

## 1. Description

1.1 Name(s) of society, language, and language family: Sanumá. Sanumá language. Classification: Yanomam

1.2 ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com): [xsu]

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude): 4.45 degrees North, 65.49 degrees West.

1.4 Brief history: "Throughout the centuries, the Yanomami, originally from the Parima range, have spread up toward river valleys on the plains both to the south in Brazil, and to the north in Venezuela. The Sanumá, who call themselves *sanīma dībī* (*sanīma*, "people"; *dībī*, "plural, more than two") speak one of the four known Yanomami languages." (Ramos, 19) It is in the rainforests of north Brazil and south Venezuela that the groups have lived unchanged until quite recently. In the last 40 years or so the western world has been knocking at their doorsteps wanting lumber and gold.

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

The Brazilian government

1.6 Ecology (natural environment): "Entirely covered in tropical rainforest with occasional clearings, small savannas" (Ramos, 19) "Most Sanumá choose their residence sites on high ground, away from large rivers, which makes travel on foot between communities an exhausting exercise in ups and downs sometimes as steep as forty-five degrees or more." (Ramos, 21)

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

"The total Sanuma population is estimated to be 3,200 people located in the northernmost portion of the Yanomami territory [Venezuela]. In Brazil they count between 900 and 1,000 people living in some twenty widely scattered communities." (Ramos, 21) Average village size from Ramos, 34 was 42 people.

Population in all countries: 6,410 (Ethnologue)

## 2. Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s):

"Not only is the garden the place where the most reliable, regular, and abundant food is planted, such as manioc, bananas, potatoes, as well as tobacco..." (Ramos, 23)

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources:

"Delicacies such as *nabi*, a larva that grows in rotten palm tree trunks, honey combs, caterpillars, frogs, fruits of various kinds, nuts and other edibles can be eaten right away in the forest." (Ramos, 30)

"Women and children fish and gather fruits and nuts, while men hunt tapir, wild boar, various kinds of rodents, monkeys and armadillos, a multitude of birds, and some snakes." (Ramos, 27)

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?:

“As early as the 1960s, there were already a few shotguns in some Sanuma villages, specially near the mission station. Traditionally, however, ground mammals are hunted with a wide and flat bamboo arrowhead, birds with a bone point, and monkeys with a fine wooden shaft with three deep notches so that it breaks on impact, leaving the tip inside the animal’s body and liberating the arrow to be recovered.” (Ramos, 28) “Tips are covered with the hallucinogen *sakona* which produces muscle relaxation” (Ramos, 29) “Dogs are a useful compliment.” (Ramos, 29)

2.4 Food storage: Being largely hunters and gatherers, this is not as much of a issue. “People in one single site for a long time inevitably leads to scarcity of game, and it is one of th reasons why villages are relocated.” (Ramos, 30)

2.5 Sexual division of production:

“Sanuma have a sexual division of labor according to which men do the hunting and garden clearing, and women grate manioc, spin cotton, and make the *wia* baskets...both sexes work in the gardens, fish, gather, and make hammocks and baskets. Domestic chores, such as fetching water of firewood, are more women’s than men’s, but it is not uncommon to see men cooking, babysitting all day long, chopping wood, and, albeit rarely and reluctantly, baking cassava bread or getting water when their woman cannot do it.” (Ramos, 30)

2.6 Land tenure:

Land is owned by those who name it. (Ramos, 232)

2.7 Ceramics: Just basket weaving is mentioned by Ramos.

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:

2.9 Food taboos:

“If a pubescent person eats wasp larvae, he or she wil be covered in boils. If a husband and/or his wife, not yet grandparents, eat the meat of a porcupine, coatimundi, squirrel, rabbit, otter, or turtle during a pregnancy, the woman will have a miscarriage...Frogs and sloths are summarily prohibited to almost all age sets, whereas tapir is permissible for nearly everybody... Sickness and disease resulting from breaches of food taboo are perhaps the most frequent complaints among the Sanuma, but they are also easily cured with “a few hours of shamanism.”” (Ramos, 160, 161)

2.10 Canoes/watercraft?

“Influenced by the Maiongong, the Sanuma who live on the banks of the Auaris are now expert canoeists.” (Ramos, 49)

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):

Typically 14-15 (Ramos, 160)

##### 4.2 Age at first birth (m and f):

17 years old. (Ramos, 160)

##### 4.3 Completed family size (m and f):

5 people if the marriage manages to last, 3 children (Ramos, 160)

##### 4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f):

4 years for each child. (Ramos, 160)

##### 4.5 Age first marriage (m and f):

17 years old, beginning at the age of 15, after puberty, a person is single for 2 years. (Ramos, 160)

##### 4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce:

"Few Sanuma stay married to the same spouse all their lives. Divroces are frequent, serial marriages are very common." (Ramos, 127)

##### 4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously:

Ramos encountered 42 families, 11 of them polygynous, so that's 26% of marriages.

