

John Topi

4/8/13

Cultures of the Amazon Questionnaire 2

1. Description

1.1 Name of society, language, and language family: Embera, Embera language, some dialects are part of Carib family (2); They were also primarily considered in the past to be in a culture and language family named Choco that consisted of the Embera and Wounaan (4).

1.2 ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com): emp (1).

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude): 6 degrees N, 77 degrees W; The Embera are located in Northwestern Colombia and Southern Panama (1).

1.4 Brief history:

“It is likely that the Choco have been migrating northward from Colombia into the Darien region of Panama for centuries. In recent decades, Choco migration from Colombia and movements within Darien seem to have increased in tempo, stimulated partly by the northward movements of an impinging Colombian (Colombian Negro) population. Sparsely scattered among the Indians are Colombianos and a few Panamanians. In contrast to their once openly hostile relations with their traditional enemy, the Cuna Indians, Choco adjustment to Colombianos and Panamanians has taken the form of piecemeal withdrawal. They do not compete strenuously for land with outsiders, although adequate land is essential to their economy and general way of life. They merely express a restless dissatisfaction with "too many Colombianos and Panamanians" and with being "too close" to Panamanian river towns. This is apparently the reason why they have abandoned the lower reaches of the main rivers and have settled on the middle course of these and along their tributaries. But the Choco do not move simply to escape Colombianos and townspeople. As the population in their own residential sectors increases, rather than move laterally into the jungle, they expand along the rivers up to or near their headwaters.” (3, 14-15).

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

“In colonial times, the Emberá resisted Christian proselytizing, aided by their dispersed settlement and migration to inaccessible locations (Williams 2004). When Christian missionaries had influence, they discouraged ‘the “barbarian” habit of decorating the human face with lip and nose ornaments’ (Isacson1993: 38). Later, in the earlier part of the twentieth century, the Emberá dealt with the pressure of the Catholic Church by avoiding direct confrontation. When priests and missionaries departed—exhausted by life in the rainforest—the majority of the Emberá relied on the guidance of their shamans. In the last part of the twentieth century, however, the presence of North American Evangelical Churches has been more resilient and supported by the provision of much needed medical care.” (3, 595). “In the late 1960s and the 1970s, the government actively encouraged concentrated settlement, offering primary school education to the new communities and, in some parts of Darién, a certain degree of political autonomy within two geographically demarcated semi-autonomous reservations (the Comarcas). Cement school buildings were constructed even in the most inaccessible river sectors, and provided an incentive for Emberá families to settle around them. To attend school, the Emberá children, like all children in the country, have to wear a uniform.” (3, 595-596). Theodossopoulos goes on to describe the great discomfort school life caused Embera children. Embera or Choco interaction with Colombianos, Panamanians and the Cuna are described above. Unspecified hostilities do seem to arise at times, but the general pattern of behavior with outsiders, especially non-native peoples, seems to be avoidance (4, 14).

1.6 Ecology: “The Choco are horticulturalists who raise subsistence crops near their houses in the jungle backdrop away from the river and the plantain groves (see Map 2). In their jungle plots they cultivate maize, manioc, rice, and some lemons, oranges, cacao, coffee, and clumps of sugarcane in small amounts for household consumption. The most important cash crop, plantains, they raise only along the sandier river banks ” (4, 20). “The Choco also engage in hunting and fishing with more or less success, depending on what any particular region offers” (4, 20).

1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density: 49,700 in Colombia and 22,500 in Panama (1). The population of the village in which Faron conducted his work is 137 people (4, 14). There are not more specific indications of mean village size, but the author speaks as if this is an average-sized group. None of the available ethnographic information provided a home range size, but Faron notes that the agricultural land of each household extends 5-12 hectares (4, 20). This would seem to imply Embera or Choco would mostly interact within that radius, besides hunting or trading ventures. Faron provides maps of Choco villages that do not include a scale, making it impossible to determine density (4, 13 & 15). The best estimation after combining information from the two maps is 1,000 Choco in the Chico river region of 15 kilometers (4, 13 & 15). The Choco villages are located almost exclusively in riverine areas (4, 13).

2. Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s): “Plantains also provide the dietary staple, and the Choco consider few meals complete without them.”(4, 20). Faron then explains the pivotal role plantains, which seem to be a form of banana, play in the economy and life of the Choco.

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources: “The Choco also engage in hunting and fishing with more or less success, depending on what any particular region offers. They catch a variety of fish and birds and occasionally kill peccaries, agoutis, monkeys, and other animals. Meat and fish, while perhaps not constituting a substantial part of the diet, seem to be important in relieving its vegetable monotony.”(4, 20). As demonstrated above, the author does not distinguish between the lipid protein sources by noting one as more substantive in Choco diet. All sources play a seemingly minor nutritional role, according to Faron.

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns: There was no mention of bow and arrows or blowguns, but it was noted that the Embera buy bullets in more modern times (5, 158). The Embera then use some form of gun, at least to hunt.

2.4 Food storage: No author provides information on how the Choco or Embera store food.

2.5 Sexual division of production:

“A division of labor by sex and age does exist with respect to certain tasks performed outside the house. While both men and women work almost without distinction in the plantain groves and the jungle plots?the basis for the Panamanian observation that Choco women work like men?it is generally conceded that men hunt and fish and make their own tools and those of the women which are not purchased; and that women cook, wash, care for children, and do housecleaning. The point to be noted, however, is that the more closely related the activity is to the actual feeding and care of the household, the more flexible the line of division of labor by sex and age.” (4, 27-28).

Within the household both men and women prepare meals, but women typically clean game killed by the men and also typically do tasks such as laundry (4, 27).

2.6 Land tenure: “Today, however, inheritance admits of much variation, and there is no striving to preserve holdings within families or to preserve them at all after a certain period has elapsed. The fact that land almost always passes to someone who is connected with the imberana of the deceased or is a member of the larger cognatic group of the former owner is of little or no consequence to the structure of Choco society, characterized as it is by great potential population mobility in a frontier region of low population density.”(4, 35). Land tenure and inheritance seems to change depending on the circumstance, but it is passed to cognatic kin.

2.7 Ceramics: There is no mention of pottery in the ethnographic sources.

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns: “ Food from anyone's garden goes into the common pot and is freely shared, regardless of the number of contingent elementary families in residence or of guests present at the time.” (4, 27). Food is therefore openly shared to guests and among the members of the more local unit. No other sharing patterns were found, but the Choco seem very open with goods among members of their group (4).

2.9 Food taboos: There are no noted food taboos among the Embera or Choco. However, it is noted that plantains be included in every meal. This is a sort of taboo from omitting plantains from a meal. “Plantains also provide the dietary staple, and the Choco consider few meals complete without them.” (4, 20).

2.10 Canoes/watercraft?: Canoes are mentioned as a means for traveling to trade and sell, primarily surplus agricultural produce (5, 158). Kane also mentions watching the construction of a canoe and the ceremony involved (5, 181).

3. Anthropometry

3.1 Mean adult height (m and f): There is no indication of anthropometry in the sources.

3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f): No information was found for this aspect.

4. Life History, mating, marriage

4.1 Age at menarche (f): There is no indication of age of first menarche in the literature.

4.2 Age at first birth (m and f): Faron only indicates that first birth occurs within the first ten years of marriage, which would be 13-23 years-old for females and 17-27 years-old for males (4, 17).

4.3 Completed family size (m and f): Faron notes that families have multiple children, but does not specify the amount (4, 16-18). The other authors do not give any clue with regard to completed family size.

4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f): This information was not found in the sources.

4.5 Age first marriage (m and f): “Genealogical generation, in this case, is of little importance, but men tend to marry women at least several years younger than themselves.” (4, 23). “There are few grandparents having marriageable grandchildren, i.e., granddaughters aged 13 or more and grandsons aged 17 or older.” (4, 17). This quote is referencing grandparents, but it still gives the marriageable age for males and females.

