

I. Description

1.1 Name of society, language, and language family: Sama: Sama-Bajau Language group (Hesperonesian Branch of Austronesian)

1.2 Location: Eastern Indonesia (Sulawesi) as far apart as the Martaban Gulf in Burma, the Malacca Straights, the Sulu Sea, Borneo Island, the Celebes Sea and the seas off northern Australia. Today covering the three nations of Malaysia but generally being associated with the coastal region of the east Malaysian state of Sabah. (1, pg 111)

1.3 Brief history: The Sama people have been recorded as early as the 16th century all over Sulawesi. Their recording dates back further with Samalan speakers migrating from the southern Philippines in search of marine products at least as early as the eleventh century. Because of their impartiality to living on land, they have garnered a reputation as being “sea nomads” and spend almost as much time living on the sea in temporary houses as they do living on land. (1, pg 111-12)

1.4 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors: Generally poorly educated and considered a sub-group in Malaysia both economically and socially. From the 19th century, the household, the village, the land survey, the census, the map, and the school were among the technologies of rule used by the Dutch colonial administration in its attempts to control peoples movements. (1, 113)

1.5 Ecology: Population = not less than 467,000 in 2000 (2, pg 21)

2. Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s): Cassava, dry rice, maize, bananas, sago (3, 254)

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources: Copra, fish

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns: Use of spears and explosives for fishing present though not explicitly implied for warfare (3)

2.4 Food storage: Copra and dried/salted fish are major foods stored. These methods have been refined to survive cross-sea trips for trade. (3, 254)

2.5 Sexual division of production: Both sexes share in agricultural labor; fishing, boat building, and ironworking are primarily male occupations. Both men and women engage in trade, while women weave pandanus mats and make/market pottery. (3, pg 254)

2.6 Land tenure: Farm and residential land is subject to individual use and/or tenancy rights. Fish-trap and lift-net sites and coral fish corrals may be owned individually; otherwise fishing grounds are available for common exploitation. (3, 254)

2.7 Ceramics: In Sulu, pottery making is entirely a Sama craft. (3, 254)

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:

2.9 Food taboos: saying the names of land animals at sea is taboo (*pamali*) and will bring bad luck and throwing fruit or vegetable peels overboard is also taboo (1, 125)

2.10 Canoes/watercraft? Abundant watercraft. Sama are known to even reside in their boats during much of their lifespan. Sibitu Samal are well known for their expert skill in boatbuilding. (3, 254)

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):

4.2 Age at first birth (m and f):

4.3 Completed family size (m and f):

4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f):

4.5 Age first marriage (m and f):

4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce: Frequency of divorce varies, for some groups its described as common while for others it is relatively infrequent. There is some evidence that its frequency is highest for polygynous unions, somewhat high for arranged marriages, and lowest for elopement. Little stigma attaches to divorce and remarriage is relatively easy for both partners (3, 255)

4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously: Polygyny is allowed but is infrequent (3, 255)

4.8 Arranged marriage, bride purchase/service, dowry: Bride-wealth is always paid. Some marriages are arranged but can also be the result of eloping or abduction (3, 255)

4.9 Inheritance patterns: Bilateral inheritance, with each child, regardless of sex, entitled to a share of its parents' property. The Sama distinguish between property acquired in the course of marriage and that inherited independently, to which the husband or wife has no claim. (3, 255)

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict:

4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals:

4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy): highly endogamous, most marry within specific communities and kinship groups (3, 255)

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: Abduction sometimes occurs to garner a mate. (3, pg 255)

4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin): Most marriages prefer kindred as long as the ages are similar. (3, pg 255)

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?

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) – no true preference but similar ages are generally paired. (3, 255)

4.24 Kin avoidance and respect?

4.24 Joking relationships?

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

4.26 Incest avoidance rules: Kin are encouraged to marry and most come from direct family lineages (3, 255)

4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony? Weddings typically occasion the largest gathering of kindred and neighbors of any life-cycle rite. Group of religious officials typically officiate, witnessing the ceremony and confirming the transfer of bride-wealth. (3, 255)

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? (m/f difference?)
Within community (3, 255)

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:

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

5. Socio-Political organization and interaction – Sama historically have a low social status, but by consolidating Sama identity of religion, common terms of reference, and their language, the Sama people have garnered higher social status, a development that was strongly influenced by both structural and cultural factors (2, 4)

5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size:

5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality):

5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes): Generally poorer compared to other Malaysian groups. Differentiate themselves from other Sama peoples by their community size; increasing from *kampong* (village) to district level and from state to country level. The names Sama Siasi, Sama Simunul, Sama Semporna, Sama Kota Belud, Sama Tuaran, Sama Mangkabong, Sama Sangkuang, Sama Sabah, Sama Indonesia and Sama Philippines based on their levels of community size and status listed lowest to highest. (2, 6)

