in supernatural powers, and practices these to worship their gods. [12]

7. Adornment

7.1 Body paint: Tattoos are very common amongst the Chenchu women. They are of different designs and are generally found on their foreheads and upper arms. [14]

7.2 Piercings: Earrings. [14]

7.3 Haircut: The older generation lets their hair grow long. The young people often cut theirs short. [11] The hair-cutting ceremony for a child for the first time is performed in a temple. This usually takes place around 3 to 4 years old. The ceremony is initiated by the maternal uncle and completed by a barber. Boys will have their head completely shaved leaving only a lock of hair on the scalp. [15]

7.4 Scarification: After someone dies, mourning lasts for 10 days. On the 10th day, a goat is sacrificed and the flesh is offered at the grave. Once the goat has been touched by a crow, the mourners are then allowed to bathe, drink liquor and return home. [15] They will also sacrifice a sheep in the name of their favorite deity, Ganga, one time a year. [15]

7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.): The Chenchus are not fond of wearing ornaments. They wear only earrings, foot-bangles and necklaces. [14]

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment: During a wedding ceremony, the bride and groom will each wear white and the groom would place black beads around the bride's neck. [15]

7.7 Sex differences in adornment: Older men wear nothing but a loin cloth and a head shroud. [9][11] Young boys wear shorts and pants. Girls wear the traditional wrap-around colored dresses or skirts and blouses. [11]

7.8 Missionary effect: Modern dresses, blouses and petticoats are worn due to the influence from advanced neighbors and visitors. [14]

7.9 Cultural revival in adornment:

8. Kinship systems

8.1 Sibling classification system:

8.2 Sororate, levirate: Widow re-marriages are common, but she is not expected to marry her late husband's brother. [10][15]

8.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.): The kinship system is of a classificatory type. They apply a single term to designate the number of persons of the same status, sex and age. They also distinguish the difference between the affinal (by marriage) relatives and the consanguinal (blood related) ones. [14]

9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):

- 1.) They make beer from the mahua flowers. [8]
- 2.) They put their honey that they collect into beer bottles to distribute among their clan. [9]
- 3.) They eat the larvae and eggs from the beehives. [9]
- 4.) Alcoholism is a serious problem amongst the tribe members. [11]

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