- 4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce: “Another significant point, expressive of conjugal solidarity among the Choco, is that informants experienced great difficulty in discussing divorce (i.e., cases where a man leaves a woman) and failed to understand most questions about the separation of spouses (including spiritual separation in death).”(4, 22). While no proportion is given, it seems that divorce is uncommon among the Choco, or Embera.
- 4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously: “The interhousehold linkages in El Naranjal, and the special forms of marriage such as that of brothers to women from another household or with women who are closely related to each other (e.g., the polygynous arrangement in household 21, in which the women are aunt and niece), seem to have counterparts all along the Chico River. There is little reason to doubt that this is a general pattern throughout Choco society.” (4, 18-19). This is not a percent, but it seems that polygynous arrangements are fairly common based on Faron’s analysis.
- 4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?: The Choco or Embera lack the practice of bride-price, or dowry, according to Faron (4, 26). They do perform bride service, “The initial phase of marriage always involves residence in the bride's father's house.” (4, 29). This is only for a time and then the new family typically moves away or often establishes their own house nearby.
- 4.9 Inheritance patterns: “Without undue qualification, this generalization holds for the Choco, although it is inconsistent with the verbalized ideal pattern of inheritance, according to which sons and daughters receive equal shares of their father's estate. Sons tend to inherit more than daughters, and rights of ownership in plantain land (or the bulk of them) pass from the paterfamilias rather than from his wife.” (4, 30). The author describes a system where sons inherit most of the land, but not in all cases. Daughters still inherit some unspecified things.
- 4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict: There does not appear to be a great deal of conflict between parents and offspring (3)(4). The only time conflict was mentioned was related to choosing a spouse (4). In this case, children, especially males, were allowed to choose their wife. However, parents exerted a great amount of influence and could dissuade male suitors (4).
- 4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals: There was no mention of homosexual activities in the ethnographic sources.
- 4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy): “It would be consistent with the evidence to end this paper with the conclusion that the Choco are an ethno-endogamous people who, once they establish relationships on any one river, practice endogamy with reference to the riverine population. But beyond this, I suggest that different sectors are significantly linked through a network of regular and successive marriages.” (4, 36). The Choco are then endogamous in marrying cousins and people from certain groups upriver who have at least nominal kin ties to the family. Therefore, this also describes a sort of specific exogamy to other villages, but also endogamy to cousins and among usually more distant relatives.
- 4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these “other fathers” recognized?: No indication is given for the belief role of males in conception.
- 4.14 What is the belief of the mother’s role in procreation exactly? (e.g., “receptacle in which fetus grows”): Although Kane discusses menstruation and other aspects related to femininity at length, she does not mention belief of the role of females in procreation (5).
- 4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)?: No indication is provided on beliefs concerning conception.
- 4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape: There were no mentions of rape in the ethnographic sources.
- 4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin): “What does seem of great significance for the structure of Choco society is that marriage occurs preferentially between persons of contiguous kindreds, secondary unions of whatever sort being understandable within this framework of relationships.” “A Choco, in short, may marry any other Choco who is definitely not considered imberana, but he tends to marry cognates peripheral to the incest group.” (4, 24). This describes marriage to a not close, but known biological relative. A cross-cousin would be one of the main kin in this type of category.
- 4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?: “Men do abandon their wives occasionally, and vice versa} but separation is overwhelmingly caused by the death of one of the spouses.” (4, 22). This does not imply sexual freedom and there are no indications of any freedom or promiscuity. Females would then only enjoy sexual freedoms if they were to leave their spouse.
- 4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring: No discussion of extramarital offspring was found in the literature, so no indication of gift giving was found.
- 4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children?: There is no mention of who raises the children if a mother dies. However, there is a brief mention of status differentiation of children in that circumstance. “They were also at a loss in discussing possible status differences among the offspring of separated spouses or of half-siblings in households of adoption or in instances of remarriage upon the death of

one of the parents.” (4, 22). Faron indicates that the other surviving parent, or father with relation to the question, would likely remarry and raise the children.

4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females: This information was not recorded in the ethnographic record.

4.22 Evidence for couvades: None of the authors provide evidence for couvades.

4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older): There are no distinctions or indications of potential fathers related to partible paternity.

