

## **Arawak Questionnaire**

### **Amuesha**

#### **1. Description**

1.1 Name of society, language, and language family: Amuesha/Yanesha' society, Amuesha/Yanesha' language, it is a member of the Arawak language family. The Amuesha have various names for their people and language; however Yanesha' is the most commonly used term (1, pg 1).

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

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude): (-10,5/-75,42), located near the city of Oxapampa, Perú in el Departamento de Pasco (Pasco Region) They are also located in the regions of Junín and Huánuco (1, pg 44).

1.4 Brief history: The Amuesha language forms a branch of the larger Arawak language family that spans across the South American continent. While it is still unclear exactly how the Amuesha language spread across such a vast distance (from the Caribbean to the Andes) linguistic evidence shows that although the Yanesha' language is first and foremost a grammatically Arawak language, it also includes vocabulary of an ancient Incan language as well as another unknown language. This shows before the Europeans came, the Yanesha' were involved in trade with the nearby Incan mountain people and other nearby groups. This is a common trait for Arawak speakers (1, pg 46).

First contact with Europeans was possibly with Fr. Jerónimo Jiménez in 1635, since that date the Amuesha were exposed to European peoples, diseases and religion. Not long after, missionaries were established and they had a presence among the Amuesha from the mid-1600's until 1749. They are also responsible for the cultural and language loss of the Yanesha' people. The SIL (Summer Institute of Linguistics) made contact with many groups of Amuesha in order to translate the Bible and to proselytize the people; however in doing so they began a trend in which the people of the tribes began to lose their language and their culture. Since the beginning of colonization of Amuesha lands, the story of their people has played out similarly to other Amazonian tribes. The forests have been cut down, their lifestyle has been westernized and much of their traditional beliefs have been replaced at least in part by Christianity. In 1891, much of the Oxapampa Valley, traditional Amueshan lands, were given to German colonists in order to 'civilize' to civilize the Yanesha'. However what eventually occurred was that the Amuesha were expelled from their lands, only to return later in a severe state of poverty that endures to this day (2, pg 3-8).

Nowadays the Yanesha' language is dying out and is spoken less and less by each new generation. Many traditions such as the ponapnora, the coming of age ritual for women, are becoming less common due to the social situation of the tribes. Most Yanesha' currently live in a system of perpetual poverty and fail to make significant gains into their forced inclusion into the capitalist Peruvian economy (1, 12).

1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/ powerful neighbors: Early missionary presence among the Amuesha was primarily dominated by the Franciscans. Their presence in the central montaña region lasted until their expulsion by Atahualpa in 1742. For the next 139 years, the people of that valley, the Amuesha and the Campa, lived without foreign government influence. However, in 1881, the Franciscan Order returned to the valley and founded new missions such as Nuestra Señora de la Asunción de Quillazu located in the Quillazu Valley near Oxapampa. Since then, the Amuesha people have been under the influence of various missionary groups in addition to the Franciscan Order. The missionaries' records serve as our earliest historical accounts of the Amuesha culture and The Yanesha' have lost many of their cultural traditions by their integration into the dominant Peruvian culture and society. While many Yanesha' traditions are still observed, they are becoming increasingly rare. The Amuesha children are educated in the Spanish language; however many children attend bilingual Amuesha/Spanish schools. The Amuesha people are considered fully bilingual; using the Yanesha' language as a familiar form of communication and Spanish in formal or public situations; however many children in the most recent generations do not speak the Yanesha' language. The influence of Christian missionaries has had a multitude of effects aside from culture loss. Adventists have influenced their Amueshan followers to shun modern medicine such as vaccines. (4, 113)

1.6 Ecology: Tropical rainforest at the foot of the Andes Mountains, situated at approximately 1,800 meters above sea-level. The climate is very humid and semi-warm. The annual rainfall averages above 2,000 mm and the average temperature is 19°C (66.2°F). (4, 113)

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

In 2000, the population size of Yanesha' speakers was 9,830 and the ethnic population was 10,000 (3). There are 47 small groups that make up the Yanesha' population. They vary in size from two to over 100 families. The Peruvian government recognizes twenty-eight of these communities (1,pg 35).

#### **2. Economy**

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s): They have a carbohydrate-rich diet; manioc (yuca/cassava) is consumed daily and arracacha is also common (4,pg 116).

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources: The Amuesha diet consisted of limited protein-lipid sources. Meat is rarely eaten, proteins and lipids are acquired via the consumption of nuts (notably peanuts) and beans (4,pg 117).

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?:

2.4 Food storage:

2.5 Sexual division of production: The women work in the chacras or in ceramics workshops. The men typically work on haciendas, often located far from their families. (4,pg 115)

2.6 Land tenure: Although before colonization, the Amuesha lived off of the land without risk of starvation. Nowadays, the Yanesha' survive by slash and burn subsistence farming. They grow coffee on small plots for small profit and subsist from growing manioc, bananas, corn, and rice (1,pg 36).

2.7 Ceramics: Ceramics have historically been present in the Amueshan culture even before Europeans and ceramic making continues among the women (4, 115).

