

1. Description

1.1 Name(s) of society, language, and language family: Rama, Rama, Chibchan

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

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude): "Most of the Rama (approximately 800) have their primary settlements on the small island of Rama Cay, in the southern part of Bluefields Lagoon, while the remainder are based in communities dispersed throughout the mainland between Bluefields and San Juan del Norte. Rama Cay is 15 kilometers south of Bluefields, allowing for frequent boat transport of goods and people. The island has a Moravian church, an elementary school, health clinic, community center, sports field, and several dozen houses. The smaller Rama communities on the mainland consist of houses interspersed with agricultural plots. [...]"

According to historical accounts the Rama Indians have traditionally occupied southeastern Nicaragua, from the Rio Escondido on the north to the Rio San Juan on the south, and from the Caribbean Sea on the east to the inland hills that give rise to the headwaters of eastward flowing rivers such as the Rio Maiz and Rio Punta Gorda. This area marks the southern extent of Nicaragua's Atlantic coastal plain, also known as the "Miskito Coast", named after the Ramasí neighbors to the north, the Miskito Indians. While the broad and low coastal plain extends up to 150 kilometers inland in northern Nicaragua, it gradually becomes narrower to the south. In Rama territory the low coastal plain varies in width, averaging only about 10-15 kilometers wide. At Monkey Point, 45 kilometers south of Bluefields, the coastal plain is interrupted by a range of low hills known as the Serrania de Yolaina, which reaches all the way to the coast. The highest hills of the Serrania reach just 100 meters in elevation, while south of the Rio Punta Gorda is a range of hills that reaches 150 meters above sea level." (Mueller, 4)

1.4 Brief History: "There are conflicting views about when and from what direction the ancestors of the Rama and neighboring indigenous groups arrived to what is today Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast. Based on their cultural and linguistic affinity with other Chibcha language speakers, some pre historians claim that around 1,000 years ago the ancestors of the Rama migrated northward to Nicaragua from what is today Colombia. Others claim that the Ramasí ancestors arrived on Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast from Mexico around 3,000-4,000 years ago. Recent studies using mitochondrial DNA have pushed back the date of arrival much farther, claiming that the ancestors of the Chibcha language speakers have inhabited Central America for 10,000 years. Despite the uncertainties, it is clear that the Rama and their ancestors have a long history in the general area of their present day territory.

Archaeological evidence gathered from Rama territory confirms that the area has been settled for several thousand years. [...] an archaeological site discovered at Monkey Point may be over 7,000 years old, making it among the oldest sites yet found in Central America. Excavations performed in 1974 near Bluefields Lagoon and Pearl Lagoon unearthed pottery estimated to be from approximately 800-1200 AD. The pottery found included pieces from the Pacific coast region, implying that some type of contact existed between the coasts. As of yet a very fragmented picture exists of the prehistory of Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast. [...]"

Historians and anthropologists have tried to piece together the origins of the Rama as a distinct people. Apparently the Rama were formed by the combination of indigenous groups that inhabited the areas that are today southeastern Nicaragua and northern Costa Rica at the time of contact:

There is no mention of the Rama as a people in sixteenth and seventeenth century accounts of the area. However, the ancestors of present day Rama - the Voto and the remnants of various other linguistically related groups - do appear in the early records. At contact the Voto lived interspersed with other groups along the San Juan River, concentrated especially between its tributaries the Frio and the Sarapiquí. Their population may have extended as far north as the Bluefields Lagoon-Escondido River area in Nicaragua, and south up the central mountain range as far as the province of Alajuela in Costa Rica. Conzemius adds to this already sizeable Voto domain by including the Suerre and the Guetar as Voto, or close relatives. The Suerre occupied the Atlantic Coast of present-day Costa Rica, between the San Juan and Matina Rivers, and the Guetar, or the northern highlands of Costa Rica, west as far as the Gulf of Nicoya.

