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SEX ROLES AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN AMAZONIAN ECUADOR

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## INTRODUCTION

This paper has two primary aims. The first is to discuss sex-role behavior in Amazonia, and particularly among the Siona-Secoya Indians of eastern Ecuador, in order to assess the traditional status of native women. The second is to discuss how inter-ethnic contacts and national development are influencing the sex-role behavior and status of Siona-Secoya women. In the first case I will propose that sex-role differences derive primarily from sexual division of labor and that reciprocity is more characteristic of male-female relations in Amazonia than the overt male exploitation of females as described for some societies such as the Yanomamö. In the second case I will describe how the expanding Ecuadorian frontier has exposed Siona-Secoya women to external threats while at the same time easing some of the strictures of traditional sex-role behavior.

## OPPRESSED WOMEN IN AMAZONIA?

A substantial body of literature on Amazonian societies has emphasized a widespread male-dominance syndrome in which men enjoy elevated social status as a consequence of their "fierceness" as warriors and proficiency as hunters and providers of meat (cf. Chagnon 1968, Harris 1974). In contrast, the status of women has been viewed as subordinate and inferior as manifested by overt sexual exploitation, female infanticide, strict segregation during menstruation, and the assignment of tedious and mundane activities such as water bearing, firewood collecting, and manioc harvesting and processing. This view of Amazon sex roles is seen in Napoleon Chagnon's popular ethnography (1968) on the Yanomamö which emphasizes male fierceness and warfare. In Cows, Pigs, Wars and Witches, Marvin Harris (1974) interprets Yanomamö warfare in terms of

materialist factors, but concurs that Yanomamö males are among the most brutal in the ethnographic record, and that exploitation of females is one of the more salient features of Yanomamö social behavior.

Because the Yanomamö are classified as a "tropical forest" people (cf. Steward 1948) the question arises as to whether the male-dominance syndrome of the Yanomamö is typical of the tropical forest peoples of South America. In this paper I shall examine the question of whether exploitation or reciprocity is most typical of male-female relations among tropical forest peoples. In addressing this question I shall consider data from a number of Amazonian societies including the Siona-Secoya of northeastern Ecuador among whom I have conducted three periods of field research since 1972.

In describing the status of Yanomamö females Chagnon writes:

Yanomamö society is decidedly masculine....there is a definite preference to have male children, resulting in a higher incidence of female infanticide....girls....are largely pawns to be disposed of by their kinsmen....  
Marriage does not enhance the status of the girl, for her duties as wife require her to assume difficult and laborious tasks too menial to be executed by men. (1968:81)

Furthermore, the men are often brutal in their treatment of the women:

Many men....show their ferocity by meting out serious punishment to their wives for even minor offenses. It is not uncommon for a man to injure his errant wife seriously; and some men have even killed wives....It is considered good to beat a wife every once in a while just to show your concern for her....It is not difficult to understand....why Yanomamö women have such a vindictive and caustic attitude toward the external world. (p. 83)

Marvin Harris bases his account (1974) of the Yanomamö on Chagnon's ethnography, and gives even more emphasis to the mistreatment of the women:

....the fiercer the males, the more sexually aggressive they become, the more exploited are the females, and the higher incidence of polygyny....females are held in contempt and killed in infancy....(the Yanomamö) are one of the most aggressive, warlike, and male-oriented societies in the world. (p. 87)



The picture which emerges from these accounts is one of males who are constantly exploitative of females; women are beaten mutilated, raped and kidnapped by men, and they serve as the perennial drudges who are assigned the hardest tasks of day-to-day life. Chagnon's and Harris' descriptions of Yanomamö sex-role behavior stress male exploitation of women and give no emphasis to reciprocity or sex-role complementarity. In order to assess whether this exploitative model of sex-role behavior is typical of tropical forest groups in general, I have gleaned data from eleven Amazonian societies; in addition to the Yanomamö, I will consider the Jívaro (Ecuador), Mundurucú (Brazil), Sharanahua (Peru), Cubeo (Colombia), Mehinaku (Brazil), Siriono (Bolivia), Tapirapé (Brazil), Akwẽ-Shavante (Brazil), Tukano (Colombia) and Siona-Secoya (Ecuador). This sample is a sample of availability in which I selected cultures which have been studied by professional anthropologists whose research has led to the publication of detailed ethnographies which are generally available, plus the Siona-Secoya among whom I have conducted field research. I make no pretense of having conducted an exhaustive literature review, but I feel that the ethnographies selected are representative and are among the best available. Although a modest number of societies are included in this sample, the comments provided in the ethnographic descriptions should provide insights into the nature of sex role patterning and whether the oppressed Yanomamö woman is typical of Amazonian women in general.

