

Questionnaire

1. Description

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

- Siwi (Egypt), Oasis Berber, Sioua, Siwa, Zenati

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

- siz

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude):

- Northwest desert, several isolated villages in West Oasis 25 degree 30' eastern longitude and 29 degree 12' northern latitude, and it is about 24 meters below sea level.

1.4 Brief history:

- "The Siwan people are mostly Berbers, the true Western Desert indigenous people, who once roamed the North African coast between Tunisia and Morocco. They inhabited the area as early as 10,000 BC, first moving towards the coast, but later inland as other conquering invaders arrived. Hence, Siwa is more North African sometimes than Egyptian and their language, traditions, rites, dress, decorations and tools differ from those of the other Western Oasis." (1)
- "The Siwans originated from Arabs and Berber. (2)

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

- "No real record, or for that matter, archaeological evidence exists to support Christianity in the Oasis." (1)

1.6 Ecology (natural environment):

- "The climate of Siwa is what we expect from a depression in the midst of the desert at 29 degree 12' of latitude and with abundant water which have made many salty lakes in it. The weather between December and February is ideal but in the summer months it is hot and humid." (2)
- "According to ancient writers, it had a thousand springs, nowadays their number is about 200, of which about 80 are important." (2)

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

- 30,000 (2006)

2. Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s):

- "The chief products of Siwa are the dates and olives, but there are other kinds of fruits and vegetables which are planted in its gardens... specially grapes. Apricots, fig, lemon, orange, sweet-lemon, pomegranate, pears, peach, apple, and plums grow also but in different degrees of successes. They plant also many kinds of vegetables; garlic, onion, egg-plant, tomatoes, cucumber, okra, gherkin, pumpkin, melons, water-melons, turnip, mint, parsley, pepper and radish grow there. Corn, barley, maize, rice, beans, and peas are planted in small quantities." (2)
- Vegetarian dishes are more common and affordable, with delicious olives, olive oil, dates, and fresh, organic vegetables (4)

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources:

- "There are many domesticated animals in Siwa; sheep, goats, cows, hens, pigeons, turkeys, and geese are brought up in the houses." (2)
- Main dishes are tagines, with chicken or meat cooked in large pots with rice or couscous. (4)

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?:

2.4 Food storage:

2.5 Sexual division of production:

- The agricultural work is primarily done by the men. (6)

2.6 Land tenure:

- Most land is held as private property by individuals and can be bought and sold. Water rights are very important. (60)

2.7 Ceramics:

- Basket-making (2)

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:

- We help each other. There is nothing that we will not do for each other. In times of hardship we will give help and money. If one of us is punished then we help each other pay the fine or it may well be that the fine is not required as long as an apology has been given. We forgive each other. Wealthier individuals will assist those who are less fortunate and will do this unobtrusively by setting up covenants. (5)

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):

- “The girls marry generally in the age of fourteen, while the men are about twenty-five or more.” (2)

4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce:

- “It is very rare that a man and a woman spend their whole life together because divorce is very easy and happens very often, it is not seldom to find a child of sixteen or seventeen who had been married and divorced once or twice. It is quite possible that one meets a man who had married over twenty wives one after the other...” (2)

4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously:

- “...But it is very rare that one finds a Siwan who has two wives in the same time because they hate polygamy” (2)
- “I know many men who have two women for no reason. It's really a horrible thing. Living in three under one roof, I do not like it,” says Safiha. Sheikh Omar Rageh says that polygamy is rejected by the siwi society. “Polygamists are rare in our society. It takes a very serious reason, like illness, so that man can marry another woman”, he adds” (7)

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

- “There is a fixed sum, 120 piastres as the mahr of any girl whether poor or rich, young or old, virgin or widow but the presents given by the bridegroom vary greatly according to the wealth and social position of both families. The mahr is taken by the father of the girl if he is poor but the rich do not accept though they sign in the marriage contract that they have received it.” (2)

4.9 Inheritance patterns:

- According to Islamic law inheritances are traced through the males (6)
- These religious principles also determine which portion of a man's estate goes to his widow; the balance is divided among his children, with full shares to sons and half shares to daughters. (6)

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict:

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? 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)

- Marriage with first cousins is common (6)

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

- Family life is patrilocal (6)

4.26 Incest avoidance rules

- However there are drawbacks to this as it can lead to genetic problems such as albinos. (5)

4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony?

- “When an important marriage takes place, the whole town is invited and the people eat “azkagh” which is a Siwan food made of lentil and peas.” (2)

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?)

