

## The Machiguenga/Matsigenka of Peru

### 1. Description

*1.1 Name of society, language, and language family:* The Machiguenga go by a few names, also known as Mañaries, Matsiganga or Matsigenka. The Machiguenga are members of the Arawak language family, specifically Pre-Andean. Their dialect is most similar to Nomatsiguenga of the Anapati River system, but is also grouped with other languages such as Piro, Amuesha and Campa.

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

*1.3 Location (latitude/longitude):* 12S, 73W

*1.4 Brief history:* The word 'Matsigenka' literally means 'people', referring to a group of minor language groups that are affiliated with one another both linguistically and culturally. They inhabit the upper Amazon in southeastern Peru, living in the rainforest and along the Río Urubamba and Río Madre de Dios, along with its subsequent tributaries. They have occupied this region since before the arrival of Europeans and did so peaceably with little conflict with neighboring groups. This lifestyle continued until the early 1900s, when the rubber boom and slave trade hit the region, causing members to trade their own people into slavery (much like the West African groups during the trans-Atlantic slave trade) for foreign commodities. Even after the rubber boom subsided, the interregional slave trade continued due to the demand by colonists for human labor. These social atrocities continued until the 1960s when the Peruvian police and other institutions became involved, effectively ending the slave trade and restoring the Machiguenga to their previous, peaceful lifestyle. Currently, the Machiguenga retain most of their traditional cultural practices despite being exposed to the temptations the modern world has to offer. With the exception of some modern medicines, clothing and metal tools, they have remained relatively rooted in their ways.

*1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors:* Due to their regional isolation, outside contact was relatively limited with the exception of trade before the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Catholic missionaries were relatively ineffective in the area due to its inaccessibility, and while the Machiguenga maintained relationships with neighboring groups for trading purposes, there was and has been very little outside influence on their way of life.

*1.6 Ecology:* The Machiguenga inhabit the tropical rainforest region on the eastern foothills of the Andean Mountains. Typical to this climate, there is significant rainfall throughout the wet season and still rainfall even in the 'dry' season. The terrain makes this region very difficult to navigate, as well as almost impossible to inhabit without centuries of experience of living and adapting to this inhospitable environment.

*1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density:* The Machiguenga are estimated from anywhere between 7,000 to 12,000 individuals, recorded recently in 2000 as 10,100 individuals. The population is currently recovering and increasing after the setbacks that European contact caused (spread of diseases and casualties from the rubber boom). The Machiguenga live in settlements from about seven to twenty five individuals, consisting of anywhere between one to four families. These settlements live relatively isolated from other segments of the Machiguenga, mainly to stave off the competition for resources. In recent years, missionaries and anthropologists have been able to sway some families out of isolation for educational purposes, forming communities ranging from 100 to 250 individuals in order to facilitate school communities.

### 2. Economy

*2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s):* They rely on manioc, maize, yams and plantains as their main carbohydrate staples.

*2.2 Main protein-lipid sources:* Their main sources of protein are fish, but they also hunt monkeys, peccaries, tapirs and certain types of birds.

*2.3 Weapons (bow and arrow, blowguns?):* Traditional hunting is done with bow and arrows, while more recently some individuals have acquired shotguns, which give them the obvious edge (they curb resentment by sharing their catch with the rest of the community). They also use barbasco poisoning when fishing.

*2.4 Food storage:* No evidence

*2.5 Sexual division of production:* Women do part of the horticultural work, as far as tending to certain crops like yams, as well as child rearing and spinning/weaving. Men do all the hunting and a majority of the fishing, but are also integral parts in the child rearing process as well as agricultural activities as well.

*2.6 Land tenure:* Land isn't owned or divided, but rather men make public announcements to stake a claim on a piece of land they plan to cultivate. After they have used the land to its extent or they move, the land becomes available for anyone else who wants to use it.

*2.7 Ceramics:* No presence of ceramics or pottery.

*2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:* Sharing within the local communities is common, especially to facilitate healthy relationships and avoid jealousy or favoritism.

*2.9 Food taboos:* Food taboos are a part of Machiguenga life, for example, pregnant woman can only eat fish and yuca because of the belief the eating any other meat will cause the unborn child will become like that animal.

*2.10 Canoes/watercraft?:*

### 3. Anthropometry

*3.1 Mean adult height (m and f):* No exact measurements, men and women both are generally short.

*3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f):* No exact measurements again, but it is documented that obesity and other diseases are nonexistent in the Machiguenga, all members are a healthy weight due to dietary restrictions.