First I would like to consider several Amazonian societies which practice matrilocality. Under conditions of matrilocality it is reasonable to expect that the status of women might be better than in patrilocal societies such as the Yanomamö because of the fact that the male spouse takes up residence in or near the lineage of his wife. Holmberg describes Siriono sex relationships in the following terms:

It is difficult to generalize as to the status of women. Although they are dominated by men, it can hardly be said that women occupy a position much inferior to that of the men....During childhood there is no noticeable preferential treatment of boys....the men do as much or more work than the women....Women enjoy about the same privileges as men. They get as much food to eat, and they enjoy the same sexual freedom. They are not restricted from holding drinking feasts and dances, nor from participation....in ceremonies. After marriage, moreover, women continue to live with their parents and to enjoy the latter's protection. (1969:147)

The Mundurucú of Brazil are among those Amazonian groups which practice the gang rape of women as a punishment for certain transgressions, and in their traditional society they maintained a men's house from which women were excluded. Yolanda and Robert Murphy made the following observations concerning male-female roles in this society:

....segregation of sex roles is paralleled by actual separation of the sexes....but the separation juxtaposes the sexes as groups and not as individuals. This may well be the reason that Mundurucú men do not regard individual women as somehow polluting, contaminating, and ritually unclean, as in the case of many societies....Women are governed by men, but they are still regarded as unpredictable and difficult to manage. They are denied formal authority, but it is conceded that they have potential power. (1974:109, 111)

The Murphys also make other observations that seem to contradict a model of total male domination. For example, they state that "women are not servile toward men in either a real or symbolic sense"(p. 139), that "women's work is always done in cooperation....with other women.... (and they).... enjoy each other's company" (p. 130), and that they "never witnessed an overt violent loss of temper between husband and wife during all our stay" (p. 157).

Like the Mundurucú, the Tapirapé also had the institutions of matrilocality, men's houses, and gang rape as a punishment for women. According to Wagley (1977:157) the major cause of marital conflicts is quarrels concerning marital fidelity: .

Young women were said to be rather promiscuous and easily seduced.irate husbands would take their personal belongings and move back to their maternal household, and the next day another man would take his place. During my residence in Tapiitawa one young woman had four husbands and another had three.

Wagley did not discern a consistent pattern of male brutality against women in Tapirape society and stated, "There is no typical pattern of Tapirapé marital relations. Some marriages were calm; others were stormy and full of drama" (p. 158). Wagley also observed that when a husband and wife were quarreling the women often threatened to throw her husband's most valued feather ornaments into the fire (p. 161), and some Tapirapé men reported that they "feared" their wives because of this.

Among the Gê-speaking Akwé-Shavante Mayberry-Lewis reports that, "....it is remarkable how well husband and wife get on together. Quarrels are very rare and I do not recollect having seen them use violence on each other" (1974:86), and "... men often treat wives and children tenderly by European standards... (although)...one never sees Shavante couples make mutual demonstrations of affection" (p. 79). Nevertheless, women who are caught observing certain important male ceremonies may be subjected to gang rape (p. 255-269), and Mayberry-Lewis argues that among Gê groups "where a high value is placed on bellicosity as a form of manliness" there is ritual aggression against women (p. 307-307).

Thomas Gregor reports marital conflicts among the Arawakan-speaking Mehinaku, but as among the Tapirapé the women do not always submit to punishment meekly:

Jealousy over extramarital affairs is an important source of tension between spouses. Husbands and wives "prize each other's genitals highly," to use the Mehinaku idiom, and don't like to see others take even temporary possession of them. A husband....may become so jealous of his wife's extramarital activities that he will

publicly beat and denounce her. She, in turn, may destroy his property, cut down his hammock, and even swing at him with a lighted brand. (1977:138)

The Jivaro, as described by Michael Harner (1972), appear to be one of the stronger cases in support of the exploitative male syndrome in Amazonia. Like the Yanomamö, the Jivaro are well known for their endemic pattern of warfare, and particularly for their practice of making tsantsas (shrunken heads). Polygyny is the preferred marriage pattern among the Jivaro, and older wives are said to become irate when a second wife joins the household, and vent their anger by throwing pottery and other artifacts at their husbands (p. 95). Although fathers council their sons that drunkenness and wife-beating are shameful (p. 104), these behaviors do occur with some frequency. Harner found that the only suicides reported in Jivaroan society were committed by women who were consistently treated badly by their husbands, or who had been discovered in adulterous affairs (p. 181).