In addition to the Voto, Suerre, and Guetar, additional groups mentioned in the historical record have been identified as ancestors of the Rama. The anthropologists Lehmann and Conzemius both considered the Melchora Indians to be ancestors of the Rama. The Melchora lived in the area of the Rio Sabalos, a tributary of the Rio San Juan, and were mentioned as late as 1852 in the travel accounts of a U.S. diplomat, E.G. Squier. Lehmann also consider the Guatuso Indians of Costa Rica's Rio Frio area to be closely related to the Rama. Another indigenous group called the Kukras lived at the northern edge of what is today considered Rama territory, but were generally thought to have been a sub-group of the Sumo Indians, who still to the north of the Rama today. Given the disappearance of all of the previously mentioned tribes, with the exception of the Rama and the Sumo, the complete story of the Ramasí origins will never be known." (Mueller, 14)

1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors: “Today the Rama primarily speak a form of English that has been described as Rama-Creole, adapted over many years of contact with English pirates, Moravian missionaries, and black Creoles living in the Bluefields area. Although a study of the Rama in the early 1970s concluded that there were only five or six elders who spoke the Rama language, a 1988 study identified 58 people who knew the language, including 36 fluent speakers. Of these speakers the majority were between 25 and 44 years old.³ Despite this more encouraging assessment, and an effort to teach the Rama language in the primary school on Rama Cay, Rama children are not learning to speak the language, and it appears headed for extinction.” (Mueller, 5)

1.6 Ecology (natural environment): “The climate in southeastern Nicaragua is humid-tropical, with an average temperature of 27°C. There are few places in the world with a higher annual rainfall—the average annual rainfall reaches up to 6,000 mm in the wettest part of the region, near San Juan del Norte. The area is characterized by year-round rains, with a short drier period from approximately February or March through April or May. This dry season becomes progressively longer as one heads westward, while in the southern part of Rama territory near the lower Rio San Juan, in some years the dry season barely occurs. The heaviest rains occur from June to August, when torrential downpours are a daily occurrence. With such abundant rainfall, the regions soils are heavily leached and generally poor for agriculture, although the alluvial soils of riverine areas are an exception.

The region is drained by several rivers, the largest being the Rio San Juan, which flows 191 km from Lake Nicaragua eastward to the Caribbean Sea, draining the largest watershed in all of Central America. Heading north from the Rio San Juan, Rama territory is drained by the Rio Indio, Rio Maiz, Rio Punta Gorda, Cane Creek, Wiring Cay Creek, and a number of small rivers that flow into Bluefields Lagoon, including Rio Dakuno, Rio Torsuani, and the Kukra River. Bluefields Lagoon is the largest in southeastern Nicaragua, and is dotted with a number of small islands, including Rama Cay, the largest Rama settlement.

Rama territory also encompasses the nearshore Caribbean waters, and includes a number of small islands such as Guana Cay, Soap Cay, Three Sisters Cays, Frenchman's Cay, Booby Cay, Silk Grass Cay, Palmetto Cay and others. The continental shelf is narrower than in the northern part of the Miskito Coast, and thus lacks the extensive system of coral reefs. Nonetheless, the coastal waters of the “Rama Coast” are rich in marine life such as lobster and fish, and are an important migratory route for green turtles (*Chelonia mydas*) passing between the nesting beaches of Tortuguero to the south, and the sea grass beds of the Miskito Cays to the north.” (Mueller, 6)

“The landscape of the Rama territory is comprised of a diverse mosaic of ecosystem types. Along the length of the coast is a beach vegetation community characterized by well-drained sandy soils. The dominant plant species are *Coccoloba uvifera* (sea-grape), *Chrysobalanus icaco* (icaco), *Cocos nucifera* (coconut palm), *Croton punctatus*, *Ipomoea pes-caprae* (beach morning glory), and grasses of the genera *Sporobolus* and *Paspalum*.” (Mueller, 7)

