

1. Description

1.1 Name of society, language, and language family:

Name of society: Kuna (1)

Language: Kuna, Border (1)

Language family: Chibchan (1)

1.2 ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com): kvn (1)

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude): Colombia and Panama (1)

1.4 Brief history:

“The Kuna land was among the first to be traversed by Europeans, but they have survived across the centuries, succeeding in keeping their traditions, culture and language alive” (3). Nature is very important to the Kuna and, “they can live in harmony both with nature and with the new winds of modernization and industrialization that are increasingly reaching their lands. Although indigenous ways of work are gradually changing, their overall approach continues to protect the rich bio-diversity that still exists in their lands” (3). “The Kuna have governed the Comarca (“autonomous territory”) de Kuna Yala “Kuna-land” or “Kuna mountain” in the Kuna language) since the 1920’s. Living across 49 communities (each run by their own chief), they maintain their own economic system, language, customs and culture with their distinctive dress, music, dance and legends” (2).

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

The Kuna people are 70% Christian, meaning that missionaries had a large affect on the population, in both Panama and Colombia. In Colombia, the Kuna are 36% Evangelical and in Panama the Kuna are only 4% Evangelical (4). The Kuna continue to practice their traditional economic activities, despite outside influences (3).

1.6 Ecology:

“Conversations and narratives. Especially Kuna specialists (but traditionally this meant almost every- one) talk about flora and fauna as they fish, hunt, farm, gather medicinally useful plants, and walk along in the jungle. They talk about their names, where they found them, their properties, their significance, and their symbolism. Now to more verbally artistic uses of ecology; One common theme, which I heard and recorded many times in Mulatuppu, is a listing of the plants and animals in the jungle, including planted crops, reminding people that they were given to the Kuna by Father, God, and must be cared for by the Kuna” (7). The environment is extremely important to the Kuna people, it is in their politics, religion, and every day life.

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

Population size: 500 in Colombia, 700 in Panama (1)

Mean village size: not found

Home range size: not found

Density: not found

2. Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s): not found

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources: not found

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?:

The Kuna spend most of their time fishing, with a small amount of hunting depending on where you are (3). It was not found which weapons they use for hunting and fishing.

2.4 Food storage: not found

2.5 Sexual division of production:

Women make crafts (molos) to sell as one of their main sources of income, while men do the fishing and agriculture, with some hunting depending on where you are (2). Within families, labor is divided along gender lines. Husbands gather coconuts, cultivate the food, provide firewood, make the clothing for themselves and their sons, weave baskets and carve tools and utensils. Wives prepare the food, build and repair the dwellings, collect fresh water from the Mainland Rivers, unload the boats, sew female garments, wash the clothes and clean the house. (2)

2.6 Land tenure:

Men do the agriculture (2)

2.7 Ceramics: not found

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns: not found

2.9 Food taboos: N/A

2.10 Canoes/watercraft?:

The Kuna men spend a lot of their time fishing; however there was no information found on which kinds of watercraft they are using.

3. Anthropometry

3.1 Mean adult height (m and f): not found

3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f): not found

4. Life History, mating, marriage

4.1 Age at menarche (f): not found, but women marry soon after

4.2 Age at first birth (m and f): not found

4.3 Completed family size (m and f): not found

4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f): not found

4.5 Age first marriage (m and f):

Women marry soon after reaching puberty, but young men stay single until their late teens or early twenties (6)

4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce: Divorce is not common (2)

4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously: not found

4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?: not found

4.9 Inheritance patterns: matrilineal (2)

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict: When two people marry, the groom moves in with the wife's family and becomes an apprentice to her father. Daughters are prized. (2)

4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals: not found

4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy): not found

4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these "other fathers" recognized?: not found

4.14 What is the belief of the mother's role in procreation exactly? (e.g., "receptacle in which fetus grows"): not found

4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)?: not found

4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape: not found

4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin): not found

4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?: not found

4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring: not found

4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children?: not found

4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females: not found

4.22 Evidence for couvades: not found

4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older): not found

4.24 Kin avoidance and respect?: not found

4.24 Joking relationships?: not found

4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations: matrilineal (2)

4.26 Incest avoidance rules: not found

4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony?:

If a marriage is arranged for any reason, a crew of men ambushes a selected male and takes him to the females' house. The two are thrown into a hammock and the couple is swung back and forth. This is repeated several times and may be repeated for four nights. However, there was nothing found on a formal marriage ceremony for a marriage that is not arranged (6).