The northwest Amazon is the region of yurupari; this word from lengua geral is used to refer to ancestor cult ceremonials involving sacred flutes which women are not allowed to see, and superficially this example of ritual exclusion might be cited as an indication of a culture with an anti-female bias. However, Cubeo women do maintain a degree of control over their life situation according to Goldman, who writes, "Divorce is rather frequent....most often it is the woman who leaves the husband for the general reason she does not like him, (or)....because he beats her (1963:150). Among the Tukano of the same general region, women do attend yagé (Banisteriopsis) ceremonies, but do not drink the hallucinogenic potions as do the men (Reichel-Dolmatoff 1971). According to Reichel-

Dolmatoff's analysis, the Tukano view the sex act as a significant danger to male hunting abilities. He argues that long periods of sexual abstinence are common for Tukano men because their worldview holds that all living matter are part of a single energy flow in which the total amount of reproductive energy is constant; therefore excessive human sexual activity is believed to reduce the reproductive capabilities of game animals. Such a world view seems inconsistent with absolute male supremacy over women, at least in sexual terms.

Janet Siskind's study of the Sharanahua (1973) also addresses the relationship between hunting and sex, but in terms of an exchange of female sexual favors for the game procured by males. That is, the sexual reward becomes a motivation for hunting. This model, then, emphasizes reciprocal sex-role relationships rather than the total sexual oppression of females by males.

#### SEX ROLES AMONG THE SIONA-SECOYA

The Siona-Secoya are a Tucanoan speaking people of approximately 1000 residing in northeastern Ecuador and adjacent areas of Colombia and Peru. They are a typical tropical forest people in terms of their subsistence pattern, village-level social organization, and semi-nomadic movements through their territory. They also engage in an endemic pattern of warfare as do other Amazonian societies, although they tend to emphasize ritual defense and aggression through supernatural means rather than overt raiding. Among the Siona-Secoya there is no obvious sexual discrimination in the treatment of infants and young children; in 1975 the 0-4 year-old age group indicated that there were actually a few more girls than boys so that there is no evidence to support a systematic practice of female

infanticide. By age five or six boys and girls participate in sexually-integrated play groups which usually consist of parallel and cross-cousins from adjacent households. (The Siona-Secoya are patrilineal and patrilocal.) One of the most popular games at this age is "playing house"; a small structure is built of leaves and is then occupied by the girls who make banana chicha and care for rocks which they call their "children." Meanwhile the boys go out and attack the sweet potato patch with spears or shoot blowgun darts at papaya trees in an imitation of hunting behavior. These activities are not guided by adults, but appear to be simple imitations of adult sex-role behaviors which the children have observed in daily life. At the same time girls participate in competitive games with boys such as wrestling and tug-of-war, and both boys and girls learn to fish and handle canoes with little adult supervision.

When girls reach the ages of nine or ten, their mothers expect them to participate more intensively in the household chores and discourage them from playing with boys any longer. Boys of this age may accompany their fathers or brothers on occasional hunting trips, but still live lives of relative ease. Unlike boys, the Siona-Secoya girls undergo a clearly-defined puberty ceremony which marks the transition from childhood to womanhood, and signifies the emergence of a "new person" in the social life of the community. The first flow of menstrual blood precipitates the formal phases of this ritual. A small hut is constructed away from the household and it is covered with tight layers of leaves so that it is impossible for the initiate to see out. The girl is made to sit inside this hut with her legs out straight in front of her body, and she must look straight ahead and not turn her head to either side. She is isolated in this position for a period of several weeks and is attended only by her

mother. Dietary restrictions are also enforced to "dry out" the girl, and to insure that as a woman she will not be a "big eater." It is expected that the initiate must emerge from her isolation in a very thin condition, and this is tested by the looseness of a cotton band which was tied to the girl's wrist at the initiation of her isolation.

