

1. Description

1.1 Name of society, language, and language family: Piro (alternate names: Chontaquiro, Contaquiro, Pira, Pirro, Simiranch, "Simirinche"). Language name is Yine. From the Arawak language family (1).

1.2 ISO code: pib (1).

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude): Latitude: -9.825; Longitude: -73.087 (2). "One of the most important Arawakan tribes in the Amazon region is the Piro...they occupy the highlands around the headwaters of the Purus, Mishagua, Camisea, and Manu Rivers. In former times there were large groups living along the Urubamba, where they came in contact with the Inca, and assisted them in building the fort of Tonquini. Samuel Fritz's map (1707) shows them in the section between the Ucayali and Pachitea Rivers" (3, pg: 53).

1.4 Brief history:

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

1.6 Ecology: "The climate is opposite that of the United States. Because Peru is in the Southern Hemisphere, the seasons are opposite of those in the U.S. The winter months are June, July and August, and they are the dry months. The dry months coincide with the low water levels on the river. The summer goes from December through February and they are the wetter months, and is likewise, the high water level time. In the wet season, there can be rain every day. So much rain can fall that the Amazon River can rise as much as 40 feet from its lowest point. Because the jungle is so flat, this causes major flooding. From the foot of the Andes Mountains to the mouth of the Amazon River at the Atlantic Ocean, the elevation change is only about 100 meters, or about 330 feet. When the Amazon River reaches its maximum height, the force of the water will cause the tributary rivers to actually flow backwards. This causes much of the jungle to flood. When this happens, the jungle people move to the cities until the water level recedes. The people must do this every year" (5).

1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density: "Today their numbers are reduced, through contact with white man's civilization, to five or six hundred" (3, pg: 53).

2. Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s): "The Piro have larger fields and grow more agricultural products than any of the neighboring tribes. Their staples are cassava, corn, plantains, and sweet potatoes, which are common among their neighbors. Corn is eaten on the cob, parched in a shallow pot, or its meal is made into bread" (3, pg: 55).

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources: "They [the Piro] eat all kinds of wild game, with a few exceptions" (3, pg: 56).

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns: "In hunting they use the bow and arrow for shooting game and fish. In using the bow they hold it in the right hand, with the end having the loose string uppermost, the thumb gripping the bow and the forefinger over the arrow, which is placed on the same side of the bow as the hand. The bow is drawn with the third, fourth and fifth fingers on the string, and the end of the arrow is held on the string with the thumb and index finger. It is a noteworthy fact that nearly all of the men and boys seen using the bow held it in the right hand and drew the string with the left. Men who were right-handed in other ways took the bow in the right hand, and drew it with the left" (3, pg: 56).

2.4 Food storage: **See 2.7 "Ceramics" for information on food storage** (3, pg: 56).

2.5 Sexual division of production:

2.6 Land tenure:

2.7 Ceramics: "The Piro make rough coarse pottery for ordinary use, and depend on the Conebo for finer vessels. Their pottery is made and burned by the same method used by the Conebo. What appears to be a glaze is only a coating of resin from the yutuhy-sica. They make carrying and working baskets for holding their cotton, spindlewhorls, and working implements; also the small telescope basket common among the Campa, which is used for carrying their toilet articles and trinkets. When on the trail, they carry game in a rough basket made of two palm leaves" (3, pg: 56).

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:

2.9 Food taboos: "They [the Piro] will not eat the common red deer, because the soul of man at death goes into the red deer. Their belief in this respect is similar to that of the Macheyenga, except that among the Piro it is only the man's soul, not the woman's that goes into the deer. They will not eat domesticated chickens and ducks, because these birds eat refuse, yet they will eat their eggs with great relish" (3, pg: 56).

2.10 Canoes/watercraft?

3. Anthropometry

3.1 Mean adult height (m and f):

3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f):

4. Life History, mating, marriage

4.1 Age at menarche (f): No specific age is given for menarche, but there is a very specific puberty ritual that a female must undergo before she is allowed to be married; it is described as such: "marriage cannot take place until after the puberty ceremony of defloration, "pisca," has taken place. It is said that a woman is unclean until after pisca has been performed. The operation is performed by the old women in private, while a dance is going on outside. The girl is made drunk with chicha, and the hymen is cut with a bamboo knife" (3, pg: 59).

4.2 Age at first birth (m and f): No age is given for first birth, but some interesting information on the female birthing process in the Piro culture is as follows: "When a woman is about to be confined she retires alone to the forest across the river. After the birth of the child, she brings it to the river, washes it, bathes herself, and returns to the village" (3, pg: 60).

4.3 Completed family size (m and f): "The families are not large, according to reports from the Indians and from owners. There are rarely more than three or four children in a family. They give as reasons the fact that women have children early, that the children nurse until they are three years old because of the lack of other proper food, and that women work as men. There does not appear to be any control over birth, or any great infant mortality. The largest family we saw had four sons and two daughters with one mother" (3, pg: 59).

4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f): **See 4.3 "Family size" for some information regarding inter-birth-interval** (3, pg: 59).

