

1. Description

1.1 Name of society, language, and language family:

Mamainde, Northern Nambiquara, Nambiquara . Note: Depending on which reference being studied, the Mamainde are referred to as Southern or Northern Nambiquara. Certain anthropologists have deemed it a failure to pursue classification into distinct sub-groups of the Nambiquara Language Family due to their nomadic tendencies.

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

ISO code: nab

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude):

It is very hard to define location of the Nambiquara. Since they are considered nomadic and small bands branch off seasonally they inhabit a large area. Centrally, however they have been referred to reside in the Guapore River area of Matto Grosso, Brazil

1.4 Brief history:

The Nambiquara was previously thought to be isolated, but its distinctive trait-the use of classificatory suffixes dividing the universe into about ten categories-is strongly reminiscent of Chibcha. Nambiquara culture is relatively simple. Crude ceramics, both sexes virtually naked, sleeping on the ground, nomadism, temporary shelters, poverty of material culture, and primitive social organization distinguish them from high cultures of the Guapore River area. (7, pg 362)

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

Due to the influence of a local government agent, the Mamaindê have also learned in recent years to harvest and sell cash crops. These crops are planted in a community field, where each family is expected to contribute to the workload. They have had relative success in making a profit with pineapples and rice which they sell in the nearby town of Vilhena. (1, pg7)

1.6 Ecology:

Savanna like plateau, 500-1,500 feet above sea level. The soil is composed of disintegrated bedrock. Except for narrow forests along river banks the region is infertile having only shrubs and small trees with thick bark. (7, pg362)

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

Population: 200 (1, pg 3), Clusters of 30 individuals (3)

2. Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s):

Manioc and Corn (2, pg151)

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources:

Hunting of small game (monkey, lizards, etc...) and large game such as deer provided meat for the Nambiquara.

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?

The Nambiquara implement the bow and arrow while hunting. Arrows for hunting birds have a blunt tip. Arrows for fish have three tips, similar to a harpoon. Poisoned arrows are protected with a bamboo sheath and are reserved for monkeys and other small game. For large game, the arrows have a lancealot tip with an attached barb. Warfare weapons, also used in magic, include a javelin which takes the form of a club. (6, pg15)

2.4 Food storage: Nambiquara Indians preserve Yucca (manioc) by grating it into a pulp and then burying it in the ground. (6, pg14)

2.5 Sexual division of production: Men leave, together or separately, in the mornings to go on small hunting trips. Women remain in the camp where they assume culinary duties. When the need is felt, women and children go out on foraging expeditions. (6, pg16)

Evening work for men is called to basket and arrow work. Selected women are sent to gather firewood for the night. (6, pg17) Both sexes cut down wood; men for hut, bow, and shelter while women cut wood for firewood. (6, pg65) (Table 1)

2.6 Land tenure:

2.7 Ceramics: Crude forms of ceramics/pottery were observed in Nambiquara villages. (6, pg 16) They mix clay with ashes, fire the pot in open air, and wash it while it is still hot in an infusion with resinous bark.

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:

2.9 Food taboos:

During a woman's period every "two moons", she cannot eat for 5 days. This appears to be restricted to certain foods. (6, pg70)
Chicken and dogs are never eaten. Jaguar can be hunted and killed, but never eaten. The remains are used to make fur bonnets which are attire of war. (6, pg115)

2.10 Canoes/watercraft?

There are neither canoes nor dugouts. (6, pg16)

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):

11-13 years old. (4)

4.2 Age at first birth (m and f):

4.3 Completed family size (m and f):

The Nambiquara are reluctant to have additional children. They will undergo abstinence until the young are able to walk. This is justified by stating that a woman can only carry two things, a basket and young child. Anymore would be an inconvenience. This does not restrict the size of the family, however the intervals. Marriages are strictly monogamous as well. Couples with few children are not uncommon. One or two seem to be a normal number. Sexual prohibitions and the economic situations they are based give rise to abortions. (6, pg74)

4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f):

Child birth spacing averaged 30 months. (3)

4.5 Age first marriage (m and f):

Young women are eligible for marriage after their first menstruation. (4)

4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce:

Many marriages end when the husband feels he has enough economic status to obtain a more desirable wife.

4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously:

Women are considered monogamous. Men can have many wives if a wife is considered undesirable and he abandons her. (6, pg19)
Polygamy represents a right of chiefs, or shamans, of the group. When men reach a level of accomplishment they can add another wife. This wife's duty is to aid in more masculine tasks. The first wife of the man has authority over the younger, new wife/ves. (6, pg68-69)

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

Brides are exchanged among Nambiquara tribes. (4)

4.9 Inheritance patterns:

Belongings of the deceased are often destroyed if not buried with them.

