

Paliyan

“Paliyans treat fellow humans so considerately that my year and a half with them was unforgettable. They were quieter, more peaceful, more respectful, more egalitarian, and more individualistic than any people I had ever met or read about (Gardner, Peter 2006).”

1. Description: The Paliyans are a Hunter-Gather group in Southern India

1.1 Name of society, language, and language family: Paliyans, also known as: Makkal, Malai Paliyar, Palani, Palaya, Palayan, Paliyar, Palleyan, Palliyar, Poliyar, Seramar, and Tamil. Language: Tamil and Malayalam, language family: Dravidian, Southern, Tamil-Kannada, Tamil-Kodagu, Tamil-Malayalam, Malayalam.

1.2 ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com): PCF

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude): Madras, South India, “The tribe is located in the hills of Coimbatore, Madurai, Ramnad, and Tinnevely districts in the southern extremity of Madras State, and to the east, in limited adjacent portions of Kerala State. The Paliyan occupied hills in Madras run from 8° 15’ to 10° 30’ North Latitude and from 76° 50’ to 78° 5’ East longitude” (Peter Gardner, 1965)

1.4 Brief history:

1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors: NA, the Paliyans are well respected by their neighbors and they are not influenced by missionaries.

1.6 Ecology: Relatively dry monsoon forest on the lower, eastern slopes of India’s southernmost ranges (Gardner, Peter 1965)

1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density: Total population 9,520 persons (2001 census) in some 65 settlements (Gardner 1965), groups average 20-30 members, few 60-80 members,

2. Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s): yams, sago, honey (Gardner, 1965)

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources: small, slow game (Gardner 1965) Mongoose, bat, squirrel, giant squirrel, three kinds of rodent, porcupine, hare, two medium sized deer, pangolin, forest hen and dove and their eggs, and fourteen fishwater fish (Gardner 2000). “The newborn of sambar, pig, chevrotain, giant squirrel, and langur are eaten for medicinal as well as subsistence purposes. Fetuses of large mammals are deemed to be edible but not tasty, they are usually given to the Paliyan dogs (Gardner 2000).”

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?: “No hunting equipment beyond a sharpened stick, billhooks bought from plainsmen, un-modified stones, and simply constructed, baited rock falls (Gardner 1965).” Machete-like billhooks and spears (Gardner, Peter 2006). Dogs aide in hunting as well

2.4 Food storage: No storage but the Paliyans dry meat to preserve it for later consumption (Gardner, 2000)

2.5 Sexual division of production: Division of labor is equal as well, women join men in hunting and men will search for yams, honey, etc. They also use various plants for medicinal purposes

2.6 Land tenure: NA

2.7 Ceramics: NA

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns: *Everything* is equal

2.9 Food taboos: “Bonnet Macaque, Nilgiri and common Langur, and slender Loris are regarded by many as improper food (the protecting gods have announced certain such prohibitions, but tales indicating that these primates were once human—as also the bear and the elephant—may play a part in the fairly widespread avoidance); finally, flesh of marten, otter, and the common palm civet is judged too unpalatable for any but the needy. Some species are accepted by as forbidden; for instance, gaur bison, tiger, bear, elephant, and all snakes (Gardner, Peter 2000).”

2.10 Canoes/watercraft? NA

3. Anthropometry

3.1 Mean adult height (m and f): This information was unavailable

3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f): This information was unavailable

4. Life History, mating, marriage

4.1 Age at menarche (f): This information was unavailable

4.2 Age at first birth (m and f): This information was unavailable

4.3 Completed family size (m and f): This information was unavailable

4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f): This information was unavailable

4.5 Age first marriage (m and f): This information was unavailable

4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce: The proportion of marriages ending in divorce was unavailable, however I did find a quote by Peter Gardner, 2000. It states: "For forest Paliyans social harmony is more important than continuation of martial relationships, but divorce and remarriage are free of legal and economic obstacles and are viewed as the principal parties' own business."

4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously: NA, both polygynous, and polyandrous marriages exists in this society. "Over 95 percent of the marriages are monogamous (Gardner, Peter 2000)."

4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?: No

4.9 Inheritance patterns: None

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict: "...much of a child's learning was done by observation (Peter Gardner, 2006)."

4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals: NA

4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy): NA

4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these "other fathers" recognized?: NA

4.14 What is the belief of the mother's role in procreation exactly? (e.g., "receptacle in which fetus grows"): NA

4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)?: NA

4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape: NA

4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin): NA

4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?: Yes, women are allowed sexual freedoms and when questioned the husbands might say "it is none of my business" in talking about his wife's ongoing sexual affair. (Gardner, Peter 2006).

4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring: NA

4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children?: NA

4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females: This exact information is unavailable however it is important to note the age difference between those in a marriage. "In 19 couples, the husband is three to 35 years older and in nine couples the wife is two to 41 years older (Gardner, Peter 2000)."

4.22 Evidence for couvades: NA

4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older): NA

4.24 Kin avoidance and respect?: All members of the Paliyan tribe are to treat one another with undeniable respect at all times regardless of kinship, age, or sex.

4.24 Joking relationships?

4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations: NA

4.26 Incest avoidance rules: There are no rules per say, but 35 percent of the forest marriages are secondary, tertiary, or quaternary relatives (Gardner, Peter 2000). "One young man's disabling boils on his legs were interpreted to be punishment for disrutinos which followed from his making his mother pregnant, While the baby born of this union was welcomed, the act of incest offended the mother's current husband and it eventuated in a temporary, two to three month martial separation, The young man, believed to have been the one to initiate the incest, was also said later to have been punished for "ruining the earth" (Gardner, Peter 2000)."

