

## 1. Description

### 1.1 Name of society, language, and language family:

The Paresi represent one of the southernmost tribes of the Arawakan language family. Their first language is called Parecis, though most of them are also fluent in Portuguese. The Paresi are also known as: the Ariti, Haliti, Parecí, Paressi, and Pareti. (1)

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

639-3 (2)

### 1.3 Location (latitude/longitude):

The Paresi live on several reservations in the state of Mato Grosso, in Southern Brazil (2). These reservations are located between the Parecí and Juruena rivers, and are bordered by the Serra dos Parecis on the west (1). There are 15-20 Villages within the reservations (2). The Paresi traditionally lived around a lat of 15 degrees S., long. 59 degrees W. (3).

### 1.4 Brief history:

The name "Paresí" is ascribed to three groups: The Waimare, the Kashiniti, and the Kozarene. They all share a similar language and culture, and live in close areas. There is much intermarriage between the groups. (1)

Traditionally, the Paresi were agriculturists. They raised maize, beans, sweet potatoes, pineapples, sweet and bitter manioc, yams, tobacco, and cotton. They also gather cashews, jaboticaba, palm nuts, wild pineapples, and other wild plant foods. The Paresi hunted the savannas upon which they lived, and used dogs, fires, and bows and arrows. They hunted deer, rheas, and other animals. Fishing was not a very reliable resource in the region they inhabited. The Paresi are also one of the few South American Indians to domesticate bees. (1)

In the past, Paresi men went naked except for a penis sheath; women wore a short cotton skirt. Both sexes were tattooed, and were great feather workers. Feathers would be thrust through the pierced septum of the nose. (3)

Ancient Paresi villages consisted of ten to thirty small, round or oval houses. The Paresi rarely canoed, preferring river crossings on bridges or makeshift rafts. Each village was autonomous, governed by a chief and a shaman, who were often the same person. The Paresi are animists, and believe their surrounding woods and rivers to be inhabited by spirits. (1)

### 1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors:

The Paresi were first noticed in the early eighteenth century by gold miners. The mining of gold brought many gold seekers and slavers into Paresi land. The Paresi population is estimated to have been around 10,000 to 20,000 at this time. Many of the Paresi were enslaved to work the mines, and the tribe was decimated and driven almost to extinction. By the middle of the nineteenth century, most of the remaining Paresi had retreated into the mountains.

In 1908 Colonel Cândido Rondon, who oversaw the laying of a telegraph line west from Cuiabá, convinced the Paresi to move closer to the telegraph line and to set up schools. He trained some Paresi to work on maintenance of the line.

In the 60's, a highway following the route of the telegraph line was built, which opened the area up for development. The highway runs along the southern border of a Paresi reservation and some Paresi live beside the highway selling homemade rubber balls and rhea feather dusters to passing drivers.

The region north of the highway consisted of poor land without water, and several Paresi villages had been allotted that land. Several Paresi villages were situated on better land, south of the hwy. Acceding to Paresi demands for recognition of this, the government agreed to establish three additional small reservations to protect villages both north and south of the highway. (1)

### 1.6 Ecology:

Paresi habitat is upland savanna with forests along the rivers and streams. The rivers are very deep and clear, making fishing more difficult. The Parecí reservations are located between the Juruena and Tapajós rivers and the Serra dos Parecis, border them on the west. (1)

### 1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density

According to everyculture.com, Current Paresi population size is anywhere between 1,290 and 2,000 of which about 640 live on reservations. There are between 15-20 known Paresi villages in reservations in the state of Mato Grosso. A modern Paresi village consists of one to two communal houses, sheltering up to six families each. (1)

According to the Handbook of South American Indians, by 1937 there remained only about 150 Paressi. (3)

## 2. Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s):

maize, beans, sweet potatoes, sweet and bitter manioc, and yams (1) and pineapple (3)

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources:

Traditionally they hunted deer, rheas, and other animals. Today they mostly raise dogs, ducks, pigs, and chickens. (1)

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?:

The Paresi used bows and arrows in their hunting, as well as dogs, camouflage hunting blinds, fires to draw game, pitfalls and decoys. (1)

