

# **Teresa Avila and Emily Mallow: Pipil**

## **1. Description**

- 1.1 Name of society, language, and language family: Pipil, Pipil language, Uto-Aztecan. The language is more or less dead, with about 3 speakers left.
- 1.2 ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com): CAI
- 1.3 Location (latitude/longitude): Found in the southeast Pacific coast and southeaster highlands of Guatemala, as well as western and central El Salvador. There were a few in Honduras as well.<sup>3</sup>
- 1.4 Brief history: The Pipil were the predominant tribe in El Salvador before the invasion of the Spaniards. They were descendents of the Aztecs<sub>3</sub> (and Toltecs<sub>4</sub>), diverging from a proto-Nahua culture that entered Mesoamerica around A.D. 500. They had continuous war-like interactions with Nicaraao, as each group strove to obtain land and resources. In 1524 an expedition from Guatemala was led by Pedro de Alvarado and met a resistance from the Pipil. However, they came to be defeated by the invaders. Today they are largely integrated into modern society.<sup>3</sup>
- 1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors: The native Pipil more or less inhabited the whole of El Salvador before the invasion of the Spaniards. The conquistadors established new systems of economy, faith and culture, forcing many of the Pipil to give up their original culture or to suppress it. In 1932 General Maximilio Hernández Martínez massacred nearly 30,000 rural peasants. A ban on the Pipil language was placed in the 1930s. In later years, in the sixties and seventies, the native people began to attempt to retake some control of their lives, aided by the Catholic Church.<sup>3</sup> Also heavily influenced by Mayan neighbors, indicative in their worship of corn.<sup>4</sup>
- 1.6 Ecology: The landscape included mountainous regions, volcanic regions and coastal plains and lowlands. A portion of the Pipil could be found in lowlands made fertile by the presence of volcanoes. The Pipil only recognize two seasons: summer, the dry season and winter, the wet season. The environment contains tropical deciduous, small evergreen seasonal forests, intertidal mangrove forests, upland vegetation, oak-pine forest, and cloud forest.<sup>3</sup>
- 1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density: There are about 100,000-250,000 people. <sup>3</sup>

## **2. Economy**

- 2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s): maize, squash, sweet potatoes, sweet manioc <sup>3</sup>
- 2.2 Main protein-lipid sources: Cashews, avocado, beans, peanuts, deer and rabbit jerky, tapirs, peccaries, monkeys, various birds, fish, mollusks, crustaceans, turtles, iguana, various insects, turkey <sup>3</sup>
- 2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?: Spears <sup>4</sup> bow, and arrow, some men could catch cottontail rabbits with bare hands <sup>3</sup>
- 2.4 Food storage: Protected by wooden crosses and by corncobs arranged in a traditional way. <sup>5</sup>
- 2.5 Sexual division of production: Overall, women were in charge of domestic affairs such as cooking and child-rearing. Men were focused on the fields and crops, as well as hunting, where it was practiced.<sup>2</sup> Weaving and pottery was a very female-oriented skill as well.<sup>3</sup>
- 2.6 Land tenure: Many families had to pay tribute to more powerful groups to be allowed their land. There are several records of tributes paid by families.<sup>3</sup>
- 2.7 Ceramics: Made pottery<sup>3</sup>
- 2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns: Sharing occurs mainly within families, with families trading goods with one another.<sup>3</sup>
- 2.9 Food taboos: None specifically
- 2.10 Canoes/watercraft?: Canoes present, often made from *conacaste*.<sup>3</sup>

## **3. Anthropometry**

- 3.1 Mean adult height (m and f): Unknown
- 3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f): Unknown