### 4. Life History, mating, marriage

*4.1 Age at menarche (f):*

*4.2 Age at first birth (m and f):*

- 4.3 *Completed family size (m and f)*: Family sizes are generally from five to seven individuals, which makes up a nuclear family.
- 4.4 *Inter-birth-interval (f)*: Undocumented.
- 4.5 *Age first marriage (m and f)*: Many marriages are arranged from an early age, however marriages generally occur after puberty.
- 4.6 *Proportion of marriages ending in divorce*: Since there is no real ceremony of marriage, the rate of divorce is hard to measure. Sometimes couples split up for various reasons and migrate to different villages.
- 4.7 *Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously*: A very small amount of marriages are polygynous, usually resulting in the wives to live separately and hold their respective households accordingly.
- 4.8 *Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?*: There is the presence of bride-service among marriage relationships
- 4.9 *Inheritance patterns*: Since the Machiguenga don't own land or a significant amount of material items (items that can't be readily made by any other member at any given time), most of individual's belongings are burned upon their death. There have been exceptions, however, of items like an ax or mirror that may be passed down to offspring because of value.
- 4.10 *Parent-offspring interactions and conflict*: Conflicts occur within households and communities, especially in the presence of alcohol. Usually fights are verbal and only mildly physical, resulting in an individual to leave the community briefly or permanently.
- 4.11 *Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals*: No evidence, most likely a taboo.
- 4.12 *Pattern of exogamy (endogamy)*: Exogamy with foreign nations is highly uncommon, endogamy within the Machiguenga is definitely favored and expected. Individuals have been known to move independently from village to village in search of a mate.
- 4.13 *What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these "other fathers" recognized?*:
- 4.14 *What is the belief of the mother's role in procreation exactly? (e.g., "receptacle in which fetus grows")*:
- 4.15 *Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)?*:
- 4.16 *Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape*: A very small percentage, if it occurs the member is excommunicated from the group. The avoidance of these situations is controlled and quite effective by exposure to 'shaming' and proper socialization early in Machiguenga life.
- 4.17 *Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin)*: The Machiguenga generally engage in cross cousin marriages in order to keep family connections tight via intermarriage.
- 4.18 *Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?*:
- 4.19 *Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring*: No evidence
- 4.20 *If mother dies, whose raises children?*: Due to the close nature of nuclear families, children are
- 4.21 *Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females*:
- 4.22 *Evidence for couvades*: No evidence
- 4.23 *Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older)*:
- 4.24 *Kin avoidance and respect?*: Kin respect and avoidance varies by family and their private issues.
- 4.24 *Joking relationships?*:
- 4.25 *Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations*: Machiguenga patterns of descent are matrilineal, this is so the mother can remain close to her daughter when her first child is born.
- 4.26 *Incest avoidance rules*: Incest is considered taboo and is kept in check by social mechanisms like gossip and shaming. In extreme cases individuals who commit incest taboo are excommunicated from the group.
- 4.27 *Is there a formal marriage ceremony?*: Marriage is defined when each partner acknowledges its partners parents as in-laws, and when the man assumes the bride-service responsibilities.
- 4.28 *In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name?*: No evidence
- 4.29 *Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?)*: Marriage is preferred to stay within the community.
- 4.30 *Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)?*: Traditionally marriages are arranged from a very young age, however, in recent larger scale communities some girls haven't married until after puberty.
- 4.31 *Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who?*: Possibly minor conflicts, however no evidence of serious ramifications.

## **Warfare/homicide**

- 4.14 *Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare*: Little to none, no real warfare among the Machiguenga.
- 4.15 *Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death*: Violent death among the Machiguenga is very rare, murder is considered taboo and in the case of violent outbreaks the individual is cast out of society.
- 4.16 *Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing*: No solid evidence
- 4.17 *Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations)*: Relatively peaceful, relations with neighboring tribes consist of trade.
- 4.18 *Cannibalism?*: No record of cannibalism, food taboos against it.

## **5. Socio-Political organization and interaction**

- 5.1 *Mean local residential (village) group size*: Anywhere from one nuclear family consisting of about 5-7 individuals to multiple nuclear families living together in groups of up to twenty or thirty individuals.
- 5.2 *Mobility pattern: (seasonality)*: Nuclear families migrate at will, sometimes breaking off from a small group and moving independently or moving as a unit to a new location for various reasons (resources, outside threats)
- 5.3 *Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes)*: Traditionally, the Machiguenga recognized small-scale political hierarchies in the form of shamans or certain men leading loosely grouped households, however, the strongest and most powerful political unit in the Machiguenga is on a family level. The only evidence to the contrary is the group of individuals created to deal with issues pertaining to the outside world (oil exploration, etc).