2.4 Food storage: Gourds of all sizes are used to store goods. (3)

2.5 Sexual division of production:

2.6 Land tenure:

2.7 Ceramics:

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:

2.9 Food taboos:

Until an infant's naval cord drops off after birth, both parents remain at home. During this seclusion, the father can ONLY eat manioc wafers (3)

2.10 Canoes/watercraft? Paresi did not often use canoes, instead using makeshift rafts or building bridges over river crossings. Most travel between villages was by road. (1)

**3. Anthropometry**

3.1 Mean adult height (m and f):

3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f):

**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):

4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f):

4.5 Age first marriage (m and f):

4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce:

4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously: Traditionally the Paresi were sororal polygynasts but are now mostly monogamous. (1)

4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?: Marriage was considered sealed after the bridegroom had made a small present to his brides parents (3).

4.9 Inheritance patterns: Primogeniture- first-borne inheritance (excluding females). (1)

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict: Sometimes a grown man reared a girl from childhood and married her at puberty. (1)

4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy): Both accepted and there was/is much intermarriage between the Waimare, the Kashiniti, and the Kozarene (1)

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

- 4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin)
- 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
- 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:
- 4.26 Incest avoidance rules
- 4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony?
- 4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name?

When a child is about three years old, it receives the name of one of its grandparents. (3)

- 4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?)
- 4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)? Most marriages arranged when children are young. (1)
- 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:
- 4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations):
- 4.18 Cannibalism?

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

- 5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size:
- 5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality):
- 5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes):

Each village was autonomous, governed by a chief and a shaman, who were often the same person. Chieftainship was determined through primogeniture (first-borne inheritance). In the past there were chiefs who probably controlled more than one village. (1)

5.4 Post marital residence: Only chiefs live matrilocally (with wife's family). (1)

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:

5.9 Specialized village structures (men's' houses):

Traditionally, Paresi villages had men's huts and a ceremonial hut. Today, most villages consist of only one or two communal houses, with an average of six families each. (1)

The Paresi believed that:

“A serpent spirit and his wife were worshiped in the men's hut, where the serpent spirit was represented by a trumpet and his wife by a flute. There, where the men danced and drank, women were forbidden to enter. The Paresi men drank beer to assuage the serpent spirit's thirst and ate large quantities of meat to satisfy his hunger.” (1)

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere? Hammocks suspended from rafters. (1)

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

5.12 Trade:

Inhabitants of different Paresi villages visit one another frequently and maintain active commercial relations. The whole territory of these Indians is crisscrossed by paths leading from one settlement to another (3).

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies?

Heads of families control a class of dependents that includes many adopted captive boys. These servants open clearings, carry wood to the village, build houses, and give their masters all their earnings (3).

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

6 Time allocation to RCR:

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine):

Shamans treat illness and disease using medicinal plants and by blowing tobacco smoke on their patients. Shamans are reputed to be able to fly. Sorcerers cause illness by throwing poison at their victims, or by putting it in their drinks. (1)

6.2 Stimulants: Manioc or chicha beer. (3)

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

Birth: Customary for a woman during childbirth to kneel on the ground and to lean against another woman, usually her mother. Until the infant's naval cord drops off, both parents remain at home. During this seclusion, the father can ONLY eat manioc wafers (3).

Death: Traditionally, relatives of the deceased remained in their homes for 6 days and fasted. On the seventh day, they rubbed their bodies with a plant juice mixed with urucu. The house of the dead was abandoned temporarily or permanently (3)

6.4 Other rituals:

Ceremonial dancing- Men carrying pipes and trumpets circle slowly round and round stamping their feet, to make there rattles clatter. Dances are lead by the chiefs. (1)

#### 6.5 Myths (Creation): The Paresi origin myth goes:

the Paresi emerged from a rock near a place where a natural rock bridge arches over a tributary of the Rio Sangue. Two serpents engendered them, along with many animals and birds, within this rock. The first Paresi remained there, dancing with the sacred flutes, until a little bird flew out from a crevice in the rock, returning later to tell the people how beautiful it was outside. Then Wazaré, the culture hero, persuaded different birds and animals successively to enlarge the crevice until all the people could venture forth. Wazaré named the headwaters of the rivers and designated them as habitats for the different groups. When the Paresi first came out from the rock, they were dark and hairy and had tails; like ducks, they had webs between their fingers and toes. Soon after emerging, however, they cut off their tails, plucked out their body hair, and severed the webs, assuming their present form. (1)

#### 6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games):

The Paresi make baskets and spin and weave cotton for bags, baby slings, and hammocks, as well as armbands and belts.

