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Yanomami, also spelled Yanomamö or Yanoamö, South American Indians, speakers of a Xirianá language, who live in the remote forest of the [Orinoco River](#) basin in southern [Venezuela](#) and the northernmost reaches of the Amazon River basin in northern [Brazil](#). In the early 21st century the Yanomami probably numbered about 32,000 individuals throughout their range.

The Yanomami practice slash-and-burn agriculture and live in small, scattered, semipermanent villages. They supplement their crop of plantains, [cassava](#), tubers, corn (maize), and other vegetables with gathered fruits, nuts, seeds, grubs, and honey. They hunt monkeys, deer, tapirs, fowl, and armadillos. They grow tobacco, a great favourite of Yanomami of all ages, and cotton, an important trade and domestic item used in the manufacture of string and cord for hammocks, nets, containers, and clothing. They keep dogs, both for village security and for hunting.

The Yanomami live in vine-and-leaf-thatched houses in palisaded villages surrounded by garden plots. They relocate their villages when the soil wears out or when a village has become too susceptible to attack by other Yanomami.

Traditional Yanomami culture, such as is still practiced in remote parts of Venezuela, places a high premium on [aggressive behaviour](#). Yanomami are constantly at war with one another, and much of Yanomami social life centres on forming alliances through trade and sharing food with other friendly groups while waging war against hostile villages. The role of continuous, nonterritorial war in Yanomami society has attracted the attention of anthropologists, who have studied the Yanomami since the middle of the 20th century. By the 1990s the way of life and even the continued survival of the Yanomami were threatened by the incursions of Brazilian miners into their territory in the Brazilian state of Roraima. In 1991 [Brazil](#)'s [government](#) set aside an area of some 36,000 square miles (93,240 square km)—roughly 30 percent of their ancestral territory—as a homeland for the Yanomami, but in the early 21st century governmental commitment to the enforcement of boundaries remained intermittent at best.