

1. Description

1.1 Name(s) of society, language, and language family: Yanomamö Classification: Yanomam

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

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude): 1.07 degrees North, 65.20 degrees West

1.4 Brief history:

The Yanomamö Indians live in southern Venezuela and the adjacent portions of northern Brazil... Many of the villages have not yet been contacted by outsiders, and nobody knows for certain how many uncontacted villages there are." (Chagnon, 1977, 1)

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

In some cases villages give up their ways of life to be rid of sin, and become dependent on missionaries. (Chagnon, 1974, 181)

1.6 Ecology (natural environment):

Most villages live at an altitude of about 450 feet, in the low, flat plains above the Mavaca and Oinoco Rivers. (Chagnon, 1977, 18)

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

"Some widely scattered villages have populations ranging from 50 to 250 inhabitants, with 75 to 80 people the most usual number. In total numbers their population probably approaches 10,000 people, but this is merely a guess." (Chagnon, 1977, 1)

2. Economy:

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s):

Plantains. They eat these in large quantity. (Chagnon, 1977, 34)

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources:

"The most common meat is monkey, of which there are several varieties." (Chagnon, 1977, 92)

"Fat, white grubs" from palm trees that border domestication in that they hollow out palm trees by removing the cores. (Chagnon, 1977, 30)

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?: They use palm wood bows that they shape with canine teeth from wild pigs. (Chagnon, 1977, 21) They also use 8-10 foot clubs for ritualized dueling between men. (Chagnon, 1977, 119-120)

"The game animals are all shot with arrows. The curare palm points are usually used for monkey hunting, while the lanceolate bamboo points are used for large game, such as deer, tapir, and wild pigs.

A third kind of point is used for birds. It consists of a long, slender stick to the end of which has been bound a splinter of gently curved monkey bone. This serves as the penetrating point and the barb; it is difficult to extract the point once the barb enters the animal." (Chagnon, 1977, 32)

2.4 Food storage:

2.5 Sexual division of production:

"Young boys hunt for lizards with miniature bows and featherless arrows...Little girls learn very quickly that it is a man's world, for they soon must assume much of the responsibility for tending their younger siblings, hauling water and firewood, and in general helping their busy mothers." (Chagnon, 1977, 90)

Chagnon also notes that in addition to doing the hunting, men also are responsible for tending the gardens and clearing brush. Women may accompany them in order to collect firewood, but essentially the women are in charge of the children.

2.6 Land tenure:

Crops belong to the individual who plants them, and the headmen usually has the most as he is obliged to provide for the village's feasts. (Chagnon, 1977, 34)

2.7 Ceramics:

No evidence.

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:

"It is good to share meat with others. This attitude is expressed in the sentiment that a hunter should give away most of the game he kills. One of the obligations men take very seriously is providing adequate quantities of meat for their wives and children." (Chagnon, 1977, 91)

2.9 Food taboos:

No evidence.

2.10 Canoes/watercraft?

"The tree is beaten with clubs to loosen the bark. The bark is then removed in one piece and hauled back to the village. The ends are heated in a fire to make them pliable and folded back to make the ends of the container. They are held firm by lashing two sticks together, pinching the folded bark into a flat-nosed basin. If the container is used to make a canoe, a crude framework of sticks is added to the inside, giving it more stability. The craft is so crude and heavy that the Yanomamö generally do not use it for any purpose other than the trip for it was intended." (Chagnon, 1977, 24)

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):

Chagnon estimates this age at “the onset of puberty.” (Chagnon, 1977, 85)

4.2 Age at first birth (m and f):

Women become sexually active as soon as they end their first menstruation. (Chagnon, 1977, 85)

4.3 Completed family size (m and f):

4-5 children per women seems to be the average. (Chagnon, 1974, 131)

4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f):

According to Chagnon, they seem to have births all of the time, but only actually raise a child if the one that they already have is not nursing, which they will do for three years. (Chagnon, 1977, 74)

4.5 Age first marriage (m and f):

“In some cases a woman’s daughters are promised to young men even before they are born. Generally, the girls are near puberty age by the time they are definitely given to a specific male, and they begin cohabitating with the man shortly after the puberty ceremony is over.”