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

"To take" a woman involves abdicating a portion of autonomy which men yield with uneasiness. The ambivalence inherent in a man's position during the bride service is reflected in various ways. The main focus of this ambivalence is centered in his mother-in-law, *pizisa*. While stating their dissatisfaction with their in-law's unreasonable demands, men submit to the profound abyss that the rule of avoidance creates between them and their mothers-in-law. Proverbial as it is in ethnographic circles, in its Sanuma manifestation mother-in-law avoidance is tangible reality." (Ramos, 128)

##### 4.9 Inheritance patterns: Inheritance patterns are paternal. (Ramos 153)

##### 4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict:

Marriages are uxorilocal. This causes a huge amount of stress on marriages as mothers continually, sadistically scrutinize the husbands of their daughters.

##### 4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals:

No evidence

#### 4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy):

Men and women are openly sent by their parents as a sort of diplomacy between the villages of the Sanuma who live close by. Overall only up to 30% of a villages marriages are exogamous, because it is seen only necessary to keep political relations with those groups directly next theirs as the forest is so dense that everyone else seems infinitely distant. (Ramos, 153)

#### 4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these "other fathers" recognized?

Conception seems to be understood in the traditional sense.

#### 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)?

This does not seem to be the case.

#### 4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape

Extremely low

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

"they invariably choose a prospective "correct" spouse, that is, someone in the category of cross-cousin to the child, or, more specifically, the child of one of the speakers' [women] brothers." (Ramos, 128)

#### 4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?

Sexuality is controlled by marriage (See 4.26) But women are able to freely divorce a husband. People are expected to have multiple partners in their lifetime, and marriage, and marriage is really just to control descent. (Ramos, 132)

#### 4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring.

All partnerships are marital in that marriage is viewed to them as a sexual pairing.

#### 4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children?

The children usually stay with the mother's family, as the residences of married couples are determined uxorilocally

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

#### 4.22 Evidence for couvades

“During this first *couvade* phase after delivery, both mother and father are subjected to strict food taboos designed to protect the child and the mother from supernatural harm...the father must limit his activities to fishing and light work in the garden.” (Ramos, 217)

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

There is only one potential father: the husband.

#### 4.24 Kin avoidance and respect?

See 4.8 for mother-in-law/son-in-law relations.

Married men and women treat each other with a great “reserve.” It is uncertain if this hides a deep affection for one another or if they are harboring hostility. This is maybe because in Sanuma culture it is the blood relatives who are valued most, and marriage is a social responsibility to produce children. (Ramos 130)

#### 4.24 Joking relationships?

“The frequent appeal to eroticism in conversations, jokes, and games between same- and opposite-sex cross cousins, as well as in the socialization of children” (Ramos, 130)

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

“the father-son relationship, which is marked by the transmission of a patronym and membership in sib and lineage, the mother-son bond, no matter how important it may be, does not receive any formal emphasis, for the woman does not transmit any social identity marks to her children. Her contribution in this domain is in her choice of her children’s names, if and when she chooses them. (Ramos 230)

#### 4.26 Incest avoidance rules

Sexuality is regulated by marriage. One does not marry their direct relatives, although ideal is cross-cousins. (Ramos, 132) When incest does occur, sometimes it’s unavoidable in the small, remote villages, it is frowned upon, but generally not by the in-group members. Ramos on page 64 refers to an event where a man takes his parallel cousin for a wife. The two are forced out of the community for a month long camping trip and after that are accepted back as if nothing happened.

#### 4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony?

“Marriage itself is not celebrated by anything more spectacular than the act of the husband in tying his hammock in his wife’s compartment. It is as though the sliding knots that hold the hammock, facilitating its adjustment and removal with occasional resounding tumbles, were a metaphor for the marriage tie itself: it unites, but is potentially unstable and always on the verge of snapping.” (Ramos, 129)

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

The ritual hunt. “the *humabi* ritual emerges as a model of normality. In the first place, conditions must be perfectly normal and favorable for the hunt to occur and for the child to receive the name. Secondly, the kin-affine division, which on the plane of every day life is blurred by communal living and unorthodox marriages, is dramatized and reinforced in the act of eating the meat of the *humabi* animal, and of giving the animal’s name to the child.” (Ramos, 229)

4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?)

