

1. Description

1.1 Name of society, language, and language family: (B)

Achagua/Arawak language family (alternative names: Ajagua, Xagua)

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

aca

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude):

4.42/-72.25

1.4 Brief history: (A)

Primarily a farming community but hunting is an important food source as well. They were contacted in the 1630's by Jesuit missionaries but were soon confronted by Spanish settlers, which captured the Achagua and brought them into settlements to use as regular laborers.

1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors: (A)

The majority of the Achagua people has converted to Christianity and has completely accustomed themselves into modern society. The Gahibo tribe while once a trading partner aided in the demise of Achagua populations by raiding and capturing them for slave trade with Spanish colonizers.

1.6 Ecology:

1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, and density: (A)/(B)

Roughly 30 thousand at contact but now there are fewer than 300 decedents left. The villages were made up of 700 people (although this number was recorded when their populations were already in decline)

2. Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s): (A)/(G)

Bitter manioc, beans, and maize

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources: (F)

Fish

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?: (A)

Poisoned arrows

2.4 Food storage:

2.5 Sexual division of production:

2.6 Land tenure: (A)

Farming bitter manioc, beans, and maize

2.7 Ceramics: (E)

Although I couldn't find detailed information it seems that they made dishes and serving vessels for ceremonial rituals out of the clay from the rivers.

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:

2.9 Food taboos:

2.10 Canoes/watercraft? (A)

The Achagua traded up and down the Meta and the Orinoco rivers so canoe-like watercraft were completely necessary for their survival.

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): (C)

It was normal for a man to have 3 to 4 wives

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: (A)/(C)

Majority of men have three to four wives all of equal status in marital bond.

4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?: (G)

There was no mention of dowry (although it could have existed) however women were often used as trading items between tribes such as the Carib.

4.9 Inheritance patterns:

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict:

4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals:

They have an acceptance of homosexual relationships although they are only sexual interactions with no marriage bonds.

4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy):

Marriage was preferred within their language family; however there is evidence that they often intermarried with various tribes in their trading partnerships such as Carib.

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) (C)

There were no laws against incest relationships however its believed that cousins did marry but it was not the preferred union.

4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms? (C)

No, women were often traded amongst tribes and men were likely to have up to three or four wives.

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? (C)

There were no laws against incest relationships however it’s believed that cousins did marry but it was not the preferred union.

4.24 Joking relationships?

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

4.26 Incest avoidance rules

There were no laws preventing incest relationships but culturally it was relatively avoided

4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony? (C)

Yes, the Achagua recognize formal marriages but usually there are multiple wives.

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

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

Marriage was preferred within their language family; however there is evidence that they often intermarried with various tribes in their trading partnerships such as Carib.

4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)?

4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who:

Warfare/homicide

4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare: (A)

Achagua tribes were relatively peaceful until the Gahibo tribe became violent and began raiding their villages but the Achagua met them with only unsuccessful resistance.

4.15 Out-group vs in-group cause of violent death: (A)

Inner group violence was uncommon but there was outer group violence but only when threatened

4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing: (A)/(G)

Women often practice infanticide in the killing of the first-born daughter

4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations): (A)

Relationships with Gahibo tribe transformed from friendly trade partners to a violent relationship when the Gahibo tribe became involved in the slave trade.

4.18 Cannibalism?

5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size: (A)

Original population was large and the village consisted of approximately 30 thousand people

5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality): (D)

Sedentary but trade increased during the dry season so they moved more up and down the rivers.

5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes): (A)

Chiefdom

5.4 Post-marital residence: (C)

Women move to accommodate the man usually with multiple wives

5.5 Territoriality? (Defined boundaries, active defense): (A)

At time of conquest their territory consisted of what are today the states of Bolivar, Gaurico, and Barinas. Their society revolved around the confluence of the Meta and the Orinoco rivers. They defended their territory when confronted although they have an overall gentle disposition.

5.6 Social interaction divisions? (age and sex): (A)

Men had their own hut for relaxation and social interactions that women were not welcome in.

5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships:

5.8 Village and house organization: (A)

The village was large and consisted of a complex commercial network and its own currency (strands of shells) There were 700 inhabitants in the village contacted by Jesuits in 1630’s with their houses placed closely together, usually only a few feet apart. Their

houses were large circular structures that housed multiple families. There were up to 20 provinces of the Achagua, the villages were however close together, usually only a few hours apart.

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

The villages consist of a men's house for relaxation and ceremonials.

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?

5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc: (A)

There are up to 20 provinces of the Achagua group; each village was only a few hours away from one another and they maintained peaceful relationships.

5.12 Trade: (A)

Historically had a strong trading relationship with Gahibo tribe until its involvement with the slave trade, which led to the Gahibo raiding Achagua tribes. They also had extensive trade relations with tribes of the Carib language family and often obtained European steel tools through these trades.

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies? (A)

There are mentions of Achagua chiefs and nobles and some indications that paramount chiefs may have existed. There is also literature-containing terms such as master, chief, chieftainess, servant, slave, slavery, vassal, vasallag alluding to the presence of social hierarchy. Wealth distinctions existed and were displayed primarily by the number of strings of shell beads (quiripa) an individual could wear at one time and the size of the beads on these strings.

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): (A)

At birth they rub infants (male and female) with bituminous ointment to hinder hair growth.

6.4 Other rituals:

6.5 Myths (Creation): (A)

Within the Achagua there were multiple groups and therefore multiple creation myths that they used as a distinguishing factor amongst themselves. In certain groups they believe that their origins were from tree trunks and called themselves Aycubaverrenais; men and women came from different types of trees. In other groups they believe that they are the children of the river, calling themselves Uni-verrenais to distinguish from the tree-trunk groups.

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games):

6.7 Sex differences in RCR:

6.8 Missionary effect: (A)

Contacted in 1630's by the Jesuits who worked hard to stop infanticide practices and convert them to Christianity. However due to extensive spread of disease it eventually wiped the population out. Although those left have been completely assimilated into society and their primary religion is now Christianity.

6.9 RCR revival:

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs:

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?

6.12 Is there teknonymy?

6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.) (C)

Believed in a higher being, called Cuaygerri, who lived in the heavens but also worshiped other deities that were based around nature; such as a god of the lake,

7. Adornment

7.1 Body paint:

Multicolor body paint

7.2 Piercings:

7.3 Haircut: (F)

No hair (including eyebrows) due to ointment rubbed on infants

7.4 Scarification:

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

They wore strings of shells as a way of showing status and wealth. The shells were small and disk-like and were used extensively in trade.

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment:

7.7 Sex differences in adornment:

7.8 Missionary effect: (A)

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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):

Numbered references

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