“Animal species of the Nicaraguan rainforest include brocket deer (*Mazama americana*), white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginiana*), tapir (*Tapirus bairdii*), peccary (*Tayassu* spp.), agouti (*Dasyprocta punctata*), paca (*Agouti paca*), giant anteater (*Myrmecophaga tridactyla*), three-toed sloth (*Bradypus variegatus*), howler monkey (*Alouatta palliata*), jaguar (*Panthera onca*), puma (*Puma concolor*), ocelot (*Leopardus pardalis*), crocodile (*Crocodylus acutus*), and a great variety of birds, including the harpy eagle (*Harpia harpyja*), and macaws (*Ara* spp.).” (Mueller, 8)

1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density: “The Rama Indians are an ethnic group of approximately 1200 men, women, and children, that inhabit the southeastern part of Nicaragua.” (Mueller, 3)

2. Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s): “The Rama cultivate a diversity of crops, with the staples or “breadkind” being root crops and different varieties of banana and plantain. Most agricultural sites have likely been used repeatedly over the generations, in an alternating planted-fallow cycle. Evidence of this is provided both by oral history (for any given site the names of a few generations of planters can usually be recalled) and by visible areas of secondary forest cover distributed across the landscape. These patches often have remnant fruit trees such as lime, orange, or pijibaye palm. Similarly, banana patches that are attributed to the “old” or “first-time” Rama are intermingled with wooded areas.” (Mueller, 9)

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources: “Fishing is the Ramasí most important activity for acquiring animal protein. Both saltwater and freshwater fish species are utilized, and the Rama fish in streams, river mouths, lagoons, and the open sea, especially in the vicinity of the offshore cays. Fishing is a daily subsistence activity for the people of Rama Cay, and at all hours of the day dories (dugout canoes) can be seen coming or going between the island and fishing spots. Among the most popular fishing spots are Hone Sound, where Bluefields Lagoon empties into the sea, and the mouth of the Kukra River. Fishing is

carried out by men, women, and children alike. Both nets, harpoons, and hook-and-line methods are used, but fishing with nets and harpoons is primarily a male activity.”(Mueller, 9)

“Gathering shellfish is also an important subsistence and commercial activity for the Rama. Shrimp (*Penaeus* spp.) are gathered during the dry season (March to May), and are an important commercial item in Bluefields. Shrimp are gathered from shallow waters at variety of locations in Bluefields Lagoon. Shrimping is a two-person job. One person steers a canoe, while the other stands in the bow and repeatedly throws a “cast net” which sinks to the bottom and entraps shrimp. Catching shrimp for market with a cast net is a relatively new practice for the Rama. See the interview with Rama elder Rufino Omier for a description of gathering shrimp, fishing, and hunting in days gone by.

Gathering oysters (*Crassostrea rhizophora*) is also an essential sustenance activity for the Rama. Evidence of this is provided by the large oyster shell mounds on Rama Cay. In parts of the island the ground itself seems to be made of oyster shells, and indeed, over the years oyster shells have been used repeatedly as fill for the low marshy area between the two halves of Rama Cay. The southern part of Bluefields Lagoon is shallow and contains a number of productive oyster beds. According to the Rama, the location of the oyster beds has shifted over the years due to hurricanes and other environmental factors. Currently oysters are gathered by the Rama (both women and men) along the western shore of Deer Cay and around a number of the smaller cays in Bluefields Lagoon, such as Filis Cay, Wairu Cay, and Coco Cay. Oysters are generally regarded as a reliable food source, even when other protein sources may be unavailable. A number of Rama are interested in the potential for planting “seed” oysters at certain places, to increase oyster populations in the Lagoon.” (Mueller, 10)

“Hunting is of varying importance in different Rama communities. For those Rama who spend a majority of their time on the mainland, especially in the communities to the south of Bluefields Lagoon, wild game constitutes an important part of the diet. For people living mainly on Rama Cay hunting likely provides less than 25% of meat eaten (compared with fish and shellfish), largely because of increased hunting pressure and land conversion on the mainland in recent decades. A number of Rama men have rifles (which are usually shared with other men), but some hunting is still done with bow and arrow, and lance. Arrows and lances are made of wood from the pejibaye palm. Lance and arrowheads were formerly made of bone or shark’s tooth, but are now made from pounded and filed metal. [...]

