

1. Description

1.1 Name of society, language, and language family:

Name of society: Q'eqchi'

Language: Q'eqchi'

Language Family: Mayan

The complete Language Family:

Mayan

-Mamean

-Greater Quichean

-Kekchi

-Q'eqchi' ¹

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

Kek ²

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude):

Alta Verapaz (Guatemala) (14°38'N 90°30'W)³

1.4 Brief history:

Before the Europeans the Q'eqchi' lived a very tranquil life. They were a very peaceful society, who stuck to their land and their family. Of course, this all changed when the Europeans, particularly the Spanish, arrived to America. The Spanish sent in their military to prop up a Spanish-friendly government, but the Q'eqchi' resisted by means of violence. The Spanish started to become frustrated with how difficult it was in setting up a system of government, so they changed strategies and sent in Catholic missionaries to convert the Indians in hopes of pacifying their rebellious spirits. The missionaries though had a different objective and that was to try and to protect the Q'eqchi' from foreign interests. For some time the missionaries were successful and completely isolated these Indians from European exploitation, but eventually their power faded, and the Q'eqchi' became vulnerable. The Government that was set up in Guatemala took their land rights away, and the Q'eqchi, forced into poverty, had to become wage laborers on their own land. ⁴

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

The missionaries had a lot of influence on the Q'eqchi'. They changed their society on a fundamental level. The missionaries successfully converted the Q'eqchi' people to Catholicism, and they showed the Q'eqchi' a new way of doing politics by putting in place a "mayor"-like person. The missionaries tried to protect the Q'eqchi' from European exploitation by isolating them from the government that was being set up by the Spanish. This arguable was a negative thing on this society because now that the isolationism is over, these people are finding it very difficult to fully assimilate into the Guatemala society because they are considered secondary citizens. ⁵

1.6 Ecology:

The Q'eqchi' lived on fertile ground with multiple small rivers running by. They would farm the land, and caught fish in the rivers. They were not dependent on the hunting of larger animals.

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

The Q'eqchi' were an agriculture society, so their villages were rather dispersed around. Each man's house was near the center of their farmland, so each village was rather small. It is common for families to cluster together in micro-villages at the center of the field, though there were usually never more than five houses clustered together. ⁶

The Q'eqchi population is around 750,000 people, and there are roughly 1,700 villages dispersed around Guatemala. ⁷

2. Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s):

The main staples in their diet consist of maize, beans, and chilies, while squashes, sweet potatoes, and tomatoes are used to supplement their diet. ⁸

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources:

Their main protein source was from fish that they would gather from the nearby streams. ⁹

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?:

The Q'eqchi were very peaceful people. I could not find any types of weapons.

2.4 Food storage:

Yes, the people would dedicate a special room in their houses just for food storage. ¹⁰

2.5 Sexual division of production:

There is a sexual division of production, but it is highly flexible, though traditionally men do the production of agriculture, while women do most of the food-processing and household maintenance. ¹¹

Now a day, the men still continue to farm the land, but the females, in addition of maintaining the household, go out and sell their crops and ceramics at the nearby marketplace. ¹²

2.6 Land tenure:

Yes, there was land tenure. Each man had their own land that they were entitled to farm, though the land tenure was governed by a communal management system. ¹³

2.7 Ceramics:

The women are extremely skilled in textile production. ¹⁴

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:

2.9 Food taboos:

The Q'eqchi's depend heavily on their farm land because that is their livelihood, so naturally they have a lot of food taboos dealing with their planting. Before planting they cannot eat anything besides maize and bean products, and after planting they cannot eat non-maize or bean products, eat standing up, or eating bread. The punishment for breaking any of these taboos is the reduction of their crops. ¹⁵

2.10 Canoes/watercraft?

No, there was no need for any sort of watercrafts because they didn't live by any major rivers or bodies of water they needed to cross. ¹⁶

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):

13 years (Standard deviation of + - 1.06 years) ¹⁷

4.2 Age at first birth (m and f):

17 years (Standard deviation of + - 1.31 years) ¹⁸

4.25 Age at menopause (f):

46 years (Standard deviation of + - 2.87 years) ¹⁹

4.3 Completed family size (m and f):

4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f):

4.5 Age first marriage (m and f):

Males: 15-18

Females: 12-15 ²⁰

4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce:

4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously:

Zero percent. All marriages are between one man and one woman. ²¹

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

There is a Bride price. ²²

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):

They practiced endogamy. ²³

4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these "other fathers" recognized?

No, the Q'eqchi' does not participate in paternity partible. The family lives as a nuclear family with one father and one mother.