4.24 Kin avoidance and respect?: There do not appear to be any specific kin avoidance practices among the Embera (4). Siblings display some forms of unspecified hostility toward each other (4, 24-25). Respect seems to be displayed toward elders, especially the elder male head of household (4, 26-27). These men hold the highest authority over their unit and smaller kin group and their authority does not seem to be challenged (4, 26-27).

4.24 Joking relationships?: There is no indication of special joking relationships.

4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations: “The Choco do not have ancestor-oriented, nonunilinear, corporate descent groups which control landed wealth. They reckon descent from common ancestors (beucia) largely in order to determine the proscriptive bounds of the incest group, their lateral reckoning also being for the express purpose of determining the propriety of marriage.” (4, 33). Faron then describes the Choco system as more ambilineal and that land is typically passed to the eldest son, but other things are passed to additional siblings, including daughters (4, 32).

4.26 Incest avoidance rules: “In the case of the Choco, the kindred functions mainly as a defining unit in the area of incest-exogamy, not as a descent group for determining membership in a landowning unit.” (4, 35). The Choco avoid incest with close family members, including most close cousins. This is especially noticeable in their desire and sometimes preference for marrying distant relatives from ‘upriver’ villages (4, 18).

4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony? “In Choco society, marriage consists of a simple ceremony. After a period of courtship, during which the young couple sport their finery (body paint, jewelry, flower adornments, colorfully dyed penis covers and bright calico skirts) at every opportunity and are frequently in each other's company, the young man sleeps with his intended bride in her father's house. They sleep together for an ideal period of four nights. The ceremony is then conducted with a small celebration of close kinsmen who are usually neighbors.” (4, 29).

4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name?: “Persons are members only of a named geographical area which, given the extension of plantain groves and natural topographical features, has certain definable physical boundaries. A Choco identifies himself to a stranger (merely for the purpose of geographical orientation) by referring to his river and his residential sector by name. Beyond this, and among the residents themselves, membership seems to have relatively little importance.” (4, 19). There is no other mention of names or name changes. The Choco are introduced by the aforementioned pattern, therefore naming their relatives, location and allowing the other person to note potential relationships (4, 19).

4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?): “The next group, and the most important for a consideration of marriage preferences, is formed of persons who were born upriver. All such upriver people in El Naranjal stood in some sort of kinship relation to households already in residence there.” (4, 18). The author notes that this is exogamy because marriage from different villages is desired, but a person changes villages and marriages can also be endogamous (4, 18). There is no mention of differences with regard to marriage preference for males or females.

4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin): “A man's chosen wife, when a prior kinship tie exists between them, tends to be the daughter or granddaughter of his mother's or father's sibling-in-law's sibling.” (4, 23). Men then, seem to be able to choose a wife from among a group of women whom fit the above description. It was also mentioned in an earlier portion of the study that men also marry women of not as easily determinable biological relation from select villages upriver. “Approval by the girl's parents is an absolute necessity for the marriage to take place, but the young man's parents exercise no open control over him at this time.” (4, 29). The girl exerts the final say in the matter, but it seems that parents can dissuade a suitor from pursuing marriage with their daughter.

4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who: As noted, there is a system for defining whom a person is preferred to marry, but the individual seems to be able to choose their spouse among that group (4, 23). Some conflict might occur between potential in-laws and the parents, but children are given a great deal of choice and parents exert persuasion (4, 29). Parents can dissuade male suitors from marrying their daughter (4, 29).

Warfare/homicide

- 4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare: There were no mentions of warfare or death due to warfare among the Embera or Choco.
- 4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death: There were no indications of violent death.
- 4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing: No authors reported in-group or out-group killing.
- 4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations): "Sparsely scattered among the Indians are Colombianos and a few Panamanians. In contrast to their once openly hostile relations with their traditional enemy, the Cuna Indians, Choco adjustment to Colombianos and Panamanians has taken the form of piecemeal withdrawal. They do not compete strenuously for land with outsiders, although adequate land is essential to their economy and general way of life. They merely express a restless dissatisfaction with "too many Colombianos and Panamanians" and with being "too close" to Panamanian river towns." (4, 14). The Embera or Choco had violent interactions with the Cuna in the past, but more information on the violence is not given. They otherwise seem to avoid conflict. They commissioned Darienitas to make some goods for them and traded/interacted with them in a general sense (3, 594).
- 4.18 Cannibalism?: There is no indication that the Embera or Choco had cannibalistic practices in the past or present.