4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name? not found

4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?): not found

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

"Parents of unmarried maidens looked over the crops of young men and chose son-in-laws in considerable part on the basis of how industrious and productive they were. When a union had been arranged, a crew of young men ambushed and overpowered the chosen bridegroom, and after what was often a determined tussle, they hauled him off to the house of the bride picked out for him, in many cases calling out 'suiii!' (husband) as they arrived... At the bride's house, the groom was thrown into a waiting hammock, the bride immediately thrown on top of him, and the couple vigorously swung back and forth. The hammocking and swinging was repeated several times, with the strong-arm crew hauling the groom in and out of the house, and the traditionally the whole ritual was repeated for four nights running." (6)

4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who:

If marriage is arranged, the wife's parents will choose a man who is "productive and industrious" (6).

Warfare/homicide

4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare: not found

4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death: not found

4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing: not found

4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations): not found

4.18 Cannibalism?: N/A

5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size: not found

5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality): not found

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

"Kuna politics are dominated by a congress conducted by the 49 chiefs of the 49 Kuna communities and their interpreters. Chiefs derive their authority from their knowledge of the sacred chants and the interpreters derive theirs from their ability to interpret the chants for the people. And, participation in the "congresso" is for men only but women's (silent) presence is permitted (4)" The Kuna chiefs are multiple, insecure positions and often competitive (5).

5.4 Post marital residence:

"Men move to their mother-in-law's house after marriage and apprentice with their father-in-law for several years" (2). "The households formed according to the matrilineal rule proceed through a number of stages as children grow up, sons move out,

and sons-in-law themselves become household heads and fathers-in-law” (6). They do have a variety of residence types, but the parent-in-law/son-in-law axis is both the ideal and dominant form (6).

5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense): not found

5.6 social interaction divisions ? (age and sex): not found

5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships:

“The Kuna Indians of Panama tell stories frequently, in the streets of their villages, at home, while visiting neighbors, and in the village gathering house. Storytelling is one of the many verbal events that take place in the gathering house... Because of natural events, such as an earthquake, an eclipse, or a heavy rain, people take a day off from work on the mainland and stay on the island, resting and relaxing. On such days the gathering house quickly fills with men who sit, talk, joke and tell stories” (9).

5.8 Village and house organization:

The homes are of matrilineal residence, with the daughter’s husband moving into her home. Although there are homes that do not follow this residence pattern, matrilineal is preferred (6)

5.9 Specialized village structures (mens’ houses): not found

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?: not found

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

5.12 Trade: not found

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies?: not found

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

6 Time allocation to RCR: not found

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine): not found

6.2 Stimulants: not found

6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal): not found

6.4 Other rituals: not found

6.5 Myths (Creation):

“Kuna myths and cosmology suggest that, symbolically, Kuna women hold high status. Howe writes: ‘Kuna women tend to be strong, purposeful and assertive, they enjoy considerable collective prestige and they strongly influence household decisions’” (8). Since the Kuna’s contact with Christianity, less of their creation story has been focused around women, and more around the father (8). The “Star Girls Story” forms part of a large corpus of sacred narrative’s carried on and performed by village political leaders. The Star Girl Story is a myth that is large part of the Kuna culture (8).

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games): The women create beautiful art, including their very famous molas (2)

6.7 Sex differences in RCR: not found

6.8 Missionary effect: 70% Christianity (4); “Kuna creation myths suggests that prior to contact with Christianity only the ‘original mother’ existed” (8).

6.9 RCR revival: not found

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs: not found

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?: Not found

6.12 Is there teknonymy?: not found

6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.): The Kuna are 70% Christian (4)

7. Adornment

7.1 Body paint: N/A

7.2 Piercings: Women wear gold nose rings (2)

7.3 Haircut: N/A

7.4 Scarification: N/A

7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.): Women wear beaded arm and leg bands (2)

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment:

7.7 Sex differences in adornment:

The traditional dress of the women is spectacular. The gold nose rings, beaded arm and leg bands, sarongs and the colorful mola blouses are works of art. The Kuna men have adopted a clothing style more traditional to the men of the western world and appear rather drab in comparison. (2)

7.8 Missionary effect: not found

7.9 Cultural revival in adornment: not found

8. Kinship systems

8.1 Sibling classification system: not found

8.2 Sororate, levirate: not found

8.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.): not found

9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):

Numbered references

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