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

The occurrence of rape is very low. The culture as a whole is pretty prude; sex is considered dirty, if not taboo at some times. Sexual coercion is not accepted in this society.²⁵

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

4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?

They enjoy as much sexual freedoms as males, which is not saying much in this prude society.²⁶

4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring

No, the marriage is considered monogamous. There are no extramarital partners, except through adultery.²⁷

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

Traditionally this culture is patrilineal; however, they do not have any formal laws on enforcing this. More commonly the Q'eqchi' pattern of descent is more bilaterally.²⁸

4.26 Incest avoidance rules

4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony?

No, traditionally there wasn't a formal marriage ceremony. Marriage was considered a process rather than a singular event, such as a ritual. The parents of the groom would visit of the bride's parents three times "pleading" for their daughter and offering gifts, then on the third visit, if the bride's parents accept, they would drink to seal the deal.²⁹

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 is usually preferred to be within the community. This is so much preferred that cousins are an acceptable option for getting married.³⁰

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

Yes, marriages are arranged by the parents of the groom and bride.³¹

4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who:

Warfare/homicide --- The Q'eqchi' were extremely peaceful people. They hardly fought among themselves or with others.

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?

I could not find any evidence if they practiced cannibalism, but I am 99% sure they do not.

5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size:

5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality):

No, these people were sedentary. They never left their crops.³²

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

The Q'eqchi', as with most communal labor societies, believes strongly in egalitarianism. The leadership of the village was usually done by a democratic system. In the past a council of elders was put into power for local leadership. Now a day, because of constant influence by the Guatemalan government, their political system is growing more complex with local mayors and judicial leaders.³³

5.4 Post marital residence:

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 villages were not dense like other societies. The houses were organized around the farmland. ³⁴

5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses):

No, there were no specialized village structures. ³⁵

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?

They slept on mats in their houses. ³⁶

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

The Q'eqchi had two levels of social organization: the first level was the organization by families and the second level was the organization of the community as a whole. ³⁷

5.12 Trade:

Traditionally, the people didn't do much trading outside of their village. They usually stuck to their farmland, and traded communally with their neighbors and the neighboring Q'eqchi' villages. Now a days, the Q'eqchi' have been integrated into the capitalist system and actively participate in local market selling and buying. ³⁸

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies?

Yes, there are two types of social hierarchies: civil and religious. ³⁹

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

6 Time allocation to RCR:

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine):

There were three types of specialization that one could be in:

1. The Ilonel, who were curers by use of ceremonies and herbs;
2. Aj ke, the diviners who advise and predict;
3. Aj tul, the sorcerers who cast spells.

Typically a person would be specialized in all three areas, not just one. ⁴⁰

6.2 Stimulants:

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

Death: At death a ritual is done where the decease's body is wrapped in a petate, which is a sleeping mat made out of straw. Then that person is then buried with various items. ⁴¹

6.4 Other rituals:

The Q'eqchi practiced many rituals, traditional and modern rituals. The traditional rituals were based on their heritage and what their ancestors use to do; these rituals tended to be centered around nature. The modern rituals were heavily influenced by the missionaries and the Catholic Church.

Traditional ritual-

Fertility ritual: Before each growing season the man and wife would simulate intercourse around the three corners of their growing area, and then on the fourth corner they have sex.

Modern rituals-

Veneration of saints: The Q'eqchi' would hold festivals for each tribe's "saint." Also they would praise idols that represented that saint.

Catholic Holy Days: The Q'eqchi' would observe Catholic Holy Days, such as the Day of the Dead. ⁴²

6.5 Myths (Creation):

Their Creation myths were derived from the traditional Mayan myths, but it is not certain if they actually believe in these myths.

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:

The Q'eqchi' believe in a life after death. As a result of this belief, the tribe buries with the body all the things that might be needed for the afterlife, such as that person's hat, sandals, and fishing net. ⁴³

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?

6.12 Is there teknonymy?

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

Traditionally, the Q'eqchi' believed in earth deities. They would pray to the mountains and to the valleys, but this changed when the missionaries arrived. For the most part this culture converted to Catholicism, but they still kept some aspects of their old religion. In a way the Q'eqchi created their own syncretic religion where sometimes they worshiped saints and the Christian God, while at others they prayed towards the Earthly gods. ⁴⁴

7. Adornment – All this information was derived from a picture on page 124 of The Cultural Context of Biodiversity. ⁴⁵

7.1 Body paint:

No.

7.2 Piercings:

No.

7.3 Haircut:

Males have short haircuts, while females' hair is tied tightly in a bun.

7.4 Scarification:

No.

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

No.

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment:

No.

7.7 Sex differences in adornment:

No.

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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