## **4. Life History, mating, marriage**

- 4.1 Age at menarche (f): Unknown

- 4.2 Age at first birth (m and f): No specific number, but women got married and had children a year or two after menarche.<sup>2</sup>
- 4.3 Completed family size (m and f): Unknown
- 4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f): Most women conceive their next child a year after the birth of the previous. There is a 6-month period of abstinence after birth, and 11-month amenorrhea<sup>2</sup>
- 4.5 Age first marriage (m and f): Young women are married soon after menarche. Young men work 5-7 years after reaching puberty before marrying. Most husbands are 3-5 years older than their wives<sup>2</sup>
- 4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce: Unknown
- 4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously: Presence of concubines for the leaders. Otherwise it's understood that you can't leave one's wife.<sup>3</sup>
- 4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?: The men's family would present a dowry of fruit trees and bride price of cotton, hens, etc.<sup>3</sup> Often the young man had to have worked for the bride price as well. The bride's family would reciprocate.<sup>2</sup>
- 4.9 Inheritance patterns: Mainly father to son.<sup>3</sup> It was not uncommon to see the youngest, or favorite son, being given the land and home, which could cause some conflict among the rest of the children. You did see evidence of daughters inheriting land as well, though it happened less often.<sup>2</sup>
- 4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict: Overall, the parents were meant to be respected and seen as ideal models of their genders' roles in society. Mothers were said to be very close to daughters, just as men were close to sons. Sons were discouraged from moving too far away, while mothers would often grieve at weddings at the loss of a daughter. After a baby was weaned from a mother, it went to sleep on the father's mat and it was understood that the father showed great affection for his child, boy or girl. You might see some conflict when one child inherited more than another.<sup>2</sup>
- 4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals: Some mention that homosexuals may be beaten or stoned to death.<sup>3</sup> There is some homoerotic play between young men, but overall, there doesn't seem to be intense homophobia. It is of note that they believe that the balance of the universe is based on a heterosexual model; a male force and female force working together.<sup>2</sup>
- 4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy): Endogamous marriage was encouraged among men who had distinguished themselves in war, thought to strengthen familial ties. Exogamy was accepted for everyone else, in which you really shouldn't be too closely related to the spouse.<sup>3</sup>
- 4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these "other fathers" recognized?: There is one, clear father for each child.<sup>2,3</sup>
- 4.14 What is the belief of the mother's role in procreation exactly? (e.g., "receptacle in which fetus grows"): It's believed that her sexual secretions are mixed with those of the father, and that the balance between them determines the baby's gender. The female then provides the receptacle in which the fetus can grow.<sup>2</sup>
- 4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)?: As stated above, it's believed that male and female sexual secretions mix to create the baby.<sup>2</sup>
- 4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape: It does occur, but not socially acceptable.<sup>3</sup>
- 4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin): You couldn't marry parents, children or siblings, but cousins were preferred among the wealthy/distinguished.<sup>3</sup>
- 4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms: Not exactly. They're married soon after puberty and are expected to remain faithful to their husbands. Young girls are taught to have strong sexual shame, and warned not to become women who are obsessed with sex. Boys are also taught the dangers of being too obsessed with sex, but it doesn't seem to have the shame associated with it.<sup>2</sup>
- 4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring: none found
- 4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children?: Unknown
- 4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females: Unknown
- 4.22 Evidence for couvades: None noted
- 4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older): The marriage tends to be between young men and young women; older men don't necessarily have a better chance than younger men.<sup>3</sup>
- 4.24 Kin avoidance and respect: One is expected to respect one's parents, with specific titles that indicate their representation of different energies and roles in the home. There is some evidence of sons looking up to their mothers as the model of ideal femininity, and what they should look for in a wife.<sup>2</sup>
- 4.24 Joking relationships: None noted

- 4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations: It was mainly based on the male and his sons. Women could inherit land and houses, about 20% of the time, but overall it was based on the father's line.<sup>2,3</sup>
- 4.26 Incest avoidance rules: An official law against incest, punishable by death. Many of the Nahua are especially concerned with the dangers of incest and of emotions running high between a young brother and sister.<sup>2</sup>
- 4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony?: Yes. In marriage, the bride's kin washed the groom in a river, and the groom's did the same with a bride. They were wrapped in white mantles and taken to the bride's house where the ends of the mantles were knotted together and thus marriage.<sup>3</sup>
- 4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name?: Mainly marriage<sup>3</sup>
- 4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?): The sons are encouraged to remain close to the father, while the daughter may or may not be married to someone outside the community. Sometimes you have husbands coming to live with their wives' families, but in general you have patrilocality with the women being unrelated.<sup>2</sup>
- 4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)?: The families tend to organize marriages, though the bride and groom's opinions are taken into consideration.<sup>2,3</sup>
- 4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who: mothers may show grief at daughters moving so far away. There are also always stories of young married women suffering under the rule of their mother-in-laws.<sup>2</sup>

### **Warfare/homicide**

- 4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare: Unknown
- 4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death: Unknown
- 4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing: Unknown
- 4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations): The Pipil had plenty of surrounding neighbors, and clashed with them frequently. In other cases, tributes were paid. They apparently lost land sometime before the Spanish arrived. Warfare was an expression of political force.<sup>3</sup>
- 4.18 Cannibalism?: Some evidence of carbonized human remains, a part of the religious ceremonies.<sup>3</sup>

### **5. Socio-Political organization and interaction**

- 5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size: Unknown
- 5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality): Stay in one place year-round.<sup>3,4</sup> Migrated into their land to escape from oppressive conditions with the Aztecs.<sup>3</sup>
- 5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes): There were a series of caciques, political and religious leaders, that presided over councils, made warfare decisions, community decisions, performed marriage ceremonies and directed planting of crops. Wealth and status classes that were obtained hereditarily, there was some mobility between classes. Calpuleque were other nobility who served as council members, war captains, confessors and priests. Communities run by a cacique and council of elders. The cacique distributed land, houses and slaves to nobility.<sup>3</sup>
- 5.4 Post marital residence: A separate home for the newly-wed couple, usually not too far from the husband's family, or they go to live with someone's parents, mostly the husband's but on occasion the wife's.<sup>2,3</sup>
- 5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense): Active, defensive boundaries with other surrounding groups. War was a huge, defining aspect of society.<sup>3</sup>
- 5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex): As children, women were kept closer to home and taught to do housework. Boys had more freedom in general. Grown up, women were seen as the heads of all domestic affairs, the center of the family. Men represented the family to the outside world.<sup>2</sup>
- 5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships: Not particularly noted.
- 5.8 Village and house organization: Familial organization, with family units usually headed by fathers, though the women were understood as the center of the family, providing a feminine counterbalance to the masculine one.<sup>2,3</sup>
- 5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses): Houses held the family units. Young men, in the 5-7 years of their puberty, were usually expected to sleep apart from the rest of the family. There are some reports of youth houses being built, especially for the young men in this age group.<sup>2</sup>
- 5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?: Sleeping mats on the ground.<sup>2</sup>