5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

- 5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size: "Their houses, once dispersed singly or in twos and threes along the riverbanks, have been moved into villages of ten to a hundred houses." (5, 159). This does not give the number of people, but is the closest available information. It was noted earlier that El Naranjal, a particular village, had a population of 137 (4, 14).
- 5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality): "It would seem that the heuristic value of the deme concept diminishes in direct proportion to the physical mobility of a population, that it might serve analytically among a sedentary people but not among one which characteristically expands into an almost inexhaustible frontier." (4, 36). Faron is explaining why Murdock's deme designation does not directly apply to the Choco or Embera. The group appears to practice a form of semi-sedentism, expanding into new areas as necessary, according to the author (4, 36).
- 5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes): There do not seem to be wealth or status classes. Headmen for each unit, or village, appear to be the only real political figure other than shamans, whom do not seem to hold much political authority (4, 26)(3, 594). Wealth could be indicated by jewelry and other ceremonial decoration (4, 594). No other indications of classes or status groups seem to be evident.
- 5.4 Post marital residence: "But the overwhelming tendency among the Choco is for the virilocal household to be established neolocally, in both a geographic and a social sense." (4, 34). In this system, the couple appears to move to the husband's familial home for a while, then establish a new residence in the area. The marital residence changes through some stages of life and the relatives near which a family lives also varies (4, 17).
- 5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense): There does not seem to be a need for active defenses, but each male head of house and larger social unit claims or defines land along a river by clearing and maintaining plantain groves of between 5-12 hectares per household (4, 20). Maintaining and working the land seems to be the main way of defining the boundary and claiming the territory.
- 5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex): "Instead of a marked unity among siblings, there is a lack of "feeling" which is noted by Colombianos and Panamanians as a particularly "savage" aspect of Choco society. Whether the sibling group is viewed internally or from without, it lacks organic character. Non-Choco cannot understand why brothers fail to avenge one another, except incidentally in momentary anger, or why there is a lack of standardization of complementary rights and duties among siblings." (4, 24-25).
- 5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships: No information on special friendships or joking relationships was found.
- 5.8 Village and house organization: "Traditionally, i.e., according to earlier ethnographic reports and oral history, the Choco have lived strung out along rivers, not nucleated into hamlets or organized into villages. Nevertheless, riverine populations tend to form loose clusters of closely related households. These agglomerations of families form what are known locally as sectors. Well-established sectors are named." "A glance at the sketch map of the sector of El Naranjal (Map 2) will impress the reader that nearly all of the Choco households are linked through ties of blood or marriage (which are not differentiated in the lines which join the houses)" (4, 15). Houses have a single family and are surrounded by a few others of closely related kin and headed by an elder male familial leader. This comprises the organization of each house and larger village. Families move to live in different imberana or kinship units at different stages of life, namely after having children (4, 17).
- 5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses): None of the authors mentioned any specialized mens' houses or other structures.
- 5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere? The Embera or Choco, sleep on mats on the ground according to Kane (5, 158).

5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc: Living near ambilineally and extended family households of kin seems to be the only form of kin organization (4, 21 & 33). This organization varies as households of people move among units of relatives during different stages of life (4, 15).

5.12 Trade: “In its most common contemporary form, independent households of Embera, headed by a married man and woman, bring surplus agricultural produce downriver in canoes to predominantly non-Indian town-dwellers. With money from produce, Embera buy goods in the stores and bars, returning upriver with things such as cloth for women's skirts, men's clothes, bullets, aluminum pots, plastic buckets, salt, sugar.” (5, 158). This does not as much describe trade as liquidating assets. But, the Choco or Embera seem to trade goods at times too, indicated by a brief mention from Kane with reference to canoe use (5, 158). They also either bought or traded for ornamental aspects such as silver coins used in ceremonial decoration (3, 594).