- We marry within our own tribe as this is our preferred way. In this way we preserve the integrity of our community. However there are drawbacks to this as it can lead to genetic problems such as albinos. (5)

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

- If it is the man who chooses his wife, the bride has the right to object. For Mahmoud, who has a little girl of 5 years old, the opinion of the girl's family is more important: “If my daughter tells me tomorrow that she wants to marry the boy she crossed in the street, my role is to give her my advise. Here, we see all the young men grow. We know their families. We are sometimes better placed than the girl to judge whether she will be happy with this man or not. The opinion of the tribal chief is also critical. He knows the past of the people, he knows if they are honest or not”. (7)

4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who:

Warfare/homicide

4.31 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare:

- The last great battle took place in year 1222 Heg. (=1806): Easterners dead= 28; Westerners dead= 72 (2)

4.32 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death:

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

- “The inhabitants are divided into two sections, the Easterners and Westerners and each of these two sections is divided onto different families...At the end of the XVIIIth century, the first serious quarrel between the two sections took place; the dispute

originated about the road dividing the two parts of the town... The whole population took part in the quarrel which developed into a deeply rooted hatred and a permanent civil war.” (2)

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

- Harmony, respect and close relationships are maintained both within the family tribe and co-existing tribes. (5)
- In the case of disputes between members of different tribes, the respective sheikhs arbitrate using the Siwan law and the Koran. Admonishments may be beatings, the giving of alms, fines or banishment from the tribe. (5)

4.35 Cannibalism?

5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size:

5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality):

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

- Governed by judges called El-Agwad ad who judged from laws written by ‘the learned man,’ “except for the laws of marriage and inheritance which were practiced according to the laws of Islam. No stranger can enter the town without their permission after knowing the purpose of his visit.” (2)
- The leader of each group is the the chief we know as Amazigh Agleed, or as the Sheikh, the head of the family. He leads the family council of ten members, all respected elders of the tribe. He personally settles problems within the family group and also gives advice to other tribes. In this way, harmony, respect and close relationships are maintained both within the family tribe and co-existing tribes. (5)

5.4 Post marital residence:

- Newlyweds live with the groom's parents. Sometimes a new level is added to the house to accommodate the young couple (6)

5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense):

- If the problem is connected with the land, a special committee will gather and decide the land rights using old papers relating to the land. Some of these important papers are more than one hundred years old. (5)

5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex):

5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships:

5.8 Village and house organization:

- “It was like a “bee-hive”, the streets are narrow and dark and many of them are roofs, the houses were built, one at the top of the other against the slope of the hill or simply building new storeys; some of them had five storeys.” (2)

5.9 Specialized village structures (mens’ houses):

- “Every family lived inside a house which was reached through a door in one of these dark and narrow streets; there was a court inside, stalls for the animals and storerooms.” (2)
- Most houses have two floors and a roof top terrace, where we sleep in the summer or sit in the evening for dinners and chats in the open air. The second floor has bedrooms, a sitting room and a kitchen. The first floor usually has one room called the winter room, or “gharfit nshtee.” (5)

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?

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

- It is a mentality based on the tribal family (5)

5.12 Trade:

- “Siwa produce many kinds of fruits and other plants, the dates and olive oil are the only kinds exported and are regarded as the chief source of income.” (2)

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies?

- The leader of each group is the chief we know as Amazigh Agleed, or as the Sheikh, the head of the family. He leads the family council of ten members, all respected elders of the tribe. He personally settles problems within the family group and also gives advice to other tribes. (5)

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

6.0 Time allocation to RCR:

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine):

- Homeopathic medicine (5)
- Men and women healers specialize in mixing medicines, setting broken bones, Qur’anic healing and midwifery. (5)

6.2 Stimulants:

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

- Birth:

-“Every mother poor or rich must sleep for ten days on the floor after giving birth. The first six days are spent without special arrangements but on the seventh day, the female friends and relatives come to the house and bring their children with them, where they share a meal which must contain salted fish, a traditional dish which is connected with the birth of children after the miracle of Sidi Soleiman. The ceremonies begin after the meal.”

- Boy= father chooses name; Girl= mother chooses name

-“Everybody can have a look at the baby, and then the midwife paints the cheeks of the children and their noses with henna and they rush into the street and the market-place calling the name of the child and that of his father.”

-Then “ a large earthenware round bowl, specially made for the occasion, is brought into the room and filled with water. Every woman throws into it her silver ornaments...midwife recites some prayers that God may make the child live and prosper. The women raise the bowl and lower it seven times and then let it drop.” (2)

- **Death:**

-When a person passes away in Siwa, his family notifies their relatives and neighbors. Then the town crier announces the death to the entire town, walking through the streets and calling out: “A graveyard in East Siwa (or other part of Siwa).” Everyone in Siwa is expected to attend the funeral: the men meet at the cemetery, but the women will mourn at the house of the deceased.

