

1. Description

1.1 Name of society, language, and language family: Tacana (Alternate Name: Takana), Tacana language, Tacana Family (9)

1.2 ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com): 639 (10)

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude): Primarily along the Beni, Tahuamanu, Abuna, Acre, and Madre do Dios rivers in La Paz, Bolivia, (12° to 15° S, 67° to 68° 35' W) (9).

1.4 Brief history: Prior to European contact, the Tacana relied predominately on foraging and hunting (9), and had previously resisted attempts by the Inca to bring them under Incan control (1). During the 17th century, the Tacana were resettled into “reducciones” by Franciscan missionaries (4). The Tacana were also affected by various diseases brought by Europeans, as well as encroachment on their land by those in search of forest products and gold. Attempts to make the Tacana into “civilized” Christians also affected cultural practices and settlements.

“In the late 1800s, a Tacana diaspora began as some Tacana began leaving their original mission settlements because of their recruitment as rubber tappers. Thus, amidst weakening control of the region by the barraqueros (rubber barons), many of whom went bankrupt, members of the Tacana diaspora were able to secure their patrón’s permission to settle and farm. As small, independent communities formed and were recognized politically, former rubber tappers transitioned from governance by the barraqueros and the overseers they employed to governance by the Bolivian state. In these communities, former Tacana rubber tappers and their children worked out a form of communal governance and began to organize as indígenas, participating in the indigenous rights movement that was rapidly gaining momentum throughout Bolivia at the time (Bathurst 2005). Tacana who had been rubber tappers and their descendants were part of the entry of indigenous people as special kinds of citizens into the Bolivian state (Postero 2006), granted special status due to their official recognition as indigenous people including distinct indigenous rights to culture, language, and land.” (1). Many Tacana now define themselves as sedentary agriculturists (4), but some groups also practice swidden agriculture, moving every 7-15 years (1).

1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors: First contacted in 1539, sixteenth century Franciscan missionaries established. Missionaries encouraged use of Quechua, replaced Tacana in some regions. (9)

1.6 Ecology: “In the Tacana territory, humid Amazonian forest co-exists with patches of non-anthropogenic savannah. The mean annual temperatures is 25.9 °C and mean annual precipitation 2550 mm, with a distinct dry season from May to August, as registered by the meteorological station of Rurrenabaque.” (11).

1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density: Modern population size of 5,000 (9).

2. Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s): Modern carbohydrate sources include: cassava root, plantains, rice, and maize (2), as well as heart of palm (9).

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources: Protein sources include: turtle eggs, Brazil nuts, and fish (9).

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?: Bows and arrows were used for hunting, while a wooden double hook was used for fishing. The sap of the soliman tree was also used as a drug for fishing (9) and the inner wood of palm *B.gasipaes* was used for making bows (5). In modern times, shotguns have almost completely supplanted bows and arrows, and nets were used in fishing (1).

2.4 Food storage: The large buttress roots of *Sloanea guianensis*, *Dipteryx odorata*, and *Ficus killipii* were made into containers for storage (5).

2.5 Sexual division of production: In modern Tacana settlements outside of traditional Tacana land, a division of labor by gender is preferred, but this is considered relatively flexible and little to no social stigma is associated with participating in an activity not outside of one’s traditional gender roles (1).

2.6 Land tenure: Modern Tacana diaspora settlements consider wild land to be collectively owned. Land could temporarily belong to someone if they were currently maintaining it, as it was labor that created personal land ownership (1).

2.7 Ceramics: Ceramic production has largely been abandoned in modern times, but was traditionally produced with a particular type of blue clay and strengthened with silica-containing clay from two *Chrysobalanaceae* species which were burned and mixed with the clay (5).

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns: In modern diaspora Tacana settlements, if one had a surplus, there would be a strong expectation that this surplus would be shared first among kin, then friends, and, lastly, with anyone in need. After a hunt, children would be sent to neighbors or family with meat to share, or these people would be invited to dine with the family. The majority of village exchanges operated in this way, as reciprocal gift exchanges. Harder to get items, such as meat, had higher associated expectations of sharing. This hospitality was also extended to travellers who happened to be in the village, who would be offered food and a place to sleep for the night (1).

2.9 Food taboos: Unknown

2.10 Canoes/watercraft? References to systems of canoe lending among family/kin in modern settlements, no data on historical use (1).

3. Anthropometry

3.1 Mean adult height (m and f): unknown

3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f): unknown

4. Life History, mating, marriage

4.1 Age at menarche (f): unknown

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

4.3 Completed family size (m and f): unknown

4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f): unknown

4.5 Age first marriage (m and f): Marriages occurred at age 9 or 10 for both genders, however, marriages were not consummated until puberty (9).

4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce: Exact data not known, though marriages were said to end easily (9).