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict:

If a daughter is left husbandless (from death, abandonment, etc.) she moves back to her blood parents hut. (6, pg54)

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?

When describing conception, Nambiquara males used their fingers to imitate sexual intercourse while saying “my child, my child”.

This expresses a very clear understanding of connection with intercourse and conception. (6, pg71)

4.14 What is the belief of the mother’s role in procreation exactly? (e.g., “receptacle in which fetus grows”)

The male’s semen is the source of a child. The woman is viewed as a simple receptacle. Furthermore, the woman is blamed for sterility. (6, pg72)

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)

Children of Brothers-in-Law are often promised to each other in marriage from a very young age. This is considered ideal. (6, pg125)

Kinship terms identify cross cousins with potential or actual spouses. (7, pg 366)

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?

If the mother dies during childbirth, the child is beaten to death. (6)

4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females

4.22 Evidence for couvades:

“The baby a23 is not yet weaned, and the state of couvade was to end at the end of our stay.” (6, pg50)

4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older)

4.24 Kin avoidance and respect?

4.24 Joking relationships?

When a couple leaves to have sex in the bushes near the camp, about 100 m’s away, on-lookers follow them to watch. Afterwards, joking and mockery ensues. It is easier for the couple to join in on their own taunting than to defend themselves. (6, pg74)

4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations

Rights are not hereditary. A chief is appointed based on other qualities than genetics. He appoints companions at will.

4.26 Incest avoidance rules:

“We have not been able to find a sure case of incest between blood relatives.” Incest is prohibited, not punishable but frowned upon. (6, pg72)

4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony?

Formal marriage ceremonies are conducted by the chief of the village. The union of a man and woman is conducted by placing a piece of fish in each of their mouths.

4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name?

During the appearance of Puberty a young woman is given her name. Young males are initiated by the chief at the age of 9 or ten and given a name. An appointed companion pierces the upper lip and septum of the nose to place ornaments. (6, pg125-126)

4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?)

Marriage is cross cousin format preferably within the community.

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

Marriages appear to be arranged. It is common where Brothers-In-Law explain that their children are promised to each other. However, after a young woman’s time in exclusion during her first menstruation, she is allowed to state whether she is ready to be married. The chief has the power to choose young women, preferably virgins, as an additional bride. (6, pg125)

4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who:

Young pretty brides are most commonly chosen by the chief. This makes it very difficult for men to find a bride. Often, young men choose older brides who have been widowed or abandoned. This satisfies the need to be taken care of in the home and they are content. When he feels his social status increases, he will abandon his old bride to find a younger, more seductive, bride. Three of four marriages are common. (6, pg127)

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:

It was reported the Nambiquara “slaughtered a group of Protestant missionaries” (2, pg 158)

4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations):

Preventing the invasion of their land is a common concern of the neighboring societies. This has caused invitations to ceremonial exercises to be extended to neighboring Nambiquara and non-Nambiquara societies. This allows for discussions to arise in prevention unwanted land invasion. (4)

4.18 Cannibalism?

5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size:

Villages are broken into small nomadic groups for a large fraction of the year. It is hard to get a good census due to this translation of residents.

5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality):

When the dry season arrives, the Nambiquara bands “break up” into several nomadic bands for about seven months. (6, pg15)

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

Each band recognizes the leadership of a chief. His “companions” are men who ensure that orders are carried out. Women are rarely consulted for orders. Women recognize the authority but are rarely called upon to execute a task. If the leadership of the chief is in question, families will leave to find a neighboring band of Nambiquara which suits their needs. A chief can abandon his power to join another band as a common Indian (6, pg100- 104)

5.4 Post marital residence:

5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense):

The Nambiquara mainly live in temporary huts. Their nomadic tendencies does not define boundaries.

5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex):

Women are forbidden to hear sacred flutes. They are beaten if this rule is breached. (7)

5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships:

5.8 Village and house organization:

During the rainy season (October to March) the Nambiquara construct crude huts of various forms and materials elevated above a stream. (6, pg14) However, due to the nomadic tendencies and small group interactions (fighting or fleeing), there seems to be no apparent rules on hut placement. (6, pg54-55)

5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses):

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?

The Nambiquara sleep on the ground in the sand since it is somewhat soft. Also, ashes from fires are used to keep warm if necessary. (5, pg 47)

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

5.12 Trade:

The importance and trust the Nambiquara hold in transactions of trade can be summarized in the following quotes.