Marriage can be preferred to be arranged outside of the community as a form of politics

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:

Raiding. “we learned from the missionary Donald Borgman that some Sanuma of the Mosonawa, Lalawa, and Azagoshi communities had attacked and killed four people of a Kobali group. That was done in retaliation for the death of an Azagoshi woman whose fate was diagnosed as the result of the killing of her animal spirit, *nonoshi*, by the Kobali group in question.” (Ramos, 44)

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

See 4.15

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

The external relations for the Sanuma are very little. The groups that live near the rivers interact with other peoples on the river, see 5.12

4.18 Cannibalism?

A *sabonomo* ceremonial is the drinking of a deceased love one’s ashes after cremation. The bones are mixed with banana mush and is supposed to please the dead’s ghost. (Ramos, 43, 105)

5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size:

“The total Sanuma population is estimated to be 3,200 people located in the northernmost portion of the Yanomami territory [Venezuela]. In Brazil they count between 900 and 1,000 people living in some twenty widely scattered communities.” (Ramos, 21) Average village size from Ramos, 34 was 42 people.

5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality):

There is not a real effect from seasons as they are in the rainforest, there is a dry season, but this doesn't force a community to move. The community moves when it has exhausted the resources of the current location. (Ramos, 30)

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

"Strictly speaking, there are no headmen in Sanema society, though the most powerful shamans are respected by all. Decisions are made by consensus." (BBC)

5.4 Post marital residence:

Uxorilocal. (Ramos 70)

5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense):

The defined territory is the village in which a community lives. For the Sanuma, there is not much in the means of warfare anymore, it is mostly peaceful trade between villages of goods, services and men and women who are eligible for marriage. (Ramos 47, 49, 153)

5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex):

In Ramos's 1998 social commentary, she states on page 22 "Sanuma children have access to every domain of sociability, all the way from shamanistic sessions to sexual encounters. No cultural areas are prohibited to children. No industry prolongs their immaturity. Most of their toys are miniatures of objects they will use in their adult life. Infants are not addressed in baby talk but in normal speech, including vocabulary and intonation. In short, children are not infantilized beyond their natural capacities to speak and act."

For sex divisions see 4.24

5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships:

See 4.24.

5.8 Village and house organization:

"Sanuma villages are usually made up of several modest rectangular constructions, scattered about in a casual arrangement with no apparent organization...Mortuary rites, heated arguments, great shamanistic sessions, interfamily and intercommunity debates, duels, and much of the children's games occur outdoors in a somewhat undefined space turned into a plaza by human activity rather than by physical markers." (Ramos, 34)

5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses):

No evidence.

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?

“People don’t sleep on the ground” (Ramos, 224) They sleep in hammocks

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

The lineage is Dravidian. (Ramos, 133) All manipulations and missteps that occur in the lineage system are done to account for “noncanonic marriages” (Ramos, 134)

5.12 Trade:

“As with the missionaries, the Sanuma trade services and goods with the Maiongong.” (Ramos, 47) Ramos goes on to say that it is the canoe building skill of the Maiongong that the Sanuma value, and that the Maiongong have increased skill with western industrial methods because they deal with whites more often.

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies?

Those who are revered are those that excel at shamanism. Because of this there is a relation that the current, living shaman leaders have with the old ones who have died. It is viewed that the deceased still rule with their ancient wisdom from the spirit realm and that the current shamans are still learning from them, even if they are viewed as the leader of the living group. (Ramos, 110, 111)

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

6.0 Time allocation to RCR:

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine):

No real specialization, but many people admit to using *alawali*, a plant used for making magical substances. “to make children grow well, to gain a woman’s sexual attention, to provoke barrenness in someone’s wife, or to cause serious injury to a foe.” (Ramos, 25)

6.2 Stimulants:

Tobacco (*pini*) (Ramos, 104)

*Sakona*, The hallucinogen of the Sanuma shamans, is blasted into their nose via pipe from another tribe member. The effect of it is that the men who take it go on a mildly violent outburst. The outbursts are practiced and predictable, though. (Ramos, 252)

6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal):

“Ceremonies for the dead-*sabonomo*- attract great numbers of guests from nearby and from afar. Lasting about ten days to two weeks, they include group hunts of guests and hosts, a lot of dancing, shamanism, generalized weeping, and games of various kinds, some of which carry sexual undercurrents. The climax of the *sabonomo* is the drinking of ashes of the deceased’s bones, which,

following cremation, have been sealed in a calabash, waiting for the ceremony. The bone ashes are mixed with banana mush and drunk by close relatives, such as the deceased's mother, father, spouse and all those to whom he or she was closely related. The moment of passing the bowl around is very solemn, and until the last drop of the ritual mixture is consumed, everyone's countenance remains grave and concentrated. Partaking of the bone ashes appeases the ghost and makes the living tough and fearless, *waitihili*. Much worse than leaving a corpse abandoned to rot is to have the deceased's remains consumed by enemies, a possibility that induces horror in the dead person's relatives. The ashes are harbored with great zeal." (Ramos, 43, 44)

