

1. Description

1.1 Name of society, language, and language family:

Kuikuro, Kuikuru, Cuicuru

Kuikuro is a language belonging to the southern Carib or Karib language family.

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

639-3 kui

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude):

(In 1954) The Kuikuru occupied a single village near the Kuluene River, a headwater tributary of the Xingu. The village was on a large tract of forest and its believed that they have been settled in that same location for the past 90 years, moving only slightly within that area for supernatural reasons a few times. (Carneiro 1973, pg. 98)
Today there are three Kuikuru villages. The largest of which being called Ipatse and has a population of over 100 Kuikuru. It is believed that there are around 500 Kuikuru today.

1.4 Brief history:

The Kuikuru claim that their origins start from the separation of a group with former members of the oti complex. This happened approximately around the mid-19th century. The Kuikuru had many encounters with “whites” in the last 160 years or so, but they remained in the area of the Xingu. However, like all indigenous peoples, they were hit by disease and their populations slowly declined over the years. However, today their seems to be somewhat of a revival and the population of the Kuikuru appears to be around 500.

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

1.6 Ecology:

Practice slash-and-burn agriculture, as well as horticulture.

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

2. Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s):

The Kuikuru grow about 11 varieties of manioc, all of which are poisonous. Manioc in the form of gruel or beiju cakes make up about 80-85 percent of the Kuikuru diet. Maize makes up about five percent of the Kuikuru diet. (Carneiro 1973, pg. 98)

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources:

Fishing accounts for around 10-15 percent of the Kuikuru diet. Hunting is of almost no importance. (Carneiro 1973, pg. 98)

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?:

2.4 Food storage:

Manioc is processed into flour and that manioc flour is stored for long periods of time in large quantities.

2.5 Sexual division of production:

Each nuclear family has their own garden and the man in that family is responsible for tending to it. The women of the family are responsible for harvesting and processing the crops, as well as preparing food.

2.6 Land tenure:

2.7 Ceramics:

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:

2.9 Food taboos:

2.10 Canoes/watercraft?

They use canoes.

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:

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

4.9 Inheritance patterns:

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict:

4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals:

4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy):

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

I found no explicit account of gang rape happening within the Kuikuru. However, because it happens in neighboring tribes, it is hinted at occurring in Kuikuru society. Gang rapes usually occur when a taboo is broken by a woman. A taboo such as looking at the secret flutes.

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

4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?

There is an extraordinary amount of extramarital sexual relations occurring between both sexes. However, because of the lack of political or ethical leader, there is no punishment for being caught. Nor is there open hostility, really. (Dole. 1956-1958)

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)?

It does not seem that marriages are arranged very frequently. It seems, for the most part, that marriages can occur freely. However, there is evidence of a family promising their daughter to another man. This does not necessarily mean that they must get married. This usually happens when the girl is too young for marriage, so the man must wait for her to reach maturation, but the man can excuse the girl from the deal, allowing her the freedom for marriage to someone else.

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:

Because there is little political control and no real leadership, in-group executions of people suspected of witchcraft or sorcery is fairly frequent. If there is a rise in death among children or people, or a rise in disasters, crop failures and accidents, it is not unheard of for one person to be accused of sorcery and eventually executed. However, his death could be avenged, which only leads to more in-group killings.

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:

Around 145 people in a village in 1954.

5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality):

During the dry season, some nuclear families may move into small garden houses near their gardens.

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

There is a degree of permissiveness in the political structure of the Kuikuru. The current “headman” is basically just a title. He has no real control or say over political, economic, or ceremonial matters. (Dole 1956-1958)

The position of headman is handed down patrilineally.

There also appears to be no system of punishment because there is no political control.

A case could be made for shamans being the most esteemed political figure in the Kuikuru. If problems do arise among the Kuikuru, a shaman is often consulted and will perform a ritual (usually tobacco related) to figure out what happened and who is responsible.

5.4 Post marital residence:

Ideally, a married couple will stay with the parents of the bride and then later with the parents of the groom, but this custom is often not carried out. There are no strict rules for post-marital residence.

Individual nuclear families would frequently change their place of residence, making the extended family organization unstable.

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:

The settlement (in 1954) comprises nine multifamily houses. (Dole 1956-1958, pg. 73)

The village set up is similar to other Xingu tribes, circular with the domed long houses on the outside and a circle patio in the middle, with paths crossing that point in the cardinal directions of north, east, south, and west.

5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses):

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?

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

5.12 Trade:

The Kuikuru have a formal system of exchange that almost mirrors an auction. One man, a helper of the headman, will announce items that are available and at what price the owner wants them for.

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies?

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

6 Time allocation to RCR:

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine):

Shamans grow and cultivate their own tobacco. This is usually used for a sort of trance ritual which the shaman himself goes through. (Wilbert 1987, pg. 106)

Dole (1964: 57-58) witnessed first hand the account of a Cuikuru shaman during a death and revivification ceremony in which tobacco is used. According to Dole, Metse, the shaman, inhaled many deep breaths of tobacco smoke as well as swallowing the smoke. Metse's limbs soon began to twitch and his breathing became labored. He swallowed with audible gulps to prevent vomiting. He continued to inhale smoke, until he grew even weaker. At a certain point, Metse "died". His body became rigid and three men lifted Metse's body into the air. During his death, Metse continued to breathe, but it was very subdued. He remained "dead" for nearly fifteen minutes, at which point his body slowly began to reawaken and become revived. He had no assistance being revived, however.

6.2 Stimulants: Tobacco

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

6.4 Other rituals:

6.5 Myths (Creation):

Like many indigenous tribes, the Kuikuru have a mythology dealing with characters designated as the sun, moon, tree, etc. They believe the time of creation was humans and non-humans could communicate with each other.

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games):

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.) Certainly shamans and shamanism play a major role in their culture, but I could not find much more beyond that.

Astronomy plays a role in the belief system of the Kurikuru.

7. Adornment

7.1 Body paint:

Annatto, genipap, white clay, charcoal and resins are used to make the pigments used both for body painting and for artefacts.

7.2 Piercings:

7.3 Haircut:

7.4 Scarification:

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

Feathers are worn on the heads of men, and on arm bands of both men and women.

The Kuikuro like other Carib groups participate in the economic and ritual system of the upper Xingu as specialists in the production of necklaces and belts made from the shells of land snails, high value goods. These adornments are often used as payment for the pottery dishes produced by the Aruak peoples of the same region.

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):

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