-The funeral procession begins at the house of the deceased. Everyone, including the people from the mosque, gathers outside and carry the body in a procession to the graveyard. Prayer will be led either by a close relative who is the most knowledgeable in religion or a sheikh. After the closest relatives lay the body in the grave, the family sits in a shelter or “khos” at the graveyard waiting for the thousands of people who will give their condolences. Then the town crier will announce the family’s decision: whether they will stay three days to wait for those who were not able to attend that day, or whether the family will forgive anyone who was absent. Normally they return to the mosque for a meal, although some families consider the meal an innovation and hence not in keeping with Islam. After the meal they leave if the family is decided not to sit three days. If not, the family will sit in a room in the mosque to receive condolences. (5)

6.4 Other rituals:

- **The Feast of ‘Ashura or the Children’s Day:**

-Children decorate the roofs of houses with tall palm branches and fasten a torch soaked in oil to every branch.

-On the evening of the feast the children light the torches, pray, and sing a song for this occasion only (2)

- **Other:**

- “The Siwan Manuscript throws some light on the subject...’among the old customs, there was a day in the year when all the inhabitants meet at a place called “El-‘Ayid”; everybody brings bread which is filled with “makhmakh” or “ghyarin.”... On this night, the men dance together and the women together till morning, they put their food in one place and eat and drink the whole night.” (2)

6.5 Myths (Creation):

- The early Siwans believed in life after death and even worshiped several Egyptian gods such as Osiris, Isis and Amun (8)

- The Siwans believe so much in magic, astrology, and superstitions. These aspects truly affect their lives. They are always afraid of other people envying them and they also fear ghosts as you can see on almost every house there are amulets made of animal bones, deer horns, broken pottery and bones of the dead to protect them from evils and from envy. (9)

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games):

- Many of the songs of the Siwans are love songs as they are affected with the beauty of the surrounding environment and the wonderful natural sceneries. The Siwans have a great ability to transform words or poems into songs. The Siwans use the oboe and the drums with amazing abilities to create amazing tunes and songs. (9)

6.7 Sex differences in RCR:

6.8 Missionary effect:

- Prior to the seventh century, the Berbers had successfully resisted foreign invasions of Islam. However, with the Arab conquests of the seventh century, the Berbers were shattered. Some fled or were driven into the desert, while others submitted, becoming arabized in language and, to some extent, racially mixed. All embraced Islam, the majority being Sunni Muslims. Although the Siwa observe the Islamic fundamentals, many pre-Islamic traditional beliefs still persist. (6)

6.9 RCR revival:

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs:

- Custom that is dying out- “If a man dies, his wife is supposed to become possessed of an evil eye and to bring bad luck to any person whom she sees.” (2)

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?

6.12 Is there teknonymy?

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

- Islam (1,2, 3)

7. Adornment

7.1 Body paint:

7.2 Piercings:

7.3 Haircut:

- “The men shave their heads, except the “zaggala” who leave the upper part of their hair growing. The small boys let some locks grow, the number and position depend on the tradition in the different families, but when they reach the age of ten they begin to shave their heads like the grown-ups.” (2)

- “The parents let the hair of a girl grow till she reaches the age of nine or ten and then they begin to make tresses. When the hair is tressed it means that those who think of asking her hand can talk to the parents.” (2)

7.4 Scarification:

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

- “The Siwan women and girls are fond of ornaments and wear a great number of glass beads and silver bracelets, necklaces, earrings and rings of different kinds and sizes.” (2 pg11)

- “There is no difference between the ornaments of a married woman and unmarried girl except on one thing only; both of them put a wide circle of silver round the neck, to which an unmarried girl fastens a wide disk of silver; this is the so-called “disk of virginity” which the Siwans call “shebeyka” and which the girl takes off only on the eve of her marriage.” (2 pg 11)

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment:

- “(Men) The cover of the head is wither the fez in ceremonial occasions or the close fitting white cap called “takieh” either worn alone or with a cloth wound around it to form a turban.” (2)

7.7 Sex differences in adornment:

7.8 Missionary effect:

7.9 Types of clothing:

- “The men at Siwa are dressed according to their social position, the rich people and the sheikhs imitate the criers of the tribes of Tripolis whether in putting the fez over their heads or using the wide silk wool “hram” or djird” with which they wrap their bodies. The workers in the gardens who are in the service of others put a half sleeve woolen shirt reaching to their knees which they call “gibbeh.” The ordinary dress of the Siwan men is a wide “gallabieh” of white linen with very wide and long sleeves under which they wear an undergarment and trousers.” (2)
- “The women wear clothes of bright colour when they are at home... They wear boots of red colour above which one generally sees the edge of their long tight trousers which are beautifully decorated with needlework in silk or wool.” (2)

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):

- The wedding day is decided by the family of the husband, while the girl’s family has the right to postpone it for 3 to 5 days. Marriages in Siwa are often real feasts for the whole village. It is common to have 2000 people attending the wedding! Marriage is spread over three days starting with a battle between women of both families to retrieve the wife. Meanwhile, the husband, shy, does not see his father. And the festival ends with a meeting of reconciliation between father and son in the presence of the wife's family and son’s friends. (7)

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