The most important game animal for the Rama is the wari or white-lipped peccary. Wari occur in herds or *idrovesi* of up to several dozen animals and are often hunted with a lance (spear). Wari are most often found in palm forest, and are sometimes hunted by a group of men. Large herds are becoming increasingly rare due to hunting pressure, including pressure by commercial hunters from Bluefields. Other important animals are collared peccary and tapir. Sea turtle and manatee hunting is done from a dory: one person (the captain) paddles slowly, the other (the striker) stands in the bow of the boat with a harpoon. Manatee hunting traditionally was a very important cultural event among the Rama, surrounded by a complex set of taboos and rules regarding who may or may not hunt, how the meat was to be distributed amongst the community, and what symbolic meaning was carried in different parts of the manatee’s body. These traditions have been changing as monetary relations replace sharing and the manatee has become recognized as an endangered species.” (Mueller, 11)

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns? : “Silk-grass thread, from the plant called *ngarbang* in Rama, was used to make bowstrings. The bow itself, as well as the spear and harpoon shafts were shaped from wood of the pejibaye plam. The bow is called *tangkat*, and the bowstring, *arira*, and the arrows names were as follows:

<i>Kriri</i>	Arrow in general but usually used to mean an arrow for killing large animals
<i>Sinak</i>	Three or four pronged arrow used for killing fish
<i>Sinsin</i>	Arrow used for killing fish
<i>Kriri silk</i>	Arrow with steel, bone, shark tooth, or stone point. Used to kill jaguar and wari
<i>Mantak</i>	Arrow with hard point (<i>apo</i>) which is used to kill large animals.
<i>Uru</i>	Blunt, beeswax point arrow, used for killing birds, small animals and river spirit called <i>sitani</i> who in male form harms women and in female form harms men by dragging them from the houses into the river.

Arrow shafts, called *kartuk*, are made from wild cane by heating them, which straightens the cane, and then drying the shaft in the sun. The arrow points are hafted and shaft by means of beeswax and thread. Beeswax and thread are also used to support the tail of the arrow. No feathers are attached to stabilize flight.” (Morse)

2.4 Food storage:

2.5 Sexual division of production: “In past time, Conzemius said that the men did the hunting and the clearing and burning of the forest in preparation for planting. He said, “weeding is the work of the women.” Women collected mollusks and were responsible for the food processing, including the tedious job of manioc preparation. Cotton was woven and

spun by the women before cloth from Bluefields replaced it. Women were also potters, making clay pots and vessels without the use of pottery wheels.

Traditional medicine is still the domain of some women who also have some religious knowledge in relation to healing. There are some as aide who is *Partera* and is well known for knowing about healing, but every woman knows a little bit about herbs. "(Morse)

2.6 Land tenure: "The Rama plant bananas, plantains, and other fruits, root crops, sugar cane, corn, rice, and beans, and to lesser extent transplant herbs for medicinal purposes. They spend a considerable amount of time guarding and working their agricultural plots. The agricultural cycle begins in the major dry season when the land is cleared of trees and plant cover, leaving *ibo* and almendra trees standing, because the hard-wood is hard to cut. Ibo nuts are used to make posol and oil. At the end of the dry season debris is fired. If the rains come early, the debris is left to mulch. Corn, rice, beans, and root crops are planted in the cleared lands. Fruit trees, sugar cane, and banana are interspersed with other crops." (Morse)

2.7 Ceramics: "The Rama used to make an old type of clay pottery with a pointed base called *tiksakung*. Pottery making was exclusively the responsibility of the women and was symbolically associated with women. Today the Rama use store-bought iron pots." (Morse)

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:

2.9 Food taboos:

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):

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:

4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously:

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

4.9 Inheritance patterns: "Ideally, the oldest son or daughter of the household inherits the property of their parents household. Frequently, however, older sons and daughters have already established household's elsewhere, so that the oldest child living with the parents at the time of death inherits property. Sometimes, it is the married daughter who is the oldest child living in the household of the deceased parents, and in this case the husband, or son-in-law, inherits his father in-laws' house site or agricultural plot. Brothers in law frequently dispute the inheritance of the property of a deceased household head.

