

Siona Indians

1. Description

1.1 Name of society, language, and language family:

Siona-Secoya. Siona in Ecuador (“Upriver people”) Alternate names: Sioni, Pioje, Pioche-Sioni, Ganteyabain, Ganteya, Ceona, Zeona, Koka, Kanu. Language Family: Tucanoan. Siona and Secoya are close dialects of Tucanoan(Tucanoan) Language Family. Siona is predominant dialect of western portions of the Aguarico and Putumayo river basins in Colombia and Ecuador.

1.2 -ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com): ISO 639:snn. SOV word order.

1.3-Location (latitude/longitude): At time of European contact: N 3 degrees S and from 72 degrees to 77 degrees W. Zones of wet tropical rain forest. Elevations range from 300 to 100 meters west and east. Modern times area includes portions of Ecuador, Colombia(southern), and Peru. Both sides of Putumayo River. Protected under the Cuyabeno Wildlife Reserve, in Ecuador. This reserve occupies 603.380 square kilometers, a protected wildlife zone since July 26th, 1979. Tropical Wetland.

1.4-Brief history: The Siona and Secoya people are Tucano speaking tribes. There were approximately 16,000 Tucano speakers when the Spanish first discovered the region, but now the population is less than 500 people. They are primarily located on the Cuyabeno reserve near the Putumayo and Cuyabeno Rivers. Three major Siona communities include: Biana, Orahueaya, and Puerto Bolivar. Since 1972, and until 1986. Siona-Secoya territories were devastated by oil companies, which lead to inhabitants suing Texaco for over one billion dollars in damage. In 2010, the process was still ongoing and a final decision is to be made by the Ecuadorian Court.

1.5-Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors: In 1683, a royal decree gave the Jesuits the authority to missionize the natives. The period from 1709-1769 saw much Jesuit activity. Seventeen missionaries were found in the Siona region. The new missions proved unstable, as people left them to go foraging or abandoned them whenever illness or accusations of sorcery arose. In 1744 a native named Curazaba killed Padre Francisco Real and two assistants at San Miguel. Shortly after, eight missions were abandoned. In 1767 King Charles the third ordered the Jesuits expelled from Spain's New World colonies, and their missions died out.

1.6-Ecology: Located on the Cuyabeno Reserve. The Aguarico River carries sediment down from the Andes. The Altitude is 200-280 metres. The Climate is humid tropical with a dry and rainy season.

1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density: Last known to have about (250 Siona indians in Ecuador, 2000 Juncosa, and 300 in Columbia). Village size usually does not contain more than 200 residents in one village.

2. Economy

2.1-Main carbohydrate staple(s): manioc is the most important food plant. They grow both the bitter and sweet varieties of manioc. Maize and peach-palm fruit is eaten at most meals.

2.2-Main protein-lipid sources: White-lipped and collared peccaries, tapir, woolly and Howler monkeys, pacas, agoutis, guans, curassows, turtles, and caimans. Different species of fish.

2.2 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?: Siona indians use blowguns, blowgun darts, dart poisons, dart quivers, dart wadding, cages, clubs, drying frames, spears, harpoons, fish hooks, nets, pesticides, and torches for night fishing.

2.4 Food storage: Baskets are used as well as ceramic pots.

2.5-Sexual division of production: Men hunt and clear gardens. Both men and women fish and plant, weed, and harvest gardens. The harvesting and processing of manioc is done by women. Women do most of the cooking and child rearing, but men do cooperate and help out. Women also weave string bags, hammocks, and baskets.

2.6-Land tenure: The Siona depend on the shifting of cultivation, hunting and fishing, and collection of feral resources. Gardens are usually cleared, burned, and planted during the season. (November to January)

2.7 Ceramics: Present in the Siona Indians, mainly pots for the cooking or storing of food.

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:

2.9 Food taboos:

2.10 Canoes/watercraft? Canoes, and motorized small canoes/boats

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: Either party can initiate divorce by stating a desire to separate or by moving out of the household.

4.7- Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously: Marriages are monogamous, but polygyny is occasionally practiced. Frequently intermarry with their neighbors Secoyas Indians. The ideal practice is to seek a mate beyond one's patrilineal sib, and also beyond one's mother's immediate lineage. Both cross and parallel-cousin marriages are prohibited.

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

4.9-Inheritance patterns: Social Organization is based on patrilineal descent and patrilocal residence, with a headman-shaman in each household or village settlement.

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict:

4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals:

4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy): Exogamous patrilineal sib that provides each individual with a reference group of "brothers" and "sisters."