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies? “Specifically, the paterfamilias, the eldest male and owner of the house and groves, is the household leader, the person who allocates household resources among the membership, however composed.” (4, 27). The eldest male is typically the household leader and typically is the leader of the surrounding few households of younger family members. The relationship is not extremely strict as no one really questions his authority (4, 27-28). Each village consists of these paternal male household leaders, but it is unclear of their role at the larger group level and extension to other groups. No other hierarchies seem to be evident. The eldest male child holds the highest position of the children and the mother is next in line in descent reckoning (4).

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

6 Time allocation to RCR: The sources do not give an indication of the time allocated to RCR. Ceremonial aspects seem to occupy a decent allotment of time among the more modern Embera as they perform many ceremonial dances for tourists (3). However, there is no indication of how much time is spent in RCR related activities, or how often Shamanic magic related rituals are performed (3)(4).

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine): “The Embera are known for their shamans and stories, but except for healing, not for their elaborate rituals. Indeed, after living amongst them for several months I was convinced that they didn't really use ritual enactments outside of shamanic healing” (5, 174). However, it is also noted that, ““An important purpose of body painting in the Emberá curative process is to hide (and therefore protect) the identity of the patient from the spirits that are present during the ceremony” (3, 602).

6.2 Stimulants: There is no mention of stimulants in the ethnographic sources that were found.

6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal): “It is also apparent within the imberana, where it extends to first cousins and involves the limited cooperation of this larger group in matters of birth, curing rites, wedding celebrations, visiting, and death and burial services.” (4, 24). This is the only description found related to everything but puberty. “Paloma, who was experiencing her first menstruation, stayed in that area just big enough to lie down in for one whole week without ever leaving. Her mother passed food to her, removed her excrement in a chamber pot, and helped her bathe with clean water every little while through the day and night. Following local custom, there were no particular food taboos, but the girl/woman was not allowed to utter a word the entire time she was enclosed.” (5, 174).

6.4 Other rituals:

“In that language there is a myth about a heroic transgressor with an obsessive desire to drink menstrual blood. The women hate him and send him on otherworld adventures hoping to kill the man-son. He is Jeropoto, whose name means Born-of-the-Calf (of the leg), a name that calls to mind a birth from a wound that was not a womb, a birth that was the childbearer's death. In his quest to know the meaning of his name, Jeropoto fears no challenge. He kills the river serpent Je, the most dangerous and fertile of mythic devourers. He eats its heart and returns to the women again.” (5, 155).

Kane states that this myth and belief are concerned with the ritual of allowing women privacy during menstruation.

6.5 Myths (Creation): “In the myth, mythical beings replace historical figures, and the regions outside settlement are unexplored places in natural and other worlds, rather than the non-Indian towns of history. But movement away from and back to the safety of settlements that results in retrieval of desirable objects is a persistent theme in both myth and history. Dramatic historical discontinuities, however, are not encoded in myth.” (5, 158). No creation myths were found, but this has historical elements and incorporates surrounding groups, so it is related to creation, but provides information on myths.

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games): Material such as Embera clothing, jewelry and other forms of adornment would serve as the best representation of artistic material (3). Embera also practice traditional dances that are likely accompanied with music although this is not described (3). “The leaders of some relatively inaccessible communities in Darién encourage young girls to refine their skill in traditional dancing even in the absence of tourists. In spontaneous celebrations, the young girls start a dance topless and painted with jagua— according to tradition — while older women do not hesitate to take off their t-shirts and join in subsequent dances. Men are less likely to get dressed in traditional attire, but they do so if the opportunity obliges (e.g. if foreign visitors want to see an Emberá dance).” (3, 597-598).