The family as whole inherits fruit trees and water rights. Traditionally, personal property was destroyed at the death of that individual and not inherited, but today many household utensils and trade items are inherited by relatives of the mother of the deceased." (Morse)

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict: "The wife of the household head, or the oldest woman, and her married daughter or daughter-in-law are responsible for running the household, and they usually have help from the children and

the men of the household. Frequently running the household is a source of conflict between a woman and her daughter or daughter in law, and either cooperative relationship ensues, or the young couple moves out.” (Morse)

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? :

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?:

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):

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:

4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony? :

“Unless a church wedding takes place, the wedding is accompanied by no form of ritual but only by a meal which includes the spouses’ families and a few close friends. There is some evidence that in the past a bride’s wealth was paid by the husband (or the passage by Cornelius which told about the cutting down of the *ibo* tree). Conzemius says that a form of bride’s wealth (canoes or guns) was paid in the Punta River Area in 1910-1920 (Conzemius, p. 320)” (Morse)

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?):

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

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:

4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing:

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): “As in other rainforest areas, the soils of Nicaragua’s Atlantic Coast are thin and nutrient poor, and are not suitable for extensive agriculture. Exceptions to this are narrow alluvial strips along rivers and creeks where indigenous agriculture is concentrated. The Rama, like the Miskito and Sumo to the north, mainly plant their crops in small fields and household gardens along the banks of the rivers and creeks that they inhabit. Planting crops along the banks of waterways is also a matter of convenience, as transport of people and goods by canoe is more practical than overland transport. Many families have a primary residence on Rama Cay, and a secondary residence located near their agricultural plots up one of the rivers that flow into Bluefields Lagoon, such as Kukra River, Rio Torsuani, or Rio Dakuno. The lower courses of these rivers, however, are generally lined with swampy land of low fertility. Thus, many families have to travel extensive distances upriver to reach available fertile sites. In the case of the Kukra River community of El Coco, the trip from Rama Cay is up to a three-day paddle. Families that live in one of the communities further to the south of Bluefields Lagoon (Wiring Cay, Cane Creek, etc..) are more likely to have their primary residence located near their agricultural plots, as travel between these communities and Rama Cay on the open sea is a long and often challenging endeavor due to rough sea conditions.” (Mueller, 8)

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

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:

5.8 Village and house organization:

“The Rama had three basic house types: the open, the walled, and the walled built on pilings.

Open houses are built as awalled houses, using the same types of frame and thatch roof without the vine lashed stick walls.

Open houses are found along the rivers of Rama land near agricultural plots.

The walled houses usually have earth floors and palm-thatched roof, and are divided into compartments for cooking, eating, and sleeping.

The walled and elevated houses are like the walled houses, but bare floor replaces the earthen floor. [...]

The basic social group is the Kuanu, ‘home or family,’ or kwimalut, friends or family, the household unit or the extended family. Ideally, the Rama household contains the nuclear family, the surviving grandparents, and the married sons and daughters of their children. Some of the married children may live adjacent to the parent’s household. Ideally, when a man and woman get married, they build a house to live in. Since this is not always possible, they sometimes move in with the woman’s family or the man’s family. Unmarried children usually prefer to remain in the household of the family.

The household structure is built around the household head, *ngu abing*, ‘house owner’, a middle aged man or woman. Men head most households. However, in many of the male-owned households, there are older women present who exert considerable influence in decision making.

The average Rama household is composed of eight members, half of them children. On average, there are more women than men in the household.” (Morse)

5.9 Specialized village structures (mens’ houses):

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?:

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

5.12 Trade:

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies?:

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

6.0 Time allocation to RCR:

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine): “The jaguar and the *turmali* are associated with the prophecy, knowledge, and experience. The *turmali* “talk with tigers” and the jaguar’s power is transferred to humans. In the socio-cultural world it is men as *turmali* who triumph over the jaguar, who not only help the Rama but also sometimes harm them. Humans, therefore, use the jaguar as an ally in gaining power over the future through prophecy. [...]