4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously: Unknown

4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?: Males who married into the neighboring Ese Ejja had to supply in-laws with gifts of meat (8).

4.9 Inheritance patterns: Unknown

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict: Unknown

4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals: Unknown

4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy): The Tacana are divided into exogamous, patrilineal groups (9).

4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these “other fathers” recognized? Unknown

4.14 What is the belief of the mother’s role in procreation exactly? (e.g., “receptacle in which fetus grows”): Unknown

4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)? Unknown

4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape: Unknown

4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin)- Among Ese Ejja/Tacana marriages, patterns varied, but there was a documented case of three sisters marrying three brothers (8).

4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms? Unknown

4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring

4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children? General data not available, one modern ethnographic example of the maternal grandmother raising children after the death of the mother was given (2).

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

4.22 Evidence for couvades: Men were said to observe couvades when their wives were giving birth, though exact practices were not specified (9).

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

4.24 Kin avoidance and respect? Unknown

4.24 Joking relationships? Unknown

4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations The Tacana were a patrilineal society (9). In mixed marriages between the Ese Ejja and the Tacana, the Esse Ejja considered children of a Esse Ejja woman and a Tacana man to be of Tacana descent, though they are also sometimes

considered to be Esse Ejja, depending on circumstances. Generally, the father's blood was considered the primary factor for a child's lineage by the Esse Ejja, in determining if children were of Tacana or Ese Ejja descent (8).

4.26 Incest avoidance rules: Unknown

4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony? Unknown

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

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

References to modern Ese Ejja women marrying Tacana men, though this was not the only marriage choice (8). It is unknown if this was the preferred arrangement.

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

4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who: Among intermarriages with the Esse Ejja, many of the Esse Ejja were said to initially oppose such unions. In order to win approval, Tacana men had to move to an Esse Ejja village, learn to speak their language and give gifts of meat to their inlaws. However, suspicions that Tacana men were men and violent often flared up when drunk or angry, regardless. (8)

Warfare/homicide

4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare: Unknown

4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death: Unknown

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

4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations): Instances of history of warfare and hostility with neighboring Ese Ejja, also of the Tacanan language family, though they also occasionally intermarry. (8)

4.18 Cannibalism? Not documented

5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size: Unknown

5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality): Tacana outside of original settlement pattern, entire communities moved every 7-15 years, or for seasonal labor. (1)

5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes): The position of chief was hereditary by the male line, but was also based on personality and family size. Groups could be split if a chief's brother wanted to become the chief (9).

5.4 Post marital residence: When Tacana males married Ese Ejja women, men left their village for the Ese Ejja village (8).

5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense): Unknown

5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex): Unknown

5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships: Unknown

5.8 Village and house organization: "Traditionally, some Tacana groups lived in dwellings averaging 18 meters by 6 meters and housing up to twenty families, although they slept in small huts that were designed to exclude mosquitoes and vampire bats. Other groups lived behind simple windbreaks constructed of a row of large leaves (9)."

5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses): Not documented

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere? Traditionally, the Tacana slept on the ground, or on beds made of bark (9).

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

5.12 Trade: The Tacana have a long history of trade with the Quechea. During the 19th and 20th century the Tacana traded quinine bark, coca, cacao, rice, and various tropical forest products with them. Forest products included: uhuahua flowers, yuruma bark, palm oils, aqui aceite oil, pid'ui sap, tamarind fruit, brazil nuts, feathers and animal skins. These were traded for salt, animals, animal products (fat, cheese, meat), flour, bread, alcohol, metal and trinkets. Until 1950 an annual international fair was held in the Andean town of Pata, near the Peruvian border, provided a venue for exchange of Tacana products (4).

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies? In modern settlements, expected sharing of excess goods helped reduce hierarchies and create a more egalitarian community (1). Though, evidence for hereditary chiefs, who followers had to work for, was documented in the past (9).

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

6 Time allocation to RCR: Unknown

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine): Priest-shamans, or yanacona, were present among the Tacana (6), however existence of shamans was often denied or guarded. Shamans were consulted for illnesses thought to be caused by other shamans, as well as tree or water spirits. “Curanderos” travelling from other areas also use divination to cure illness, while illness thought to be of non-supernatural origin was treated through family remedies. (4)

6.2 Stimulants: Instances of Tacana shamans (yanaconas) using hallucinogenic snuff to transform into jaguar alter egos were reported in 1952, and ayahuaska was used for divination until the 1960s or 1970s. While ayahuaska is not a part of traditional Tacana culture, it was appropriated from other groups in Peru, and was also used for curing physical and spiritual ailments, initiation purposes, to ensure success in hunting, or to find the lost spirit of a person. This last use was most commonly practiced in children, who were thought to be more sensitive to spirits. Curing and divination was also done with cahuascha, though specifics of use are lacking (7). In addition, coca leaves were chewed as both a medicine and stimulant (5). Traveling “curanderos” also used coca and alcohol when visiting Tacana communities (4).