They used rubber to make cylindrical bands that women wore on their legs and to make rubber balls with which they played a game where two teams butt the ball back and forth with their heads only until one team fails to return the ball, instead letting it fall to the ground. Theodore Roosevelt described and photographed this game in 1915 when he accompanied Rondon on an expedition through Mato Grosso, visiting Paresi villages

The Paresi also make different musical instruments, many of which are considered sacred—especially the great flutes, which are kept in the ceremonial hut and which women are forbidden to see.

Traditionally, the Paresi excelled at feather work. The women wore beautiful feather aprons and feather headdresses; feathers were also thrust through the pierced septum of the nose. (1)

#### 6.7 Sex differences in RCR:

Ceremonial dances are restricted to men; women may not even see the performance. Women may however, join profane dances (3).

#### 6.8 Missionary effect:

An addition to the Paresi creation myth is that:

There was one (original Paresi), called Kuytioré, who did not pluck out all his body hair. This man was rich: he had cattle, horses, and steel tools that he offered to share with Wazaré. This angered Wazaré, who said, "I don't want cattle because they will dirty the space in front of my children's houses. I don't want tools because they are poisonous and will kill my children. You go away across the Stone Bridge and don't mix with the Paresi." Kuytioré went far away and stayed with the Whites, and he had many children. (1)

#### 6.9 RCR revival:

#### 6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs:

The dead are buried in their huts with their possessions. The souls of the dead have many obstacles to face on their way to the sky, including a large fire and a dangerous doglike creature. If they reached the sky, a supernatural being and his three brothers receive them. (1)

#### 6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?

#### 6.12 Is there teknonymy?

6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.) The Paresi are animists and believe that the woods and rivers are inhabited by spirits. (1)

### 7. Adornment

7.1 Body paint: Traditionally, both sexes would be tattooed (women did the tattooing) but the custom has since largely been abandoned. The Paresi paint themselves with gipia and urucu. (3)

7.2 Piercings: Traditionally, feathers were thrust through the pierced septum of the nose (1). Sticks were poked through the earlobes (3).

7.3 Haircut: men wore a tonsure in ancient days. Today they cut their hair around their head. (3)

7.4 Scarification:

7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.): Traditionally, feathers were thrust through the pierced septum of the nose (1). Both men and women wore heavy beaded necklaces across their chests. Paresi would sometimes wear feather headdresses (3).

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment:

7.7 Sex differences in adornment:

Men: formerly, men went naked but tucked their penis under a few cotton strings threaded with beads and tied around the waste (3)

Women: traditionally wore short, cylindrical cotton skirts, which "scarcely covered their lower abdomen." (3)

Today, both men and women dress like rural Brazilians (3)

~ Both sexes also wore garters and anklets, the men's of cotton, the women's often of rubber. They both wore many bracelets and heavy bead necklaces across their chests. (3)

7.8 Missionary effect: The custom of tattoos has been pretty much abandoned, as have feather piercings. (1)

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.):

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

The Paresi are among few Indian tribes that domesticate bees. They put swarms of Jati bees in a gourd with two openings, one for the bees and the other, sealed with wax, for removing the combs. (3)

## **Numbered references**

1. <http://www.everyculture.com/South-America/Paresi.html>
2. [http://www.ethnologue.com/show\\_language.asp?code=pab](http://www.ethnologue.com/show_language.asp?code=pab)
3. Steward, Julian Haynes. "The Paresi." Handbook of South American Indians. Vol. 3. Washington: U.S. G.P.O., 1946. 349-60. Print.