Turmali were responsible for curing by removing the *aliban*, or evil spirits.” (Morse)

“Rama snake doctors, *albut aing kauling*, are special people who know how to remove snake venom and command super natural power.

A snake doctor has usually been bitten by a snake, and cured, a pre requisite of sorts for apprenticeship. Apprenticeship involves a period of sexual abstinence, and a number of trips to the bush to learn the names and uses of various medicinal plants. It is not certain whether the person underwent a time of fasting to obtain supernatural power, like the *turmali*. Surviving a snakebite would make one a “snake person” and therefore a good candidate for snake doctoring.” (Morse)

6.2 Stimulants:

6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal): “According to Lehmann, ‘on the path to the land of the dead is a big dog, *tansun tara*, tied, who lets the good souls by, and eats the bad ones.’ The land of the dead is in the west, upriver, and it is just like this world. In order to help people get to the land of the dead, food is set out for their souls and their possessions are placed on the grave. In the past when a person died they laid him/her in a white *tunu* cloth and put a mixture of medicine and ashes on his heart to help his/her soul on the way to the land of the dead.” (Morse)

6.4 Other rituals: “In olden times certain people went into the wood and drank a paracil drink -- *kukalkine* or *kingsaban*, ‘pepper cocoa’ -- in order to talk with tigers and prophesize how the year would go. All men who wanted to be *turmali* would collect a special kind of chocolate known as *ngerba*, or ‘tiger chocolate’. They would then dry it. [...] The man had to build a special house in the bush where he would live while he was talking to the tigers. No one else in the village knew the location of the house. The preparations would take about a week.

When the time came for him to go, the man would leave without telling people where he was going. All he would take with him was a pot for making the pepper-cocoa, a jug for water, his hammock, and a pale of pepper-chocolate. He would stay in the bush for 2 or 3 days, and all the time he was there he would drink the sacred pepper-chocolate. His face would turn red and he would begin to sweat. Then he would begin to sway like he was drunk. At this point, spirits would come to him in the form of animal (particularly jaguars) and he would be able to talk over the future, especially what would happen in the village the next year. They’d talk about all kinds of things like sickness, death, crops, weather, snakebite, etc. – mainly what bad things would go down in the community in the future. When they were finished talking, the *turmali* would go back to the village and warn the people.” (Morse)

6.5 Myths (Creation): “The Rama view the cosmos as composed of four major layers and several sub-layers which exist in two periods of time, corresponding to creation time and to modern times. The four layers of the cosmos are: Earth, moon, sun, and heaven. The Rama conceives of the Milky Way as another separate area of the cosmos. The Milky way is also associated with the hot ashes on the way to the land of the dead through which all souls pass. [...]

People say that every morning before the sun come, it has to bathe; otherwise it would burn up the earth. Every day it has to bathe. And the sun (or is it the moon) is trying to catch up with the other, and if they do, during eclipse time, like in 1991., when everyone hid in their houses because they feared the world would burn up, or maybe always stay in eclipse, people also say the sun and moon have relations—when the eclipse happens” (Morse)

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:

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?:

6.12 Is there teknonymy?:

6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.): Rama spirits associated with *sulaik*, or the selva (jungle)

