

Paul Stockdell

1. Description

1.1 Name of society, language, and language family: Buglé (Buglere, Bogotá, Bokota, Murire, Sabanero), Guaymí, Chibchan (1)

1.2 ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com): SAB (2)

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude): “Most live within the municipality of Santa Catalina, district of Bastimento, province of Bocas del Toro” (1).

1.4 Brief history: “The closest cultural affiliations of the Bugle are with the Muri (Sabanero) branch of the Ngawbe (Guaymí). Their precise historical relationships are uncertain. Numerous cultural similarities to the Ngawbe, especially to the eastern Murire speakers, suggest ancient historical connections, although some specific practices are explicitly considered by the Bugle to be recent borrowings from the Ngawbe. The Bugle themselves locate their ancestors to the south, on the Pacific slopes of the central cordillera, an area that is still occupied by the remaining Muri” (1).

1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors: “It is reported that school attendance is enthusiastic wherever schools have been established and that formal education has become highly valued among the Bugle” (1). “The area occupied by the Bugle is part of a more extensive area in the provinces of Chiriquí, Bocas del Toro, and Veraguas, one that the Ngawbe have for several years been attempting—without success—to persuade the government of Panama to declare an official reserve for the Ngawbe-Bugle” (1).

1.6 Ecology:

1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density: “There are an estimated 7,000 speakers of Buglere and Murire (Guaymí-Sabanero); however, many fewer—perhaps only 1,200 to 1,500—claim Bugle as their ethnic identity” (1). “The Bugle, much like the Ngawbe, live in a highly dispersed pattern, in individual houses and in small hamlets (called caseríos) consisting of two or three houses occupied by consanguineously and affinally related individuals” (1)

2. Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s): “Their most important crops for daily consumption are maize, rice, and bananas, the latter harvested green and then boiled” (1). Also they have “plantains, beans, and root crops such as sweet manioc and yams” (3, p.20).

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources: “Chickens, ducks, and pigs are raised for home consumption, but they are also sold to obtain the cash needed to purchase the manufactured items to which the Bugle have become accustomed” (1). “The hunting of deer, wild pigs, and other small animals... supplements agriculture and animal husbandry, as does fishing” (1).

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?: “bows and arrows, traps, and rifles (which are not common now and were not available in Nordenskiöld's time)” and fish with “hook and line, harpoons, nets, and at least three types of plant poisons” (1).

2.4 Food storage: “The Guaymi place less emphasis on food preservation than do other peoples in areas which have greater variations in abundance... The omnipresent cockroach makes keeping food even overnight a major problem; every tidbit must be placed in a container of some sort – commonly in packages made of folded green leaves of wild bananas. Though food spoils quickly, an attempt is made to keep surpluses after seasons of plenty. Preservation methods include smoking, drying in the sun or over fire, parching, and fermenting” (4, p. 113).

2.5 Sexual division of production: Traditionally “men cleared the land, and women cultivated it. Today, although men still clear the land, men, women, and sometimes children perform other tasks in the agricultural cycle—planting, weeding, and harvesting. Women do most of the food preparation and assume most of the child care in the household. Men hunt and fish, and women do most of the gathering. Men make the fine woven hats for which the Bugle are noted, and women make the net bags” (1).

2.6 Land tenure: “Land is owned by kin groups rather than by individuals. Individuals, both women and men, inherit use rights to the lands owned by their kin groups. Fallow land remains the property of the kin group whose members originally cleared it. Disputes may occur when others appropriate and use such fallow land, but such disputes are reported to be unusual and infrequent” (1).

2.7 Ceramics: “The manufacture of sturdy baskets of various sizes—well-made but not aesthetic in quality—is traditional. Fashioning net bags out of plant fibers is also a traditional handicraft of the Bugle. Various sizes of bags are made, using a technique of knotless netting. Some of these net bags are crude and strictly utilitarian, but others are of fine artistic quality. Although most are made for home use, many are sold. According to tradition, the Bugle manufactured ceramic vessels in the past, but they have now lost the knowledge of this craft” (1).