4.5 Age first marriage (m and f):

4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce:

4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously: "A man may take a child for his wife, and keep her in his family until she is old enough to be married. The father of the chief at Portillo had a wife not more than ten years of age living with his family, while his first wife, who was old enough to be her grandmother, was still living" (3, pg: 59).

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

4.9 Inheritance patterns: **See 5.3 "Political System" contains inheritance information.** (3, pg: 53).

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict:

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?

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

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

4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape:

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

4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms: "When [the chief was] asked what the punishment would be if a wife should prove unfaithful, he replied that he did not know that such a thing had ever happened" (3, pg: 54). "It has been said that the Piro were very loose in their marriage relations. The ground for this report is the custom which is common among the Piro of the loaning of wives. When a Piro, without his wife, visits a friend at a distance, a wife is loaned him for the time of his stay" (3, pg: 59).

4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring: **See 4.18 "Sexual Freedom" for information regarding extramarital relationships** (3, pg: 54).

4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children: One source says, "They [the Piro] are very apt in comprehending what is needed or desired of them, and respond freely and quickly," so I would be led to believe that this goes for helping one another in times of need/death as well (3, pg: 61).

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

4.22 Evidence for couvades

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

4.24 Kin avoidance and respect?

4.24 Joking relationships: “They are good natured and lively, often joking and playing tricks on one another” (3, pg: 61).

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

4.26 Incest avoidance rules

4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony?: “When a young man thinks of taking a wife, he speaks first to the chief, and if the chief thinks the marriage agreeable, he speaks for the young man to the girl’s father. If all agree, the chief takes the young man and woman by the hands, leads them first to the girl’s parents, then to the boy’s parents, and if no objection is raised, he, without ceremony, pronounces them man and wife. At the same time, a dance takes place with the drinking of chicha, and after it is all over the young man takes his bride to his own home” (3, pg: 59).

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

4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community?: “The Piro marry within the tribe, but outside of their own village. A young man may select his wife for himself, or parents who have children near the same age may agree among themselves that the children shall be married when they reach the proper age. The children are then known as man and wife or as belonging to each other, and they may even live together, but are not married until after the puberty ceremonies have been performed” (3, pg: 59).

4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges?: **See 4.29 “Marriage preference” for information regarding arranged marriages** (3, pg: 59).

4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who:

Warfare/homicide

4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare:

4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death: According to one source, the Piro were some of the most reserved and restrained Indians they had ever encountered; seeming extremely non-violent and really trustworthy (3, pg: 61).

4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing: **See 5.13 “Social Hierarchies” for information about murders within tribe** (3, pg: 54).

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

4.18 Cannibalism?

5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size:

5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality):

5.3 Political system: “The Piro have a very good tribal organization under the leadership of a hereditary chief who has absolute authority. The chief is called Klineriwakipiya. It is not his individual name, but the name of the office of chieftainship, which he inherits from his father. If a chief has no son, his brother inherits, and the descent is in his line. If the son is too young to exercise his authority when his father dies, the oldest man in the tribe performs the duties of the chief until the boy is about eighteen or twenty, when he assumes his office” (3, pg: 53).

5.4 Post marital residence:

5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense):

5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex):

5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships: “They are very thoughtful for the comfort of others, offering food and drink. They are good natured and lively, often playing tricks upon one another” (3, pg: 61).

5.8 Village and house organization: “Several houses were built around a very large field. The houses varied in size according to the families occupying them. One small house was twenty feet long, twelve feet wide, and eighteen feet high to the ridge pole. The houses are oriented north and south, and sometimes have the north end closed, but for the most part the gables are open to the ridge pole. The roof comes down to within five or six feet of the ground. A platform, four or five feet high, is built along one side or across one end, occupying two-thirds or more of the whole space. This platform is covered with split chonta palm, and is used for a living and sleeping place. A notched pole leads from the ground to the platform. The fireplaces are along the sides or at the end, their location depending upon the position of the platform. Firewood, cooking pots, and utensils of all kinds are kept under the platform. There is sometimes a small platform over the fire for keeping food, and another outside of the house, either covered or open, which is used for storage and for drying clothing” (3, pg: 54-55).

5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses):

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground: **See 5.8 "House Organization" for information on sleeping arrangements** (3, pg: 55).

5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc: **See 5.3 and 5.13 for information about lineages** (3, pg: 53-54).

5.12 Trade: "The Piro are the greatest lovers of dogs of all the tribes; they breed them for trade, and give them great care. They are kept in enclosures underneath the platforms [of the houses]" (3, pg: 55).

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies: "The chief takes control of all the affairs of the tribe, and always remains at home except on very special occasions. He never does any work in the fields, goes hunting, or on a journey, but sends men to perform all of these duties. He determines upon an undertaking, and assigns each man to his own particular task. The chief settles all disputes that arise within his tribe, or between tribes. There is very little evidence of crime of any kind, and when the chief was asked about it, he said that there were no quarrels, that no one ever took anything that did not belong to him, and that there was no excuse for committing murder" (3, pg: 54).