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:

2.9 Food taboos: Overall there aren't many food taboos, aside from an exclusion of pork (4,pg 117).

2.10 Canoes/watercraft?

### **3. Anthropometry**

3.1 Mean adult height (m and f): N/A

3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f): N/A

### **4. Life History, mating, marriage**

4.1 Age at menarche (f):

4.2 Age at first birth (m and f): Once a girl had gone through her first menarche and had been married she was ready to begin procreation (1, 72).

4.3 Completed family size (m and f):

4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f):

4.5 Age first marriage (m and f): Traditionally, a couple would marry once the wife had her menarche and had gone through the ponapnora rite of passage, therefore the age of marriage depended on the wife's age of menarche (1, 71)

4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce: Historically divorce was practically unheard of as the husband would chose his wife as a child and raise her; thus forming a sort of father/child relationship (1, pg 72).

4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously:

4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?: Traditionally, bride service was done by the prospective husband either working for the bride's family or paying them in goods (5, 212-216).

4.9 Inheritance patterns:

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict:N/A

4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals:N/A

4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy): Traditionally a man would choose his wife among his community of descent group (5, pg 212-216).

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) It was traditionally preferred for a wife to be in the husband's same community or descent group (5, 212-216).

4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms? Traditionally, it did not appear that females enjoy sexual freedom as they are essentially raised by their husbands from childhood (5, pg 212-216).

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?

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)?

4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who:

### **Warfare/homicide**

4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare: There is no evidence of current warfare among the Amuesha people. However, historically the people have been involved in revolts against European power; most notably in 1742 when the Europeans were expelled by Atahualpa.

4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death: N/A

4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing: N/A

4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations): Historically, the Amuesha traded with neighboring people in the Andes as well as in the lowland forests. This is evident in their language which includes aspects of neighboring languages as well as in their mythology. Their oral history reflects a greater connection to the Andean world (1,pg 39).

4.18 Cannibalism? Although early reports from the Franciscans claimed that they were cannibalistic and isolated, there is no evidence of this as the Amuesha were a part of a large trading network and were stereotypically Arawakan in respect to their more open position to foreigners (1,pg 31).

## 5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

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

There are 47 small groups that make up the Yanasha' population. They vary in size from two to over 100 families. The Peruvian government recognizes twenty-eight of these communities (1,pg 35).

5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality): The men oftentimes work on haciendas far from their families and will travel from work to their homes once a week or month. Aside from that, the Yanasha' currently appear to be sedentary with permanent villages established (4,pg 115).

5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes): There is a political system among the Amuesha known as

5.4 Post marital residence: Vitrilocal (1, pg 71).

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 (mens' houses):

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere? While it is possible that they sleep in other manners, a researcher who visited the Yanasha' in 2009 writes that she slept on the floor (1, pg 10).

5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc: There is a political network of chiefs. Each village has a chief and they join together to create what is known as a rre~tornanesha' (1, 70).

5.12 Trade: The Amuesha have a long history of trade even before the arrival of Europeans and in the present day, they primarily sell sugar and coffee in order to participate in the monetary capitalist system of Peru.

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies? There are indications of social hierarchies in the manner in which Daigneault speaks of the chiefs and their power among the Yanasha' people as a governing force. (1).

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

6 Time allocation to RCR: N/A

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine): It is clear that shamans have been present in Yanasha' culture since its founding. According to tradition, one of the original founders of the Yanasha' people was known as Doctor Tomas Entazu, a shaman and tobacco specialist (2,pg 3).

6.2 Stimulants: It is evident throughout the many publications that tobacco has been a common stimulant, even since the origin of the Yanasha' people (2,pg 3).

6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal): A notable ritual is the ponapnora coming of age rite for women. This occurs after a girls menarche and involves the young woman being isolated from society for a period of time in which she learns the 'necessary' skills to be a woman, i.e. weaving and singing. This is a time for purification and the process involves fasting and bathing with medicinal plants (1, pg 78).

6.4 Other rituals:

6.5 Myths (Creation):

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games): [http://www.sil.org/americas/peru/pubs/del36.pdf\\_pages\\_13-15](http://www.sil.org/americas/peru/pubs/del36.pdf_pages_13-15)

Music: The drum, *con*, is made from balsawood and animal hide. It is played during the *elleñets* (dance of the old man) during the rainy season. It is made by men and played in accompaniment with requërcanets.

The flute, *penquëll/pencoll*, is carved by men from bamboo or deer bone. It is played by a man at home for leisure or for divination.

The result of the divination depends on the sounds the flute produces after being carved. A good sound represents a solution to the problem while an unpleasing sound represents a bad omen. Over time this practice has become less popular.

The flute made of reeds, *requërcanets/recarcaneets*, is played by men at festivals accompanied with dance. It is played by the men and the women follow behind singing a different song. While many of the traditional dances are being replaced by Peruvian dances; the requërcanets is still a popular instrument.

6.7 Sex differences in RCR:

6.8 Missionary effect:

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.)

## 7. Adornment

7.1 Body paint:

7.2 Piercings:

7.3 Haircut:

7.4 Scarification:

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

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment:

7.7 Sex differences in adornment:

7.8 Missionary effect:

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):

There are 2 dialects of the Yanesha' language reflecting two distinct regions within the Yanesha' territory. Upriver (approximately 2,000m above sea-level) and Downriver (approx. 230m above sea-level). (1, pg 39).

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