- 5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc: The Pipil had a standard hierarchy of nobles, commoners, and peasants. Large and powerful families demanded tribute from villages under them. Lineage was passed down from father to son.<sup>3</sup>
- 5.12 Trade: A well-developed system of regional and interregional exchange, Trade in cacao, woven textiles, stone and bone tools, pottery, cotton, salt, dried fish.<sup>3</sup>
- 5.13 Indications of social hierarchies?: There were social classes of nobles, commoners, and slaves. The higher born tended to be the ones on council and leading the communities.<sup>3</sup>

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

6 Time allocation to RCR: Unknown

- 6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine): The caciques had high political and religious occupations, some would enter temples and live there for a year in solitude, praying and seeking penitence for his community. He would emerge to a grand celebration and have his nose pierced. Priests were also present.<sup>3</sup>
- 6.2 Stimulants: Tobacco and coca.<sup>3</sup>
- 6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal): Baby girls were given a spindle whorl and ball of cotton<sup>3</sup>, a boy became a man when he married and had children, celebrated through a ceremony and ritual.<sup>2</sup>
- 6.4 Other rituals: There was a hunting ritual involving sacrificing a deer, there was evidence of sacrificial victims who were generally prisoners of war, auto-sacrificing, and sacrificial ball games.<sup>3</sup>
- 6.5 Myths (Creation): One version is that the world created by Tamagazque and Cipactonal, ate human heart and blood.<sup>3</sup> A second version found describes the earth starting as an empty space until a great warrior Teotl created a fire from rubbing two branches together and creating the stars from the sparks. His work attracted the attention of Teopantli, Ruler of the Universe. Teotl's fire created the sun, and it warmed and excited the earth to create life. Teopantli was so awestruck and humbled by the world that he shed a tear, which became the moon.<sup>1</sup>  
A second myth found in the Pipil is one concerning the origin of white corn, which tells of a young woman with beautiful white teeth who knocked out her teeth in order to help her village's famine. The teeth grew into white corn.<sup>5</sup>
- 6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games): The traditional ball game often associated with Aztecs, ceramics and weavings, lithic artifacts.<sup>3</sup>
- 6.7 Sex differences in RCR: Men are generally in charge of these rituals, but women have been known to step in.<sup>2</sup>
- 6.8 Missionary effect: European missionaries more or less wiped out the traditional beliefs of the Pipil, replacing them completely or creating a hybridization.<sup>2,3,4</sup>
- 6.9 RCR revival: Not much to speak of
- 6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs: Those who died in battle or lived a good life went to live with the gods and people who had lived bad lives or died at homes went to the underworld.<sup>3</sup>
- 6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?: No
- 6.12 Is there teknonymy?: No
- 6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.): There is a pantheon with effigy bottles being used to represent the gods: Tlaloc (rain god), Xipe Totec (flayed one).<sup>3</sup> There is evidence that some believe in a cosmic interaction of male and female forces, the male force providing energy and the female offering nourishment.<sup>2</sup>

## **7. Adornment**

- 7.1 Body paint: Present, specialized tattoo artists lived by their skills.<sup>3</sup>
- 7.2 Piercings: Important caciques would get their noses pierced after a year of solitude to indicate their statuses.<sup>3</sup>
- 7.3 Haircut: None found
- 7.4 Scarification: None found
- 7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.): Warriors wore thick bands of cotton as armor<sup>3</sup>
- 7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment: Unknown
- 7.7 Sex differences in adornment: Unknown
- 7.8 Missionary effect: Unknown
- 7.9 Cultural revival in adornment: None.

## **8. Kinship systems**

- 8.1 Sibling classification system: The eldest sibling was not necessarily the most favored. There is evidence of fathers passing their land and possessions to the favorite child, however old they may be.<sup>2</sup>
- 8.2 Sororate, levirate: Does occur, though it's not a strictly regular or obligatory thing.<sup>3</sup>
- 8.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.):  
Unknown

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

1. There is an oral history of the Pipil migrating into Central America, apparently to leave unsatisfactory masters.<sup>3</sup>
2. May have brought yugos, hachas, and palmas from ballgame<sup>3</sup>
3. Language mixing with neighboring Pokom?<sup>3</sup> Iffy evidence, Fowler says.
4. Rubber was extremely important to make balls for the ritualistic ball game, and was offered to deities. Some Pipil burned rubber and *copal* for rituals. Lots of indigo dye and basalm oil was produced here as well.<sup>3</sup>
5. Used hieroglyphs<sup>4</sup>

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