4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce:

4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously:

The village of Patanowa-teri has a polygyny rate of 25%. (Chagnon, 1977, 75)

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

Males provide bride service to the mother-in-law, and must live with the brides parents for several years after the marriage until the service is paid. (Chagnon, 1977, 79)

4.9 Inheritance patterns:

Animal spirits, *noreshi*, are patrilineally inherited for men and matrilineally inherited for women. (Chagnon, 1977, 49) Other than that, there is not a lot to inherit.

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict:

It is the males who are prized offspring, so men spend considerably more time with male children than female. They playfully strike each other as the men hope to have fierce sons. (Chagnon, 1977, 84)

4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals:

Young men who are not yet ready to compete for sexually active females will sometimes have homosexual relationships. This seems just to be part of the cycle. (Chagnon, 1977, 76)

4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy):

“a small village may require alliances with larger villages for purposes, of defense, and the men of the small village may promise to give daughters to men in the larger village.”

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

Not at all, in fact half-siblings are seen the same as full siblings. (Chagnon, 1977, 55)

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

Conventional, they are to be the mother.

4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)?

No

4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape

Rape is a part of the raid, of the inter-village warfare. “Although few raids are initiated solely with the intention of capturing women, this is always a desired side benefit. A few wars, however are started with the intention of abducting women.” (Chagnon, 1977, 123)

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

The preferential category for a spouse is cross-cousin. (Chagnon, 1977, 64)

4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?

No, women are married off to specific husbands for the purposes of reproduction and if caught having relations with a man other than their husband they are beaten. (Chagnon, 1977, 56)

4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring

Extramarital practice is taboo, and garners retribution from mates, so this is not a phenomenon.

4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children?

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

1.14 (Chagnon, 1977, 74)

4.22 Evidence for couvades

No evidence.

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

No.

4.24 Kin avoidance and respect?

Men avoid their parents-in-law, as they control bride service, and son-in-laws are obligated to hunt for parents of the bride. (Chagnon, 1977, 93)

4.24 Joking relationships?

No evidence.

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

Descent is patrilineal, what is important is distinguishing lineages with relation to men, as they do not name lineages. (Chagnon, 1977, 65-67)

4.26 Incest avoidance rules

It is considered incest to be involved in any relations (sexual or not) with the mother of a wife if she is sexually active, so males try to avoid their mother-in-laws. (Chagnon, 1977, 61)

4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony?

No.

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

Names are highly secret, and members do not like to hear their own name, for this reason teknonymy is used a lot. Only friends and family really know names and most outsiders just know nick-names.

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

“Women abhor the possibility of being given to men in distant villages, since their fate is much less certain. Men in general are cruel to their wives, and the women rely on the protection of their brothers.” (Chagnon, 1977, 69)

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

“Marriages are arranged by the male members of the local descent group... A man has considerably more say about the disposition of his daughters when he is young and has immature sons. As the sons grow older, they can overrule the father and insist that the girl be given to a man from some lineage that is likely to reciprocate with a sister.” (Chagnon, 1977, 69)

4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who:

The

Warfare/homicide

4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare:

24-30 % of males die due to warfare. (Chagnon, 1974, 160)

4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death:

Outgroup cause of violent death is raiding and “sorcery,” ingroup is considerably more rare and is caused by dueling with clubs. (Chagnon, 1974, 160)

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

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

The only neighboring villages are Yanomamö.

4.18 Cannibalism?

Yes. “The ashes of the deceased are consumed in order that the living will see their departed friends in *hedu*. Members of allied villages show their friendship to each other by sharing, in the ashes of particularly important people, in a very intimate act. Endocannibalism, to the Yanomamö, is the supreme form of displaying friendship and solidarity. (Chagnon, 1977, 51)

5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size:

See 1.7

5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality):

Mostly sedentary year-round. (Chagnon, 1977, 26) (Not a lot of seasons in the Amazon, apart from dry and wet)

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

Headmen are those that are revered for their ferocity (Chagnon, 1974, 8) or for their shamanistic powers (

5.4 Post marital residence:

With the bride's family. (Chagnon, 1977, 59)

5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense):

The Yanomamö use the forests directly around their villages and garden in them. It is that area that they protect and when raiding it is that area that they attack in other villages. (Chagnon, 1977, 122)

5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex):

Children are those who

In women: have not started menstruating, and are not viable wives

In men: When they have gained enough respect from other adults that they are no longer referred to by their personal name.

(Chagnon, 1977, 85)

5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships:

No evidence.