“We promised an Indian Hunting sword as the price of transporting a message to an neighboring Indian village. The commission was done.....we neglected to immediately give the messenger recompense thinking he would come get it. He left very irritated, and we never saw him again. ” “Under these conditions, it is not surprising that when the exchanges are finished, one of the groups departs discontented.....It seems that wars very often have no other origin.”

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies?

Being named a chief is not hereditary. If a chief becomes ill, he will publicly select a successor. This successor has the option to decline, which is a highly rare occurrence. (6, pg104)

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

Certain celebrations are carried out by the chief/shaman. Initiation, puberty, and marriage are all celebrations of the Nambiquara.

6 Time allocation to RCR:

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine):

The Nambiquara are familiar with a large number of medical uses for plants. Example, they have the ability to care for purulent ophthalmia by a drip of “pao preto”. But for illnesses resulting from poisoning must be dealt with by a sorcerer. The chief, who is considered a shaman, is placed with duties of preparing poisons, leading ceremonies, and many other various special duties. (6, pg119)
Shamans treat sickness by “sucking” out the disease. (7, pg369)

6.2 Stimulants:

Tobacco is cultivated, dried, crushed, and stored in small calabashes. Cigarettes are rolled in special leaves and tied with grass (7, pg368)

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

When females experience their first menstruation, they are put inside of a small hut of isolation. They remain inside for months in the dark and in silence. The neighboring villages, recently not only restricted to Nambiquara, are invited over to celebrate the young girls emergence from the small hut and eligibility for marriage with a feast. (4)

6.4 Other rituals:

6.5 Myths (Creation):

Summarized- An old woman escapes a flood by hanging from a buriti palm tree. Once the waters receded, she gave birth to a son. From incest, twins of different sex were born. This trait of incest continues until there were enough people to populate villages. Eventually, men traveled so far away that they cannot understand each other, do not speak the same language, and must travel months to visit.

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games):

Men are responsible for building musical instruments. (Table 1) These are all woodwind instruments.

Nambiquara are virtually ignorant of drawing. Music is tonal with melodic structures easy to identify. (7, pg 368)

6.7 Sex differences in RCR:

6.8 Missionary effect:

6.9 RCR revival:

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs:

Men are transformed into Jaguars. Women and children are swept away with the wind and are not susceptible to re-appearance. (6, pg123)

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 religion has three forces; Wind, Thunder, and Atasu. Atasu is the being that carries you away after death. In many tribes of the Nambiquara Language Family Atasu takes the form of the Jaguar. (6, pg114)

7. Adornment

7.1 Body paint:

Body painting consists of urucu smeared uniformly. Some groups trace black dots and stripes on the chest and legs. (7, pg365)

7.2 Piercings:

Males, at time of initiation, have a piercing through their nose which holds a large pin. Also, the upper lip is pierced (4)

7.3 Haircut:

Long Hair, sometimes wavy with a higher pilosity (covered with soft hair) is unlike the indigenous median. (6, pg16) The front, back, and sides were cut with a shell at the length of the earlobe. The back occasionally was allowed to hang loose. (7, pg365)

7.4 Scarification:

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

While living virtually naked, women wear a thin string of beads around their waist, necklaces around the neck or looped over a shoulder, and bracelets made from the tail of a large armadillo. Males, wear similar garb with an additional straw pompom covering the sex organs. (6, pg14)

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment:

During male initiation, a feather is worn in the pierced septum by the men of the community. (4)

7.7 Sex differences in adornment:

7.8 Missionary effect:

The Indians seemed very rude to "white" man in reaction to their own poverty and sickness in comparison. (8)

7.9 Cultural revival in adornment:

8. Kinship systems

8.1 Sibling classification system:

-Subjects of a generation are organized into four large groups. If we consider a male subject, all the men of his generation will be considered brothers or husbands of sisters. If we consider a female, the women of her generation will be divided into sisters and wives. Females refer to males as husbands or brothers. Males refer to females as "wife" even though indication of marriage is not present. - Males and females call their blood father "father" and all other men "brother". Also, blood mother is referred to as "mother", all other females are "sister". Blood parents call their blood children " child, son, or daughter". (6, pg19)

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):

-If women become bored with their work, they will pick lice from each other or stroll around the camp site or sleep. (6, pg17)

-Drawing or writing were unheard of by the Nambiquara. When presented with pad and paper, the traditional Indians imitated anthropologists note taking by sketching wavy lines. (6, pg46)

- The word "Atasu" is used to name unknown beings. Objects that appear to be alive but are indescribable are referred to as the Atasu. An example, the ticking of a clock was referred to as Atasu. (6, pg114)

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