

## Chacobo Questionnaire

### 1. Description

1.1 Name of society, language, and language family:

**Society** → Chácobo (2)

**Language** → Chácobo (2)

**Language Family** → Panoan (2)

**Chacobo refer to themselves as "Nó ciria," which means "we who are truly ourselves."**

1.2 ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com): **639-3 (1)**

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude): **Northwest Beni, south of Riberalta , Alto Ivon River (1). Beni department of northwest Magdalena, Bolivia (2).**

1.4 Brief history: **The first account referring to the Chacobo's existence dates to 1845. The information was provided by missionaries and explorers who traveled through the area during the last decades of the nineteenth century and focuses on the aboriginal peoples' location rather than describing their culture (3).**

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

**Jesuit references show that the Chácobo rejected any "invitation" to join the missions, preferring their freedom. Unlike other tribes of the Bolivian Oriente, the Chácobo repelled every early attempt at missionization. Because the northern region of the Llanos de Mojos was an economically uninviting area for colonizers, the Chácobo and most of the neighboring tribes maintained their traditional way of life up to the beginning of the twentieth century (2).**

**During the last decades of the nineteenth century, the discovery of the excellent quality of the rubber tree 'Hevea brasiliensis' in the Río Beni region led to the establishment of White populations. With the white settlements began the extinction of the peoples of the Llanos de Mojos.**

**Extermination came through murderous raids and epidemics that devastated people without resistance to Europeans' diseases. Unwilling to work for rubber patrons as cheap manual laborers, Chácobo Indians migrated to the north of their original area and found protection in the open savanna. In reaction to the constant advance of the White population, the Chácobo pattern has always been to move inland rather than either to defend their territory or to share it with White or Creole people.**

**in 1955 the Chácobo were living along the Río Benicito, an area rich in fish and game and isolated from White commercial activities; during the following ten years, missionaries of the Summer Institute of Linguistics (a Protestant organization) moved a portion of the Chácobo population of the Benicito to the Río Ivon, and the rest moved from the Benicito toward the Río Yata. (2)**

1.6 Ecology:

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

**Population size → 550, Ethnic population size → 860 (1)**

### 2. Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s): **Chácobo subsistence is based on swidden agriculture, complemented by hunting, fishing, and gathering.**

**The primary crop is manioc, used mainly for manioc flour and beer.**

**The second major cultigen is maize.**

**They also grow bananas, sugarcane, papayas, and tubers such as sweet potatoes, valusas, and air potatoes (2).**

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources: **The favorite big-game animals are the tapir, the wild boar, and the peccary. Several varieties of monkey, deer, and turkey also provide meat (2).**

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?: **Today, shotguns are used for hunting. Traditionally, Chácobo used the bow and five different kinds of arrows, including two for catching fish.**

**During the rainy season, fishing is still done with a bow and arrow.**

**During the dry season, an efficient technique based on the drugging of fish with the poisonous barbasco vine is used (2).**

2.4 Food storage:

2.5 Sexual division of production: **Only women and children use fishhooks (2).**

**Chácobo society shows a clear division of labor.**

**Women→ Work traditionally included collecting firewood, carrying water, harvesting and processing either manioc or maize to make beer, spinning cotton thread for stringing hammocks, weaving baskets, molding clay pots, and taking care of their children.**

**The large number of tasks carried out by women contrasted with the great amount of free time enjoyed by men.**

**Although men's involvement with rubber tapping balanced the former situation, men still devote much time to socializing (2).**

2.6 Land tenure: **Every year, each nuclear family clears, burns, and plants a new garden. Because of the limited fertility of the soil, old gardens are seldom replanted. The fallow period is estimated to be fifteen to twenty years (2).**

**Traditionally, the Chácobo had no concept of private ownership of land; as soon as their territory was occupied, they moved inland.**

**In 1965, through the intervention of the Summer Institute of Linguistics, they were given a land grant of 43,000 hectares by the Bolivian government.**

**Each Chácobo is an owner of this land, which cannot be sold unless there is consensus to do so (2).**

2.7 Ceramics: **Yes**

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:

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):

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: **Monogamy is the rule but many older men are Polygynous (2).**

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

**A Chácobo groom realizes that he has been accepted as a future husband when his bride cooks the meat he has previously brought her and they eat it together with manioc flour prepared by her (2).**

**The son-in-law is required to help his father-in-law in minimal household tasks. Four or five years later, the couple builds their own house and the light noninstitutionalized bride-service ends (2).**

4.9 Inheritance patterns: **After death, Chácobo belongings are either broken or buried with the dead person, except for shotguns and iron tools, which are inherited by a son. Land or ritual privileges are not inherited (2).**

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict: **Parents seldom interfere in their daughter's marriage, unless the groom is considered "lazy" (2).**

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?:

**No partible Paternity (3)**

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): **marriage between cross cousins is the preferential form (2).**

4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?

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: **Marriage between parallel cousins is considered incestuous; marriage between cross cousins is the preferential form. Of the possible cross cousins, the last choice is the father's sister's daughter (2).**

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?)

**Marriage between cross cousins is the preferential form (2).**

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:

4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death:

4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing:

**Sources of Tension: Sources of tension are an uneven distribution of food, suspicion of adultery, and witchcraft.**

**The settlement of White families involved in the processing of rubber has also provoked new sources of friction.**

**Unless a controversy affects the community at large, conflict is often hidden.**

**Chácobo rationale for this negative attitude toward publicly venting personal conflicts is based on the fear of witchcraft. In this sense, witchcraft works as a powerful form of social control (2).**

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:

5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality):

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

**Traditionally, Chácobo society had a loosely defined chieftain institution.**

**Any aged man showing potential for leadership could be recognized as a chief.**

**Chiefs were also powerful shamans. Today, chieftainship goes to literate young men who are in the rubber business. Although these young men are the ones who represent the Chácobo to the outside world, community decisions have to be approved by the elders.**

5.4 Post marital residence: **New couples establish their residence in the house of the woman's parents. The son-in-law is required to help his father-in-law in minimal household tasks. Four or five years later, the couple builds their own house (2).**

**The Chacobo are uxorilocal (3.)**

5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense):

5.6 Social interaction divisions? (age and sex): **At the age of 7, whereas boys are allowed to move freely, girls are required to stay home helping their mothers with the daily housework. This pattern of women staying inside the house and men outside it repeats itself throughout the Chácobo life cycle (2).**

5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships:

5.8 Village and house organization:

5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses): **Mens' House → ( hóni shóbo ) → octagonal shape, lack of walls, larger dimensions than womens' house (2). Men spent most of their leisure time in the hóni shóbo drinking manioc beer, talking, and joking. Women were not allowed to enter, except to sweep it. Today, the hóni shóbo is neither an exclusively male domain nor a place for sleeping. Although it has become a public meeting spot for men, women, and children, the hóni shóbo is still the place where adult men mainly socialize (2).**

**Women's House → ( yóshra shóbo ) → In previous times, a women's house sheltered eight or nine nuclear families. Today each nuclear family has it own house (2).**

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?: **In aboriginal times, all initiated men, single or married, were assigned two specific poles on which to hang their hammocks to sleep overnight (2).**

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

5.12 Trade: **Chácobo did not maintain trade contact with neighboring Indian groups (2).**

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies?

**Inequality between men and women is a remarkable characteristic of Chácobo society. Chácobo social life is male centered. Women are mere spectators at rituals, ceremonies, and in the decision-making process. Although age confers power to both genders, old women never enjoy it to the same degree as their male counterparts (2).**

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

6 Time allocation to RCR:

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine): **Chácobo use plants to heal minor diseases. Odor, taste, and color are the active agents that render these plants effective. If the results of the healing are not successful, a serious illness is diagnosed and the intervention of a yóbeka or a kebiákato is required. Western medicine is used only in combination with a traditional treatment (2).**

6.2 Stimulants: **manioc or maize beer (2).**

6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal): **The Chácobo traditionally celebrated the first harvesting of manioc and maize with collective ceremonies. If the harvest was an exceptional one, people from the other concentration were also invited (2).**