"The rite of passage from adolescence to adulthood involves both boys and girls in a state of liminality that leaves the person unusually vulnerable to the action of certain evil spirits...These puberty spirits use seduction as their weapon. (Ramos 166)

6.4 Other rituals:

6.5 Myths (Creation):

"The Sanema believe in a dream world inhabited by the spirits of everything around them. The trees, the animals, the rocks, the water all have a spirit. Some can be used to heal, others to bring disaster and death. The shaman's dreams are as much part of reality as their waking life. It's in his dreams that the spirits visit him and may foretell the future." (BBC)

"On one hand, there is a continual flow between human beings, animals, and spirits. On the other, those not yet born share the same place with the already dead." (Ramos, 163)

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games):

The art of the Sanuma is the art of speech, oration. The "head man" is the man who can orate the best, and represent the tribe best when visitors come. At this time there is a ritualized poetic debate, *wazamo*. (Ramos, 112)

6.7 Sex differences in RCR:

It is the men who practice shamanism, it is the men who practice *wazano*, the ceremonial debates. In all of Ramos's ethnography I find no instances of women participating in anything but gardening and child rearing. Child rearing not being a small feat, and they are involved in all instances of the child, such as the naming ceremony.

6.8 Missionary effect:

25% of the population is Christian, 7% is evangelical (joshuaproject.com)

6.9 RCR revival:

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs:

Age: “for the Sanuma life cycle contains both what comes before and what comes after the corporeal passage of humans through the earth. Birth and death do not isolate the person in a biological chronology; rather, one is wrapped in a complex system of interrelations with other entities such as animals and spirits.” (Ramos, 162)

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?

No. Old (dead) shamans are continually looked for and referred to as sources of strength. (Ramos, 113)

6.12 Is there teknonymy?

Yes, teknonymy is used to conceal a person’s individual name, which is often secret, and transform them into a public figure. Public figures and the way that people refer to each other is to define social organization. (Ramos, 183, 184) Teknonymous name combination is used mostly in children, who have not yet gained an individualized presence in a community. (Ramos, 186)

For most of their history the Sanuma have used teknonymy to hide their actual names, which can be very spiritual, but now in recent years have taken to using Brazilian names, as they can go by them, but not reveal their actual names. (Ramos, 230)

6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.)

It is a sort of animism, people are said to have animal spirits, *nonoshi*, that is said to live in the forest. (Ramos, 44) There is a belief in the spirits of humans after they die. (Ramos, 45) “Spirits of children yet to be born are contemporaneous with souls of the already dead.

Magic is made through the use of the *alawali* plant, various types of it being used to affect various aspects of day to day life for good or evil. (Ramos, 25)

Evil spirits can be sent by enemy shamans using magic, almost all deaths are attributed to “human agency” (Ramos 161)

7. Adornment:

Ramos doesn’t really go into adornment textually, this is all based off of pictures provided in *Sanuma Memories*

7.1 Body paint:

7.2 Piercings:

7.3 Haircut:

Bowl cuts for everyone (Ramos, 24, 31, 38, 304, 305)

7.4 Scarification:

No evidence.

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

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment:

7.7 Sex differences in adornment:

Everyone wears beaded or cotton aprons (Ramos, xvii)

Everyone wears beaded belts/ aprons

7.8 Missionary effect:

Westernized clothing, Men started wearing shirts and women skirts. (Ramos, xvii)

7.9 Cultural revival in adornment:

None so far, the missionary effect is relatively recent if not still ongoing.

8. Kinship systems:

8.1 Sibling classification system:

Dravidian.

8.2 Sororate, levirate:

No evidence.

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

Dravidian Kinship system (Ramos, 133)

9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):

Sources:

1. Ramos, Alcida Rita. *Sanumá Memories: Yanomami Ethnography in Times of Crisis*. 1st ed. Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1995. Print.
2. BBC, the. "The Senema." *BBC Two*. BBC, Mar 2008. Web. 30 Aug 2012. <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/tribe/tribes/sanema/index.shtml>>.
3. Ethnologue, . "Sanumá." *Ethnologue*. SIL International, Apr 2012. Web. 30 Aug 2012. <[http://www.ethnologue.com/show\\_language.asp?code=xsu](http://www.ethnologue.com/show_language.asp?code=xsu)>.
4. Ramos, Alcida Rita. *Indigenism: Ethic Politics in Brazil*. 1st ed. Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1998. Print.