- 5.4 *Post-marital residence*: Most couple stay within the bride's mothers family in order for the matriarch to be present when her daughter has her first child. After that, the new family has the freedom to migrate where they please.
- 5.5 *Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense)*: Since the Machiguenga are peaceful peoples, there is little to no evidence of tribal warfare. And since there is no land ownership, no battles over territory exist.
- 5.6 *Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex)*: Women and men have varying tasks in day-to-day activities as previously mentioned. Children, at the age of 5, begin to take on their respective gender roles and are expected to begin learning/exhibiting adult behaviors.
- 5.7 *Special friendships/joking relationships*:
- 5.8 *Village and house organization*: Villages generally consist of anywhere between one to four families, ranging in the number of individuals, living in a house constructed of wood and palm leaf roofs. Traditionally these structures were low and oval-shaped but have recently evolved into rectangular and built on raised palm wood floors with a garden.
- 5.9 *Specialized village structures (mens' houses)*: Certain areas where women go during menses or at the beginning of puberty (women's houses) in order to stay away from men.
- 5.10 *Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?*
- 5.11 *Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc.*: Socially, the Machiguenga are organized in bilateral lineages consisting in clans or tight-knit families. These small groups consist of nuclear families that are nomadic in nature and have been known to separate from their group and go off on their own.
- 5.12 *Trade*: Trade is very important to the Machiguenga. For living in such an isolated area, their trade relationships pre-date the Spanish Conquest. Their trade relationship with the Incans has been very important historically, as well as their relationships with the modern world via schoolteachers and missionaries to barter goods such as steel axes, aluminum pots and clothing.
- 5.13 *Indications of social hierarchies?*: Not present, no headman or clan leader. Families are self-governing and self-sufficient.

## 6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

- 6 *Time allocation to RCR*: A lot of everyday activities are tied, however loosely, to religious/spiritual practices or beliefs.
- 6.1 *Specialization (shamans and medicine)*: Presence of shamans who practice sorcery and use/cure with herbal medicines, as well as the use of hallucinogenic drugs used to connect with the spirit world.
- 6.2 *Stimulants*: Hallucinogenic drugs like ayahuasca, which allow the spirit to leave the body and connect with the spirit world, or land of the Unseen Ones, which allows the purveyance of divine prophecies and spiritual directions.
- 6.3 *Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal)*: Ceremonial rituals are a minor part of their spirituality and are usually performed privately within nuclear families.
- 6.4 *Other rituals*: Pilgrimages to certain sites that the Machiguenga hold sacred.
- 6.5 *Myths (Creation)*: They believe that a Creator built up a great mound of mud that became the Earth, that a "trickster" created things in the world like biting flies and other annoyances. They believe that animals are descendants of humans who have done wrong in the past (violated taboos) and are very much ruled by a spirit.
- 6.6 *Cultural material (art, music, games)*: Presence of festivals with music, food, beer and dancing. Specifically good at singing.
- 6.7 *Sex differences in RCR*: Women are seen as vulnerable to evil spirits by way of demonic impregnation, men are vulnerable to evil spirits as well.
- 6.8 *Missionary effect*: Relatively unaffected by missionary presence, they still practice their native religion.
- 6.9 *RCR revival*:
- 6.10 *Death and afterlife beliefs*: Belief that the soul lives on after death (either natural or supernatural), if not eaten by dangerous spirits in its journey to the cosmos after death.
- 6.11 *Taboo of naming dead people?*: No evidence
- 6.12 *Is there teknonymy?*: No evidence
- 6.13 *Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.)*: Belief that animals have spirit rulers; once you kill the animal you have to appease its spirit ruler. No belief in ancestor worship, but a very strong belief in magic and sorcery as well as evil or demonic spirits.

## 7. Adornment

- 7.1 *Body paint*: Occasional decoration of face paint with achiote, a paste.
- 7.2 *Piercings*: Some Machiguengan women wear small silver nosepieces.
- 7.3 *Haircut*: No specific evidence, generally kept short.
- 7.4 *Scarification*: No evidence
- 7.5 *Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.)*: They wear 'cushmas' which was undoubtedly a borrowed idea from their trade partners the Incans.
- 7.6 *Ceremonial/Ritual adornment*: The use of achiote on the face in certain celebratory circumstances.
- 7.7 *Sex differences in adornment*: Women and men generally both wear cushmas, however the exposure of breasts or genitals isn't seen as inappropriate like in modern society.
- 7.8 *Missionary effect*: Most of the missionary influence is based in the introduction of foreign goods and the establishment of education in larger-scale communities. They mainly are responsible for bringing in clothes and affecting the Machiguengan garb.
- 7.9 *Cultural revival in adornment*:

## 8. Kinship systems

- 8.1 *Sibling classification system*:
- 8.2 *Sororate, levirate*:

8.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.): Presence of the Dravidian kinship system.

**9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):**

**Numbered references**

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