- 6.7 Sex differences in RCR: As mentioned, Embera religion is not well described. The only notable differences discernable through the sources are that women alone participate in female and menarche-related rituals (5). Shamans also seem to only be men, though it is noted that women can be designated as assistants and also they can perform some Shamanic magic-related tasks (3). No other differences were noted in the brief ritualistic, ceremonial and religious aspects of the Choco or Embera.
- 6.8 Missionary effect: “It is also important to consider that shamanic practices among the Emberá of Panama are in decline: there are still a few practising shamans who attract several patients, while many Emberá, as they identify more closely with Christianity, do not discuss directly the ritual dimension of body painting – which is, after all, the domain of shamans.” (3, 602).
- 6.9 RCR revival: There does not appear to be a revival in traditional aspects related to RCR. The Embera are somewhat acclimated into Christian beliefs, but they do still have Shamans whom conduct healing and other rituals (3). They also still perform ceremonies including those enacted through dance (3).
- 6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs: None of the sources give much information about death and afterlife beliefs. Faron describes the system for passing land and other materials to heirs, while also noting that Choco have some form of death and burial services (4, 24). These services are named in a quote in question 6.3.
- 6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?: There does not appear to be a taboo against naming dead people.
- 6.12 Is there teknonymy?: Embera or Choco do not seem to use teknonymy.
- 6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.): The Choco or Embera practice a form of religion that appears focused on magic and spirit beings (3)(4)(5). Shamans perform ceremonies, including those involving paint that are meant to hide and/or heal individuals of an affliction (3). Kane focuses on a mythical being named Jeropoto, who seems mostly to be involved with taboos and behavior related to menarche and menstrual taboos (5). Shamans perform other magic-related tasks and the Embera have ceremonies for, “birth, curing rites, wedding celebrations, visiting, and death and burial services.” (4, 24). However, these are not described and it was difficult to ascertain the religious practices of the Embera. Magic and spirit beings seem to be the primary focus of their religious world.

7. Adornment

- 7.1 Body paint: “Jagua provides a dark blue, almost black colour, which fades away eight to twelve days later, allowing for new artistic experiments and applications. The Emberá insist that jagua can improve the overall condition of the skin. When a sufficient quantity of this fruit is available, they don’t hesitate to apply it more generally, sometimes covering their body in uniform black, other times indulging in artistic decoration with geometric design that cover the arms, the face, the torso, or their whole body.” (3, 601). Jagua is a fruit that is ground to be used as paint. It has many supposed purposes among the Embera. They believe it promotes skin health, and is a neat form of ceremonial decoration. “An important purpose of body painting in the Emberá curative process is to hide (and therefore protect) the identity of the patient from the spirits that are present during the ceremony.” (3, 602). As noted, body paint is also used in shamanic curing rituals.
- 7.2 Piercings: The only reference to piercing seems to be implied through the adornment of earrings for both genders at times (3, 599 & 600). Lip and nose ornaments also constitute a form of piercing (3, 595).
- 7.3 Haircut: Men appear to have medium-length hair according to the photos. “In some cases the only ornament of young girls is flowers – in particular, hibiscus flowers – attached to their long hair (budáe). Emberá women of all ages take good care of their hair, combing it carefully and frequently, and when dressed in traditional attire, they weave crowns – from nahualas or bijaós fibres¹¹ – onto which they attach flowers.” (3, 601). Black dye is also used on older members to make them appear younger to tourists, according to the author (3, 602).
- 7.4 Scarification: The Choco or Embera do not appear to practice any form of scarification.
- 7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.): Men wear earrings at times. “On top of the loincloth, some Emberá men wear th amburáe, a belt – or broad ‘girdle’ (Stout 1963: 270; Wassén 1935: 70) – made of colourful glass beads (chaquiras) woven in geometric patterns.” (3, 598). They also wear arm cuffs made of stainless steel and bandoliers made of beads or animal teeth (3, 599). A large beaded necklace and layer of coins are used to cover the female upper body in more modern traditional and ceremonial attire (3, 600). Silver wrist cuffs are also worn by the women (3, 600). Lip and nose ornaments were worn at first contact, but missionaries dissuaded their use (3, 595).
- 7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment: Traditional male attire includes, “These include the arm cuffs (pulseras ,maniyiae) – in the past made from silver, and nowadays from stainless steel – long beaded string (kotiábarie) that stretch from each shoulder to the opposite hip, and necklaces formed of beads interspersed with small silver pendants or, more rarely, animal teeth.” (3, 599). For females, “The parumas skirt (wae) is a quintessential Chocó garment that communicates the ethnic identity of its bearer, and stands emblematic of an indigenous identification more generally.” (3, 599).