Rama Name	English Equivalent	Location, Description, Function
<i>Ngalingkat</i>	Rubbing rock spirit	Found in remote areas, communicate in Rama. Not harmful.
<i>Karkauli</i>	Tree of Immortality	Tree which fell over and was picked up by <i>Sukias</i> . If prayed to by a person, that person will not die.
<i>Karkauling</i>	Human spirit	This is a man in the bush sitting on a big rock. When you hear his groan you could grab a hold of him and comb him. Nothing can hurt you after that.
<i>Waksuk</i>	Human spirit	Travels in droves. Destroys everything. Now underground.
<i>Hoktu</i>	Good hunting spirit	Will help you. Eats cooked food.
<i>Poaktu</i>	Bad hunting spirit	Tries to kill you. Eats raw meat.
<i>Adam</i>	Culture-hero of Rama	Idol kept in woods.
<i>Kulmon</i>	Fairy people or sprite	Lives in rocks near headwaters or river. Eats only crabs. Very strong.
<i>Sirkin</i>	Whale or large snake	Spirit which protects manatees and other animals.
<i>Abin Nulkon</i>	Peccary owner	Man in red hat. Lives in lice nest. Kills you.
<i>Ulak</i>	Sasquatch	Legendary Man-money that harms man and woman.
<i>Pasak</i>	Squirrel spirit	Looks like a squirrel. Tells how long you love. Must kill it otherwise you will die when it says you will die.
<i>Turmali</i>	Prophet, Seer	Good spirit that saved Rama.
<i>Walsan</i>	Devil	Has no face, lives near cemetery, harms people.

(Morse)

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: "Moravian mission moral code was very strict. The Rama women symbolically identified with it by wearing buns in their hair and rejecting old hairstyle and dress. [...] The Rama did not subscribe to the sexually restrictive codes of the Moravians, and in fact the missionaries were concerned about the permissive sexuality of the Rama. Many of them were excommunicated for adultery, fornication, etc." (Morse)

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):

9.1 Krubu and Turma (The importance of the Jaguar):

Rama Name	Common Name	Remarks
<i>Auma or Krubu</i>	Jaguar	Friends with the Rama with whom they drink pepper-cocoa and learn the future. Will harm man, though.
<i>Krubu parnah</i>	Black jaguar or panther	Very dangerous. Enjoys eating man. Important in Rama myth.
<i>Krubu salah pr Auma Nuknugna</i>	Puma	Respects man and will let you pass if you meet him in the forest.
<i>Krubu Tatara</i>	Ocelot	Treated the same way as Jaguar
<i>Krubu Kwala</i>	Magray	Treated the same way as jaguar

"*Auma* is also a Miskito word for jaguar. There is some confusion, however as to whether Krubu is a Rama or a Miskito word. Metaphorically *auma* is frequently utilized to refer to 'white men' or outside Anglos. Also, *Auma* used to mean 'father' as well as white men." (Morse)

"Hunting Jaguar: Whereas it is possible that the Rama did not hunt the jaguar, now, jaguar is hunted for the value of its skin. The pitfall method is sometimes used in hunting jaguars, mostly by the Miskito, but the Rama prefer to use guns because the skins are not damaged, and bring more money.

Humans and Jaguars: There many correlations the Rama draw between humans and jaguars. Humans, like jaguar, are hunters and predators and enjoy eating meat. Jaguars all enjoy music, dancing, and getting drunk just like the Rama. Jaguars also enjoy talking about the future, and communicating without a noise. On the other hand, when the jaguar is drunk he likes to holler just as the Rama do when they give the boisterous calls in the middle of a drinking party.

Jaguar Color Associations: Rama association of color -- red and black are associated with blood, death and decay, while the yellow and speckledness are associated with the life and ripenes. This is dervied from the story where the black and red jauars are the human-hunters, while the yellow and spotted jaguars are the human's friends. The spotted tigers particualy are the ones the Rama seak with and are friendly with." (Morse)

Numbered Resources

1. Mueller, Jerry (2001) *Defending Rama Indian Community Lands and the Southeastern Nicaragua Biosphere Reserve*. Four Directions Geographic Consulting (4DGC): Gainesville.
2. Craig, Colette G. *Current Knowledge of American Languages of Nicaragua*. International Journal of American Linuistics. Vol. 51, No. 4 (Oct., 1985) pp. 381-384.
3. Morse, Joshua (Researcher), Walter Ortíz (Speaker), Nora Rigby (Speaker). (1993). "Ethnographic Notes on the Rama Indians of Nicaragua". *Rama Language and Culture Project Collection*. The Archive of the Indigenous Languages of Latin America: www.ailla.utexas.org. Media: text, image. Access: public. Resource: RMA001R038.