5.8 Village and house organization:

The Yanomamö live in large group homes called *shabono*. The *shabono* is constructed by the groups together, and each family or individual creates their own part of the large structure. It is sort of like a series of houses arranged in a circle, but there is usually a large, shared roof. The structures must be continually rebuilt to combat wear, rot, and insects. (Chagnon, 1977, 25)

5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses):

No.

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?

They sleep in hammocks in a *shabono*, a large, communal structure. Every person has their own individual compartment in it, it is a large, circular stick-walled and leaf-roofed house. (Chagnon, 1977, 25)

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

Lineages live together, usually a village is made up of at least two descent groups and they reciprocate marriage. (Chagnon, 1977, 56)

5.12 Trade:

The biggest form of trade is bride reciprocation. (Chagnon, 1977, 56) and after Chagnon arrives, machetes. (Chagnon, 1974, 10)

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies?

It is the strongest man who becomes headman of a village, through reputation for ferocity. (Chagnon, 1974, 8)

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

6.0 Time allocation to RCR:

Shamans spend their time practicing medicine, and dealing with demons. They protect the village they live in from outside demons, and cause demons to go to enemy villages. (Chagnon, 1977, 52)

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine):

For those who want to practice shamanism, men simply fast and remain chaste for a few days as they learn magic. Chagnon estimates that roughly half of all men are shamans. (Chagnon, 1977, 52)

6.2 Stimulants:

Bark from the *ebene* tree. It is ground with ashes and heated into a powder that is ingested by one person blowing the powder into another's nostrils. (Chagnon, 1977, 23-24)

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

"At first menses, *yöbö nou*, Yanomamö girls are confined to their houses and hidden behind a screen of leaves. Their old cotton garments are discarded and replaced by new ones manufactured by their mothers or by older female friends. During this week of confinement, the girl is fed by her relatives; her food must be eaten by means of a stick, as she is not allowed to come into contact with it in any other fashion. She must also scratch herself with a set of sticks. The Yanomamö word for menstruation translates literally as "squatting," and that fairly accurately describes what pubescent females (and adult women) do during menstruation...After her puberty confinement, a girl is eligible to begin life as a wife and take up residence with her husband...Males, on the other hand, do not have their transition into manhood marked by a ceremony." (Chagnon, 1977, 85)

6.4 Other rituals:

6.5 Myths (Creation):

There were *first beings* that were created by the cosmos themselves, which can no longer be accounted for. The *first beings* were responsible for creating maybe a useful plant or something significant in the lives of the Yanomamö, and bear the name of that item that they made. After most everything was created, the *first beings* were mostly wiped out in a great flood. The survivors of the flood climbed up and lived on mountains to become Yanomamö—but it doesn't end there! The moon being, *Periboriwa* still survived and would periodically come down to the mountain tops and consume the souls of the

children. On one such trip he was shot in the abdomen with a bamboo arrow and as his blood spilled upon the earth it created more Yanomamö, fierce in nature because of their blood origin—all if not most of the Yanomamö who live today are descended from the war-like people. (Chagnon, 1977, 45-48)

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games):

They have contests referred to by Chagnon as club duels. Partakers take on an opponent one-on-one start with sticks and non-lethal weapons and eventually build up to lethal ones, helped out by their families. (Asch)

6.7 Sex differences in RCR:

Women don't seem to have any practice.

6.8 Missionary effect:

See 7.8

6.9 RCR revival:

Missionary effect is still ongoing.

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs:

"The true or real portion of living man is his "will" or "self" (*buhii*). At death, this changes a *no borebo* and travels from this layer to *hedu*, the place above where the souls of the departed continue to exist in an ethereal state, much in the same fashion as do the people on earth: gardening, hunting, and practicing magic...Another portion of the soul, the *no uhudi* or *bore*, is released at cremation this part of the soul remains on earth and wanders about in the jungle. The children who die always change into this, as they do not have the *no borebo* portion that goes to *hedu*: it must be acquired." (Chagnon, 1977, 48)

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?