7.7 Sex differences in adornment: The author then describes that women typically dress more traditionally, while men more often wear Western clothes. Both, however, wear Western clothes some of the time. Traditional attire is worn mostly for ceremonies and for attracting tourist attention and income (3).

7.8 Missionary effect: "When Christian missionaries had influence, they discouraged 'the "barbarian" habit of decorating the human face with lip and nose ornaments' (Isacsson 1993: 38). With respect to clothing practices, the Christian message had a constraining effect on the use of traditional Emberá attire. Even when the missionaries tolerated the use of the *parumas*, the women started covering their upper bodies systematically." (3, 595).

7.9 Cultural revival in adornment: "At the dawn of the new millennium, an increasing number of Emberá communities have become interested in developing indigenous tourism as an alternative source of revenue to plantain cultivation." "Interest in tourism more generally has inspired a re-evaluation of indigenous cultural practices within the Emberá world (Theodossopoulos 2007; 2010a; 2011), including a renewed appreciation of Emberá attire." (3, 595). Embera elders instructed younger members on readopting the traditional attire described above.

8. Kinship systems

8.1 Sibling classification system: "A person's imberana includes his first cousins, his blood relatives of the ascendant generation on the paternal and maternal sides, his own and his siblings' offspring, and the children of the latter. The kindred is both a vertically and horizontally conceived incest group. Sibling terms are horizontally extended far beyond this segment of the cognatic group (as are uncle and nephew terms), but with different implications." (4, 23). Sibling terms extend to first and more distantly recognized cousins. Faron does not provide the exact terminology or extensions.

8.2 Sororate, levirate: "A man may also marry his brother's widow. Again, there is a feeling that this is "good," but neither the notion of compulsion nor that of special privilege is involved. Withal, this seems to be the strongest indication of the unity of the sibling group in Choco society, once brothers and sisters have left the parental household. Its occurrence is so rare, however, that I am by no means certain whether it strikes a note of moral responsibility or of opportunism." (4, 24). This is a description of the levirate, though the author does not use the term.

8.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.): "The terminological system (Faron 1961) is typically Hawaiian and, in accordance with statistical expectations (see Murdock 1949), correlates significantly with the bilateral extension of incest taboos and the presence of socially significant kindreds." (4, 22). It seems that kinship and descent are ambilineal as is common in the Hawaiian typology.

9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):

It is interesting that the Choco or Embera have been continually migrating from areas of Colombia into Panama. There seems to be a great deal of cultural contact that Embera avoided in the past (3)(4). Some groups of Embera now seem to have embraced some Western influences and taken to enacting rituals for tourism and economic support (3). It would be interesting to know if the portions of Ember whom remained on the Colombian side have retained more traditional lifeways.

Numbered references

1. Lewis, M. Paul, Gary F. Simons, and Charles D. Fennig (eds.), 2013. *Ethnologue: Languages of the World, Seventh edition*. Dallas, Texas: SIL International. Online version: <http://www.ethnologue.com/language/emp>
2. Faron, Louis C. 1962. "Marriage, Residence, and Domestic Group among the Panamanian Choco" in *Ethnology*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Jan., 1962), pp. 13-38
3. Kane, Stephanie. 1988. "Omission in Embera (Choco) Mythography" in *Journal of Folklore Research*, Vol. 25, No. 3, Special Issue: Feminist Revisions in Folklore Studies Indiana University Press, (Sep.-Dec., 1988), pp. 155-186
4. Theodossopoulos, Dimitrios. 2012. "Indigenous attire, exoticization, and social change: dressing and undressing the Embera of Panama" in *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (N.S.) 18, pp. 591-612