4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony? "It is quite frequent, especially in first partnerships, for a union to be solemnized with the exchange of betel leaves and salt and a promise of lifelong fidelity. Although, a ceremony is not necessary for the marriage to be legitimate. (Gardner, Peter 2000)

4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name?: NA

4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?): NA

4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)? No the marriages are not arranged, as with most things with the Paliyans, it is up the individual as to whom they want to marry.

4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who: NA

Warfare/homicide

4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare: “Paliyans were occasionally killed by outsiders, but I found no evidence of murder within their own society (Gardner, Peter 2006).”

4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death: NA

4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing: NA

4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations): The Tamils regard the Paliyans with a “remarkable degree of deference, The Paliyans appear to enjoy the respect even awe of their Tamil neighbors. Because of the harsh but simple lives they lead, the Paliyans are seen by the Tamils as holy, akin to the revered ascetics of Hindu tradition. This respect is expressed during the Tamils’ frequent pilgrimages to shrines located deep in the Paliyans’ forest ground.” (Gardner, Peter 2000)

4.18 Cannibalism? No

5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size: 20-30 members

5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality): Varies with resources available

5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes): “No leader or group had the authority to give an order or levy punishment. People were responsible for only themselves (Gardner, Peter 2006).” “In most bands one or two men and women did stand out, they were people who had “good heads” as they put it, people who were able to distract others with wit or soothing words at times of tension (Gardner, Peter 2006).”

5.4 Post marital residence: Varies, the concept of where Paliyans decide to live after marriage is very fluid. “If a husband and wife come from different groups they may move back and fourth irregularly (Gardner, Peter 2000).”

5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense): This information was unavailable

5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex): All Paliyans regard one another with respect, there is interaction between all ages and both sexes.

5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships: “Young Catayan, by contrast, played the part of a clown. At times of tension, he came on the public stage with exaggerated clumsiness or went up to people and, with slurred speech, pretended that he needed to borrow a common item that he surely already owned (Gardner, Peter 2006).”

5.8 Village and house organization: NA

5.9 Specialized village structures (mens’ houses): NA

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere? On ground, thatched huts during monsoon season, rock shelters, some sleep on expansive slab of granite (Gardner, Peter 2006)

5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc: NA

5.12 Trade: Paliyans specialize in a “silent trade” system where they leave forest products at a set location and retreat back to their forest to find the next day equivalent valuables left by their lowland trading partners. (Gardner, Peter)

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies? No

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

6 Time allocation to RCR: NA, varies. The Paliyans conduct elaborate ritual of thanks in which a few pieces of meat from the day’s kill are given to the gods (Gardner, Peter 2006). Paliyans can experience possessions by *caamis*, this can last for hours.

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine): Find medicinal plants in the forest. “Protecting *caamis* (spirits or gods) usually respond when Paliyans call on them for help. When a *caami* does “descend on” a Paliyan and take

over the host's body, everyone pays rapt attention; those present may be able to coax the spirit to provide information or protection... Sometimes a *caami* visits a person spontaneously at a time of special need. More often, people sing invocational prayers to call down the spirits (Gardner, Peter 2006)." "People laid out offerings of incense, betel leaves, partly peeled bananas, sweets, and a freshly opened coconut on leaves (Gardner, Peter 2006)."

6.2 Stimulants: NA

6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal): NA

6.4 Other rituals: NA

6.5 Myths (Creation): NA

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games): "Children played ever changing games during the day. They dog-paddled in icy pools along the mountain rivers, built toy houses, rantogether holding reed propellers that spun on thorns, or carried withthem colorful tethered beetles that buzzed in endless circles (Gardner, Peter 2006)."

Children also enjoy playing under a night's full moon.

6.7 Sex differences in RCR: NA

6.8 Missionary effect: NA

6.9 RCR revival: The *caamis* simply leave the bodies of the Paliyans

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs:

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people? NA

6.12 Is there teknonymy? NA

6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.): "Their religion, called "animist", is a blend of shamanistic possession and superficial recognition of Hindu lesser deities" (Gardner 1965)

7. Adornment: NA

7.1 Body paint: NA

7.2 Piercings: NA

7.3 Haircut: NA

7.4 Scarification: NA

7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.): NA

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment: NA

7.7 Sex differences in adornment: NA

7.8 Missionary effect: NA

7.9 Cultural revival in adornment: NA

8. Kinship systems

8.1 Sibling classification system: NA

8.2 Sororate, levirate: NA

8.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.): NA

9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):

The Paliyans upon first waking up will sit with one another for about 45-60 minutes enjoying the warm morning sun, they usually do not talk during this time or if they do in a very quiet manner. (Gardner, Peter 2006)

Numbered references

1. Gardner, Peter M. *Bicultural Versatility as a Frontier Adaption Among Pelican Foragers of South India*. Vol. 2. Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 2000. Print.
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3. Gardner, Peter M. *Journeys to the Edge : In the Footsteps of an Anthropologist*. University of Missouri, 2006. EBSCOhost.
4. Gardner, Peter M. *Ecology and Social Structure in Refugee Populations: The Pelicans of South India*. Ann Arbor: U Microfilms, 1965. Print.