They do not name dead people. (Chagnon, 1977, 11)

6.12 Is there teknonymy?

There is a taboo for using the names of the deceased, so yes. (Chagnon, 1977, 11)

Men cannot use their mother-in-law's name. (Chagnon, 1977, 64)

Teknonymy can also be an indicator of when a man passes through puberty, as there is no formal ritual. When he is no longer referred to by teknonomous references, he is a man. (Chagnon, 1977, 85)

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

They believe in a Cosmos, comprised of mythical, supernatural beings. All life descended from the uppermost of four layers of Cosmos, which is now barren and known as "an old woman," through the

“sky layer” and to “this layer.” A long time ago a village fell from “this layer” and made an underground layer. The village is all alone in their barren layer so they must come up to “this layer” to hunt, they reap the souls of the living. (Chagnon, 1977, 44)

7. Adornment

7.1 Body paint:

Men will paint their bodies for raiding and ritualized drug taking, covering their skin in patterns specific to themselves. (Chagnon, 1977, 94 & 109)

7.2 Piercings:

Referring to the photographs of 156 individuals for identification in Appendix E of *Studying the Yanomamö*, piercings include:

Ears: Rods of various colors made of bone or wood, or small feathers fashioned to hang, sometimes a combination of the two that resemble small arrows.

Lips: Thin bones or reeds pierced through the lower lip symmetrically, or even a feather piercing that looks oddly like facial hair, of which the *Yanomamö* do not have.

(Chagnon, 1974, 230-256)

7.3 Haircut:

In the 156 individuals photographed and logged in the back of *Studying the Yanomamö*, all of them have bowl cuts (Chagnon, 1974, 230-256). In *the Fierce People*, it is mentioned that men will modify the bowl cut into a tonsure to display scars gained from club fighting. (Chagnon, 1977, 119)

7.4 Scarification:

No evidence, besides from the scars gained from club fights, which victims wear as pride of their ferocity as stated in 7.3 (Chagnon, 1977, 119)

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

Again Chagnon goes into not much further detail than calling them hideous and half-naked (Chagnon, 1977, 5), but in general dress, they wear only loin-cloths and may or may not have a bead belt with a feather or two. (Chagnon, 1977, 38)

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment:

If a person does not usually adorn themselves with the earrings and body paint, they most certainly seem to when ritualizing hallucinogen use or reading for a raid. (Chagnon, 1947, xviii & 12)

7.7 Sex differences in adornment:

They both seem to be fairly similar. Perhaps the patterns differ, but they seem to be individualistic in nature.

7.8 Missionary effect:

The concept of Sin, in 1972 Chagnon takes note of the group from Mömariböwei-teri, who had moved from their mountain top homes down to the river to be able to keep in contact with the missionaries. They had been informed that their polygyny and drug use was sin and that they must give it up. They did not want sin, so they did. The river banks were mosquito infested swamps and they had much trouble cultivating gardens, and waited to be “fed and clothed by the people from God’s village until their gardens began producing; they were going to learn how to sing and be happy. (Chagnon, 1974, 181)

7.9 Cultural revival in adornment:

The missionary effect is ongoing.

8. Kinship systems

8.1 Sibling classification system:

“Their kinship system is called the ‘bifurcate merging’ type with ‘Iroquois’ cousin terms. Within each generation, all the males of one lineage call each other ‘brother,’ and all the women call each other ‘sister.’ Males of lineage X call males of lineage Y ‘brother-in-law’ and are eligible to marry their sisters. In fact, males of lineage X call females of lineage Y wife whether or not they marry them.”(Chagnon, 1977, 56)

8.2 Sororate, levirate:

Although sororal polygyny exists, there is no evidence of anything traditionally sororate or levirate; they are not obliged to marry the siblings of deceased partners. (Chagnon, 1977, 61)

8.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.):

9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):

They heavily practice infanticide. It is more preferential to have sons than daughters, and they kill a newborn regardless of gender if the mother is already nursing as they believe that it will most likely die anyways as the older and larger baby will take all of the milk. Males are preferred as they become the warriors and hunters of the group. It is also important to note that this is a really common thing, infanticide. (Chagnon, 1977, 74)

The Yanomamö have only three numbers: One, Two, and More-Than-Two. (Chagnon, 1977, 74)

Shabonos are burned down and moved routinely (2 years at most) to combat infestation of bugs.
(Chagnon, 1977, 25)

Numbered references

1. Asch, Timoty, dir. *The Ax Fight*. Dir. Napoleon Chagnon. 1975. Film.
2. Chagnon, Napoleon. *Yanomamö: The fierce people*. 2nd. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1977. Print.
3. Chagnon, Napoleon. *Studying the Yanomamö*. 1st. Hold, Rinehart, and Winston, 1974. Print.