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

6 Time allocation to RCR: **See 6.4 "Other rituals" for a brief description on some time allocation for myths and story-telling** (4, pg: 79).

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine): "The Piro have no medicine man. The chief takes care of the health of his people. He uses certain herbs and manipulations. The people are all taught to take care of themselves, and one is constantly surprised at the things they know" (3, pg: 60).

6.2 Stimulants: [The Piro] grow tobacco, which they smoke in large wooden pipes with short bird-bone stems, like those of the Conebo. Tobacco is also used for making snuff, which is taken through the nostrils. When the tobacco is dry, they hold it over the fire in a leaf until it is very crisp; it is then pulverized in the palm of the hand, and taken by means of the colipa, a V-shaped instrument made of two leg bones of a heron. The end of one bone is decorated so that it may be distinguished from the other. The snuff is placed in the decorated end, while the other end is placed in the nose, and an assistant blows the stuff with a sharp puff into the nostril" (3, pgs: 56-57). "This same instrument [the colipa] is used by the hunter for taking the pulverized, roasted seeds of *Acacia niopo* as a stimulant and narcotic. The hunter administers the same powder to his dogs, believing that both he and the dogs will be more alert and have clearer vision" (3, pg: 57).

6.3 Passage rituals: "Under the platform [of one of the Piro houses] there were several burials. It is the common method among the Piro to bury the dead under these platforms" (3, pg: 55). "When a man dies, he is buried in the floor of a house, at full length, and the family moves away and builds another house in some other part of the field. A man's bows, arrows, pipes, and everything he possesses, are buried with him, except his dogs, which are killed and buried in a grave nearby. The men of the immediate family take charge of the body and bury it; in the meantime the women moan and weep outside. A widow cuts her hair close to her head, and is not allowed to marry again until her hair has grown out. All the children, also, have their hair cut. The chief takes care of the widow and the children until she is remarried" (3, pg: 60).

6.4 Other rituals: "For Piro people, mythic narration is an activity with certain characteristic properties. Myths are *tsrunnini ginkakle*, 'ancient people's stories.' They are usually told in moments of rest by older people to younger people, in the intimate surroundings of the house. They are most often, in my experience, told on quiet evenings, after people have eaten and before they feel overwhelmed by sleep. Most often, I was told, grandparents would tell these stories to their grandchildren. For Piro people, this specific setting for the telling of 'ancient people's stories' has pragmatic obviousness: myths are told by people who know them well to people who do not know them at all when there is little else to do. What motivates such story-telling is, as far as I am aware, simply that they are interesting: the teller wants to tell them, and the listeners want to listen" (4, pg: 79).

6.5 Myths (Creation): 'The Birth of Tsla' is a Piro myth about jaguar creationism, but I didn't find anything about Piro Creation myths specifically about how the Piro came to be (4, pg: 103-105).

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games): Cats Cradles (3, pg: 62).

6.7 Sex differences in RCR:

6.8 Missionary effect:

6.9 RCR revival:

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs: **See 4.9 "Food Taboos" for information regarding death/afterlife** (3, pg: 56). **See also 6.3 "Passage Rituals"** (3, pg: 60). "The Piro do not like to handle a corpse, and will not do so except to take care of their own dead. When there is

an epidemic in the village they believe that it is due to the presence of a “buija,” or witch, and the chief may designate the witch and order him killed” (3, pg: 60).

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people: The Piro tend to avoid talk of death and dead people as much as possible (3, pg: 60).

6.12 Is there teknonymy?

6.13 Briefly describe religion: It seems like most of the Piro religious practices are based around myths and ancestors. Myths are passed down from generation to generation and the myths are responsible for the Piro culture being what it is today (4).

7. Adornment

7.1 Body paint: “They paint the faces, hands, and feet for protection against insects and the sun. The whole face may be painted or there may be lines or dots on the forehead, nose and chin, with triangular patches on the cheeks” (3, pg: 58).

7.2 Piercings: “The Piro do not wear nose, ear, or lip ornaments” (3, pg: 58).

7.3 Haircut: “The hair is worn long, and cut across the forehead” (3, pg: 58).

7.4 Scarification: “The men sometimes have angular designs tattooed upon their lower arms” (3, pg: 58).

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

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment:

7.7 Sex differences in adornment: “The Piro dress in cotton garments, as do the Campa tribes about them. The men wear the long cushma, while the women usually wear a skirt that reaches below the knees, and a cloak over the shoulders” (3, pg: 57). **See also 7.4 “Scarification” for information about tattooing** (3, pg: 58).

7.8 Missionary effect:

7.9 Cultural revival in adornment:

8. Kinship systems

8.1 Sibling classification system:

8.2 Sororate, levirate:

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

9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):

The Piro collect and spin their own cotton using wild cotton seeds, which is what they make their clothing out of. They also use their own homemade looms to weave their clothing and other cotton essentials (3, pg: 58).

“The head of the infant is not deformed” (3, pg: 58).

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