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

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)
- 4.23 Kin avoidance and respect?
- Joking relationships?
- 4.25-Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations: The Siona Indians are patrilineal.
- 4.26 Incest avoidance rules
- 4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony? The ceremony is concluded when the bride sits with the groom in a hammock. Ideally, the husband provides a period of bride-service to his wife's household before establishing patrilocal residence.
- 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?) The Siona-Secoya Indians intermarry with communities in close proximity to them.
- 4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)? Parents arrange marriages.
- 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: Varies, usually less than 200 residents.
- 5.2-Mobility pattern: (seasonality): Most settlement sites are abandoned after periods of habitation ranging from five to 20 years. These movements can be attributed to a wide variety of causes including individual deaths, disease, and depletion of local resources.
- 5.3- Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes): Social organization is based on a patrilineal descent pattern with patrilocal residence. A shaman- headman resides in each household of village settlement. These settlements are politically autonomous, and the headman-shaman exercises influence rather than authority in leading the people of his local group.
- 5.4-Post marital residence: Patrilineal. Resides with the male line.
- 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: Settlement consists of scattered households and small villages, usually located on or near river banks or streams.
- 5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses):
- 5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?: The Siona sleep in hammocks in their huts.
- 5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc:
- 5.12 Trade:

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies?: Each village is lead by a shaman-or headman but no actual authority. He is there for guidance.

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

6 Time allocation to RCR: Yahe ceremonies are held at intervals of about once a month, but may be performed within a few days of each other if the shaman has a particular purpose in mind, such as to appeal to the spirits.

6.1-Specialization (shamans and medicine): The specialization of the Banisteriopsis potion(Yahe) is carried out by two or three assistants. The afternoon before the ceremony is to take place, these assistants go to the garden or forest to cut lengths of the Banisteriopsis vine and then carry them slowly and respectfully to the ceremonial hut(the hut is located in the forest away from the village settlement). The next morning, one assistant begins cooking the Yahe, while others bring water and firewood and clean the ceremonial house. The vine along with water, boils throughout the day. Rituals are performed to protect the Yahe. Before sunset, the shaman arrives , sits on a special log bench and begins a long and rhythmic chant over the Yahe pot. After he sings for nearly a hour, he serves the Yahe to each person wishing to take it. This is largely a communal act. Whole families take part(minus very young children). As the shaman serves the yahe, he performs a blowing ritual and shakes a rattle over the people who are about to drink. This is intended to keep away demons. After they have been served, the participants return to hammocks and wait for the drug to take effect.

6.2-Stimulants:Yahe(hallucogenic) Yoko(stimulating morning beverage) Mito(tobacco) dried leaves are rolled into cigars and smoked. Important to many rituals, said to ward off demonic spirits. Ointments, poisons, potions are present as well.

6.3-Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal): Young children are presented to village elders. Child receives a haircut before the ceremony.

6.4-Other rituals: This culture is profoundly influenced by the ritual drinking of a beverage made from Banisteriopsis, referred to as Yahe. It is a hallucinogenic plant. It is key to understanding the world view as a Siona indian as well as their mythology, art, ritual, and “science”(this is supposed to explain the cause and effect in the universe). Siona seek supernatural knowledge by consuming Yahe.

6.5-Myths (Creation): Believe in “heavenly people” Durning the Yahe ceremony, the shaman's soul rises to the heavenly realms and mingles with the ma'timo bai(“heavenly people”). This world/realm of “heavenly people” is one of great beauty and bounty.

6.6-Cultural material (art, music, games): Durning the Yahe ceremony, shaman plays a one-stringed musical bow. Drums are popular as well. Dolls and string games are also present.

6.7- Sex differences in RCR: None used in the Yahe ritual. It is a communal act with whole families participating.

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.)

7. Adornment

- 7.1-Body paint: During the Yahe ceremony, participants arrive in their finest cotton tunics and are adorned with red face paint. Lip stains are present as well.
- 7.2 Piercings: Ear ornaments, headbands, headdresses, and pelvic bands for women.
- 7.3 Haircut: Usually is left thicker on top, with a long back. Similar to a mullet.
- 7.4-Scarification: Scarification is used. I found a picture of a Siona youth with lines going around his forearm all the way up to his bicep. It was said to be an aspect of hunting and fishing magic and is believed to improve the individual's aim and skill in landing fish. The light bands consist of raw skin where scars will later form. This effect is produced by tying strips of bark around the arm.
- 7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.): Many strands of brightly colored beads are used.
- 7.6-Ceremonial/Ritual adornment: The Siona Indians body art usually consists of different patterns of lines drawn all over their bodies. Done is black paint. Both men and women wear this type of art.
- 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):

Numbered references

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