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns: “Trade occurs with nonindigenous communities on the Caribbean coast, with people in southern Veraguas, and with itinerant merchants who travel through the Bugle area. Rice, sometimes maize and domestic animals, and the two principal handicrafts, straw hats and net bags, are exchanged for Western manufactured goods such as metal cooking pots, cloth, and machetes” (1).

2.9 Food taboos:

2.10 Canoes/watercraft?

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): “A puberty ceremony for a girl at her first menses signals her transition to adulthood and her eligibility for marriage” (1). “Women often marry at the age of 12 or 13” (1). So first menarche between 12 and 13.

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): “Women often marry at the age of 12 or 13, whereas young men often must remain unmarried for several additional years” (1).

4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce:

4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously: “Monogamy is the most common form of marriage, although polygyny is permitted and does sometimes occur” (1). No exact numbers given.

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

4.9 Inheritance patterns: “Some personal items are buried with their owner. A house in which a person dies is abandoned. Nordenskiöld reported that all of the personal belongings that are not buried with the deceased are abandoned, along with the house. Use rights to land are inherited by both men and women” (1).

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict: “Young children are allowed to run freely through the house and are treated with considerable tolerance. Their play mimics adult activities of the appropriate sex. Children of both sexes begin to learn early by observation and by assisting their parents in the tasks for which they will be responsible as adults” (1).

4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals:

4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy): “Intermarriage has occurred with the Ngawbe, usually between Ngawbe women and Bugle men—again, supposedly because of a shortage of Bugle women. In remote areas it is reported that there are many families of Bugle with no history of intermarriage with other groups” (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) “Herrera and González also report several instances of cousin marriage, but they note that their Bugle guide and chief informant considered such marriages to be immoral” (1).
- 4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms? No; “Adultery and robbery are punishable offenses among the Bugle” (1).
- 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: No numbers given but a “shortage of women” (1) leads to intermarriage with the Ngawbe.
- 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: “Descent is presumably cognatic, as among the Ngawbe” (1).
- 4.26 Incest avoidance rules: “Herrera and González also report several instances of cousin marriage, but they note that their Bugle guide and chief informant considered such marriages to be immoral” (1)
- 4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony?: “There is no formal marriage ceremony, and none was remembered by the elderly people who were interviewed by Herrera and González in 1964” (1).
- 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)? “Marriage is by common agreement between a man and a woman. Women may accept or refuse offers of marriage. The custom of parents giving a prepubescent girl to her future husband to be raised by his family was said by the Bugle in 1964 to be no longer practiced, although Herrera and González documented two cases in their brief ethnographic survey” (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: "Guaymi social organization is based primarily on kinship networks; the local community is generally from six to eight households" (3, p. 20).

5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality):

5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes): "Nothing is known about traditional forms of political organization among the Bugle. Political authority was probably kin-group based, as among the Ngawbe" (1).

5.4 Post marital residence: "Residence after marriage may be neolocal or patrilocal the choice seems to depend on whether the young couple is prepared to be economically independent of the man's family" (1).

5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense):

5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex): "Men meet outside their own homes for social purposes, whereas it is reported that women as a group do not do so" (1).

5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships:

5.8 Village and house organization: "the local community is generally from six to eight households" (3, p. 20).

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: "No clans, lineages, or other unilineal descent groups are reported for the Bugle" (1).

5.12 Trade: "Trade occurs with nonindigenous communities on the Caribbean coast, with people in southern Veraguas, and with itinerant merchants who travel through the Bugle area. Rice, sometimes maize and domestic animals, and the two principal handicrafts, straw hats and net bags, are exchanged for Western manufactured goods such as metal cooking pots, cloth, and machetes" (1).

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies? “Social stratification does not exist, but some individuals (usually elder males) are more highly respected than others for their wisdom and decision-making abilities or for their control of special bodies of knowledge, such as traditional medicine” (1).