5.4 Post marital residence: Split. Newly-weds first spend at least three or four days with the bride's family and after that they are expected to visit the groom's parents where they may either remain there or return to the bride's family. Most couples are expected to set up their own household by the second or third year of marriage. (3, 255)

5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense): Very few armed conflicts but piracy and vendettas occur. As a result, disputes that cross village or parish boundaries are often difficult to resolve and sometimes escalate, without outside intervention, into open violence. Some regional leaders in the past were known to erect stone or coral forts where their followers might take refuge in times of raiding or during inter-regional feuds. (3, 255)

5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex): Following puberty, girls are usually kept close to home, where they are expected to help with the housework and child care, boys are allowed greater freedom of movement, accompanying their fathers when they go fishing and marketing. (3, 255)

5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships:

5.8 Village and house organization: -very loose village attachments since most of time is spent mobile. The coral reefs and shoals, and even the mid-ocean depths under the waters surface are "intimately known and precisely inventoried" home spaces. (1, 116)

5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses):

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere? – generally sleep in their boats or in small houses built on top of the reefs (1)

5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc: Historically, some Sama groups enjoyed considerable trading and political independence. These groups were divided into ranked strata: nobles, commoners, and slaves. Other groups were more egalitarian. (3, 255)

5.12 Trade: Trade has long occupied a central place in Sama life. European accounts as early as the 17th and 18th centuries describe Sama communities as being dependent on trade for even basic foodstuffs. Throughout Sulu and E. Indonesia, sea-oriented groups historically were valued for navigational skills and as suppliers of trepan, dried fish, pearls, pearl shell, and other marine commodities. Some groups perform intercommunity barter, exchanging fish for kajang matting, cassava, and seasonal fruit. Such trade often involves both Sama and non-Sama groups. Today trade in fish, farm produce, fruit and craft goods is channeled almost entirely through regularly constituted local markets while copra and to some degree dried and salted fish are handled by larger scale wholesalers. (3, 254)

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies? Among stratified Sama, the nobility tended to enjoy privileged access to wealth and power through their involvement in trade and raiding and from their control of slaves and the labor services of the commoners. Today these hereditary privileges are no longer acknowledged. Inherited titles, however, continue to carry prestige and class distinctions are based chiefly on wealth and political influence. (3, 255)

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

6 Time allocation to RCR: All Sama people except for the Abak are Sunni Muslims and follow all 5 pillars of Islam including the five daily prayers, the fast during Ramadan and the pilgrimage to Mecca, but only the most pious observe all the characteristics of Islam. (3, 256)

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine): Those who are well versed in religious matters including the imam and other mosque officials are called paki. As a group, the paki preside over all life-crisis rites, act as religious

counselors and conduct minor rites of thanksgiving. A number of traditional religious practitioners are also present, including midwives, herbalist-curers, diviners, and spirit mediums. (2, 255)

6.2 Stimulants:

6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal): As soon after death as possible, the body is bathed and shrouded. It is then buried in a grave niche, with the head facing Mecca; the grave is covered, usually with sand or crushed coral, and marked with a wooden marker. Burial is followed by a period of vigil lasting up to seven nights. Each evening the male relatives and neighbors gather in the house of the bereaved family for reading prayers and a meal or light refreshments. (3, 256)

6.4 Other rituals:

6.5 Myths (Creation):

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games):

6.7 Sex differences in RCR:

6.8 Missionary effect:

6.9 RCR revival:

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs: Following a period of atonement a person's soul is believed to ascend to heaven while the body descends to hell where it suffers punishment proportional to the persons misdeeds and accumulated merit. Spirits of the dead are thought to remain in the vicinity of their graves. Here they require remembrance and expressions of continued concern from the living. During the month of Shaaban, God permits the souls of the dead to return to this world. To honor their return, the living offer special prayers to the dead and clear their graves. (3, 256)

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?

6.12 Is there teknonymy?

7. Adornment

7.1 Body paint:

7.2 Piercings:

7.3 Haircut:

7.4 Scarification:

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

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment:

7.7 Sex differences in adornment:

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):

- Believe in demons and other man-eating/killing entities throughout the reefs that the Sama fish including the Ko'ko' (form of satan) as well as giant man-eating groupers and eels (1, 120)
- Fishers always take pago on long fishing trips because unlike rice it does not need fresh water to cook (1, 126)
- Factors contributing to the low standing of Sama among the Malays at large are that they are boat peoples, they do not practice Islamic rituals properly, and their economic base is maritime. (2, 6)

Numbered references

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2. Saat, Gusni. The Identity and Social Mobility of Sama-Bajau. *Sari* 21 (2003) 3-11
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