6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal): Among some Tacana groups, funerals start prior to the subject of the funeral actually dying. Some groups bury their dead in their huts, others in the bush with their possessions (9).

6.4 Other rituals: Men bath in water that the bark *Trichilia pleeana* has been boiled in the morning before hunting to ensure success (5).

6.5 Myths (Creation): “The Tacana Indians of the Beni River area maintain the belief in a supreme being known as Caquiahuaca, who created the earth, human beings, animals, and plants. An old man with a white beard, Caquiahuaca lives in a cave in a mountain that bears his name and that forms the center of the world. In temples he is represented by a small bees-wax figure surrounded by a series of larger wooden statues that represent the lower gods, known as *edutzi*, who assist him. As the instructor of the priest-shamans, or *yanacona*, Caquiahuaca assists them in the performance of their office, and as their master he is responsible for their religious vocation.” (6).

“In their compilation of Tacana myths, Hissink and Hahn (1961) recorded one that began: “after a while, a man died...from his legs was born the ‘bibosi’ tree, from his arms the ‘black bibosi’, from his guts the vines, from his testicles and his penis the palm tree ‘sayal’ with fruits like testicles. From his lungs and his heart was born ‘pajajaja’ the forest papaya; from his back, the bees ‘eaua guasa’ which share their honeycomb with the termites, from his kidney the ‘budhubudhuy’ stem, from his backbone the bambu ‘penene’...His blood became the latex of the ‘bibosi’ tree, from his urine was born a gigantic lake in the mountains, from his nails the snails, from his fingers the ‘noa’ herb...from his head, the star ‘uena etuaji,’ which can be seen at the sunrise, and does not move nor pulse.” Many myths also relate to spirits imparting revenge on humans for overusing resources, though these beliefs are becoming obsolete (4).

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games): A ball game played by the Tacana involves hitting the ball with their stomachs, which are protected by belts made of bark. (9)

6.7 Sex differences in RCR: Unknown

6.8 Missionary effect: Unknown

6.9 RCR revival: Unknown

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs: Among some Tacana groups, the ghost of the deceased is prevented from returning to their home by moving the door of his or her house (9).

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people? Unknown

6.12 Is there teknonymy? Unknown

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

“Like other Amazonian groups the Tacana possess a rich cosmology involving their environment. The Tacana can be described as a ‘Society of Nature’ for which complex stories of the relationship between humanity, plants, animals and gods exist.” The following is also said of the Tacana, “The Tacana do not see the universe as constituted by neutral objects which can be manipulated with impunity by humans to satisfy their needs. Many stories relate to spirits and their interactions with animals, men, and plants including their revenge imparted on humans for over-harvesting resources.” (4).

Additionally, the following is said of Deavoavai, an important Tacana figure, “In addition to this, Deavoavai, the lord of the animals, also represents a creator, culture hero, and master of the dead. In his capacity as ruler of the game, Deavoavai is rooted in an earlier cultural-historical level—that of hunters, fishers, and gatherers. Such a deity is also found among other agricultural peoples, including peoples of the Amazon lowlands. Despite their reliance on an economic subsistence that has long since undergone the transition from a hunting to an agricultural base, these groups of the Amazon Basin maintain a religious emphasis that incorporates a dependence on a powerful being who controls the game, an aspect that will receive attention below. It is sufficient here to point out that within this region a relationship exists between the master of the hunted game and the supreme being, a concept first recognized by Adolf E. Jensen.” (6).

7. Adornment

7.1 Body paint: Unknown

7.2 Piercings: Unknown

7.3 Haircut: Unknown

7.4 Scarification: Unknown

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

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment: “Featherwork produced for ceremonial use consists of colorful, tropical feathers attached to leather, cloth, wood, or other material such as basketry to create adornments worn on the wrists, ankles, neck, waist, back, and head including the lips and ears. Most typically found are headdresses, which may consist of small, modest crowns (30 cm. average) or large, towering bonnets of Suri feathers (80 cm.) This category also includes feather-covered ritual belts and textiles (35 - 70 cm.), fans (250 cm. long), staves or batons (145-250 cm.), basketry supports, and healer's amulets or photadi (80 - 250 cm.)” (10).

7.7 Sex differences in adornment: Unknown

7.8 Missionary effect: Unknown

7.9 Cultural revival in adornment: Unknown

8. Kinship systems

8.1 Sibling classification system: Unknown

8.2 Sororate, levirate: Unknown

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

9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):

1. After the 19th century, hunting incorporated dogs, which would be used to circle prey (9).
2. During the dry season, the Tacana gathered fish from pools left by receding water (9).

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