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

6 Time allocation to RCR:

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine): “The traditional religious practitioner among the Bugle until shortly before the 1960s was the sukia (shaman). Sukias apparently effected cures through communication with the spirit world.” “Curanderos, traditional specialists who cure with the use of plant medicines (but never through interaction with the spirit world), are still common among the Bugle. Numerous plant substances are used in curing. The curandero shows the family of a sick person how to process and administer the specific plants that are needed for a particular cure. Some plant medicines are taken internally; others are boiled in water and used to bathe the patient. Natural waters, sometimes from thermal springs, are also prescribed” (1).

6.2 Stimulants:

6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal): “A ceremony to insure a bountiful harvest is conducted, generally four days before planting, at which time large quantities of chocolate drink (made of hot water and unsweetened cocoa beans from the first harvest, ground into a paste) are drunk.” “One type of chichería traditionally takes place eight days after the birth of a child.” “A puberty ceremony for a girl at her first menses signals her transition to adulthood and her eligibility for marriage. No puberty ceremony is reported for males.”

6.4 Other rituals: “A child who was predestined to become a sukia, it was believed, refused to accept breast milk and was therefore fed chocolate water made from the first harvest of cacao or from wild cacao. Such a child was isolated and placed in the care of old women. Sukias could use their powers for both good and evil. The literature does not specify whether sukias could be women as well as men.” “After the construction of a new house, a ceremony is held to propitiate the god of lightning, in order to protect the house from lightning bolts. During the ceremony, a designated person perforates the ear lobes of the participants with a stingray spine and collects the blood as an offering. Women are not permitted in the house during this ceremony, but they do attend the chichería that immediately follows, at which there is much eating, drinking, and dancing” (1).

6.5 Myths (Creation): “According to one myth, the maize goddess initially brought the Bugle many varieties of the grain, but when the iguana and the river bird angered her one day as she was making chicha (a beer prepared from maize), she returned to the sky, taking with her the large-grained maize and leaving only the small-grained maize for the Bugle. From the sky, she continues to call to the maize, which accounts for why there are sometimes ears with no grains and ears with bare tips” (1).

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games): “Straw hats and net bags are decorated with geometric designs. Some of the designs on the net bags are said to represent birds and animals.” “Singing, dancing,

and the playing of traditional musical instruments occur during chicherías and also during the female puberty ceremonies.” “The balsería, or stick game, is played among the Bugle, but there is some disagreement as to whether it is a traditional ceremony or a result of recent Ngawbe influence” (1).

6.7 Sex differences in RCR: During the new house ceremony women are not permitted in the house during the ceremony and only women have ceremonies for puberty.

6.8 Missionary effect: “Today the Bugle accept aspects of Christianity” (1).

6.9 RCR revival:

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs: “Details of any belief in an afterlife other than the Christian heaven are unknown. The fact that individuals are buried with some of their personal belongings may be indicative of a belief that utilitarian items will be needed in an afterworld” (1). “Some personal items are buried with their owner. A house in which a person dies is abandoned. Nordenskiöld reported that all of the personal belongings that are not buried with the deceased are abandoned, along with the house” (1). “Some form of funeral ceremony occurs, but no details are available” (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.)

7. Adornment

7.1 Body paint: “Traditionally, face painting by both men and women was common, but it is now reported to be infrequent except among young men. Simple horizontal lines across the cheeks were the most common forms of decoration, with red and black the preferred colors” (1).

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: Face painting is now more common for young men.

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):

“The Guaymi make carrying bags out of an exceptionally strong, fine fiber obtained from the wild pineapple plant. They are the only people in the Bocas del Toro Province who cultivate the plant and make such bags” (4, p. 118).

Numbered references

1. Young, Philip. www.everyculture.com. Web. 24 February 2013.
<http://www.everyculture.com/Middle-America-Caribbean/Bugle.html>
2. Lewis, M. Paul (ed.), 2009. *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, Sixteenth edition. Dallas, Tex.: SIL International. Web. 24 February 2013.
3. Gjording, Chris. *The Cerro Colorado Copper Project and the Guaymi Indians of Panama*. Print.
4. Gordon, Burton. *A Panama Forest and Shore Natural History and Amerindian Culture in Bocas del Toro*. Pacific Grove: Boxwood Press, 1982. Print.