6.4 Other rituals:

6.5 Myths (Creation):

**The main figure of Chácobo cosmology is Káko, a mischievous culture hero who transformed the old world and shaped it into what it is today.**

**Not only Chácobo material culture, but also their behavioral norms and customs were established by him.**

**Another figure of Chácobo cosmology is Ashina, a stingy old woman who owned the fire and all the cultivated plants. Through ingenious tricks, Chácobo people stole them from her and began planting and cooking their own food.**

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: **Death is conceived as the result of external agencies (such as the yóbeka, the yushíni, and the kebiákato) that become controllers of an individual's self.**

**Whenever these external agencies start acting upon the individual, he or she loses control of his or her own self and dies.**

**Then, the individual's self undergoes a metamorphosis and becomes a yushíni. It is said that the yushíni of the dead person roams about among the living trying to hurt them.**

**Through strict taboos, the Chácobo establish and maintain clear-cut boundaries between the domain of the dead and that of the living (2).**

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?

6.12 Is there teknonymy?

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

**The Chácobo world is inhabited by frightening spirits called yushíni. Chácobo classify them into two categories: yushíni of the dead and yushíni of the forest.**

**Through the shaman's activity, animals, plants, and objects can be bestowed with yushíni. Since yushíni are potential spiritual helpers for shamans, the latter can employ them to harm others. Strange noises in the night, unrecognizable figures in the dark, and extraordinary events are explained as the result of the yushíni's presence (2).**

**Shamanism is still strong among the Chácobo. Although it is said that men and women can both become shamans ( yóbeka ), it is mainly a male institution.**

**The initiation process is based on the chewing of tobacco in the area of the Río Ivon and on the ingestion of Banisteriopsis caapi in the area of the Rio Yata. The chewing of tobacco or the ingestion of B. caapi allow the shamans to contact their spirit helpers (yushíni).**

**Because of the high risk involved in interaction with the yushíni, only aged people are able to acquire the status of yóbeka. Since shamanic power enables them to heal as well as to harm, they are perceived as ambivalent figures.**

**Parallel to shamanism, there is a female institution called kebiákato that counterbalances the power attributed to men. Female adolescents are initiated by older women into the art of chanting specific songs ( kebíchi ) used either to cure or to harm. Some of these kebíchi are considered so dangerous that even the most powerful shaman cannot cure the victim (2).**

## **7. Adornment**

7.1 Body paint: **Red and black body paint (2).**

7.2 Piercings: **Nasal Ornament (2).**

7.3 Haircut:

7.4 Scarification:

7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.): **Bright and colorful feather headdresses, armbands, and a nasal ornament (2).**

**Black seed necklaces and bracelets, and earrings made of capybara teeth (2).**

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment:

7.7 Sex differences in adornment:

7.8 Missionary effect:

7.9 Cultural revival in adornment:

## **8. Kinship systems**

**Traditional Chácobo society was organized into nine unstratified exogamous clans.**

**Inherited through the father's line, clan affiliation was identified through distinctive facial designs painted on the men's foreheads or on the women's pubic aprons.**

**Affiliation to a particular clan did not imply ritual privileges or the holding of land. Although nowadays the elder Chácobo are still aware of their clan affiliation, the clan system neither regulates marriage nor enhances internal cooperation as it formerly did (2).**

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.): **Chácobo kinship terminology follows the Iroquois system for classifying cross and parallel cousins. For the ascending first generation the terminology is bifurcate-collateral (2).**

## **9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):**

### **Numbered references**

1. [http://www.ethnologue.org/show\\_language.asp?code=cao](http://www.ethnologue.org/show_language.asp?code=cao)

2. <http://www.everyculture.com/South-America/Ch-cobo.html>

3. <http://www.pnas.org/content/107/45/19195.full.pdf?with-ds=yes> → (Evolutionary history of partible paternity in lowland South America: Robert S. Walker, Mark V. Flinn and Kim R. Hill)