Before her coming out, the initiate receives instruction from her grandparents and her mother:

After coming out of the hut you can't play with children or act like a little girl. You can't run....you have to walk slowly and without smiling. When people visit you must serve chicha without smiling, and answer questions politely. You are a different person now.

Finally, the father gives her similar advice:

Now you are a woman. You can't play with boys as before, and you must walk with much respect and greet older persons. When you visit another house you must sit in one place and not gossip. We are not going to tell you (these things) any more. We speak once and you must remember our advice.

The final phase of the puberty ceremony occurs when the young "woman" emerges from the hut and her mother and grandmother pluck out her hair. This depilation is painful and causes the scalp to swell. The rationale for this step is that it will make the woman have better hair through her adult life. After her coming out, the young woman is expected to demonstrate appropriate behavior as prescribed during the puberty rite, and she is carefully supervised by the adult members of her household until marriage.

There is no similar ceremonial debut for males; becoming /bɛsi/ ("young man") is a process of gradual development and the acquisition of skills related to subsistence activities. The most important physiological change indicating maturation is the deepening of the voice, but muscular development is also considered an indication of manliness. Regardless of

biological maturation, the most significant criteria for manhood are demonstrated abilities in hunting and making gardens. A youth who has not demonstrated proficiency in hunting and making gardens will have difficulty in procuring a wife. The fathers of unmarried girls are quite specific about these requirements, for they desire the ablest son-in-law possible to perform bride service.

Courtship in Siona-Secoya culture tends to be a rather formal process. After her puberty rites a girl no longer plays or socializes with boys or young men. At times she may visit the central portions of the village with her mother or sisters, and at moments may exchange glances with eligible young men. Eye contact that is too intense, however, is likely to bring embarrassed giggles, and no overt contact takes place.

If a bachelor is interested in a girl as a potential marriage partner he will dress in his finest garments and ornaments and make social calls to the men of her household. One of the primary functions of this behavior is that the youth is demonstrating the seriousness of his intentions to his potential affinal kin and attempting to impress them with his worth as a provider. The final arrangements for a marriage are worked out between the parents of the boy and girl. These consist of negotiations in which the merits of the respective son and daughter are alternately questioned and defended. The main point of contention is whether or not the boy or girl has demonstrated a sufficient degree of maturity, particularly as evidenced by his or her performance of appropriate work activities (e.g. for the male these would include hunting, fishing, and the clearing of gardens, and for the female knowledge of cooking, and willingness to harvest and process manioc, and wash clothes. In most cases the parents do consider the wishes of their children, for if one of



them is unwilling there is little probability of a satisfactory union. In one case reported to me a young girl was given in marriage to an older man she did not like, and soon after the ceremony she escaped into the forest and hid overnight. She was found the following day, but her parents considered the marriage annulled and she returned home with them.

A period of bride service is expected of the groom following the initiation of a marriage. Usually the man takes up residence in the household of his wife's father until this obligation is completed, and then takes her to his father's household. The length of bride service is not rigidly set, but depends upon satisfying the expectations of the bride's father. A period of a year is not considered unusual.

For the Siona-Secoya, gestures of affection and physical contact between husband and wife are normally reserved for private moments. A man and his wife will not embrace or sit in the same hammock in the presence of others. According to male informants, it is the husband who initiates sexual relations because, "The woman is afraid to indicate interest....she can't talk." Like the Tukano, the Siona-Secoya believe that too much sexual intercourse can have a debilitating effect on the male. For this reason a man should arise early and drink yoco (a high-caffeine beverage made from the vine Paullinia yoco) and twine palm fiber or weave hammocks. As one male informant related:

A man can become ill by using the woman all the time. He won't have good aim in hunting, and won't be animated to do his work. For these reasons the man should arise first....at 3 am or so.... especially the recently married. We say, "People should not arise together as parrots do." The man makes yoco....the woman no. Later she can get up to make banana chicha....after sunrise.

According to Siona-Secoya ideal belief, the number of children that a woman has should not be large. Most informants agree that four children

is about the ideal number of offspring for a woman. The rationale offered by men in support of this number is that, "We don't want the woman to suffer too much," and "We don't want too much work for the woman." The proper spacing of births is also important, and should come at intervals no closer than four-to-six years, when the preceding child, "goes to fish alone.... when the mother doesn't have to watch him too closely. Then she can have another child." In the village of Shushufindi there were three women in 1975 who had small children who were closely spaced, and when the other women visiting with an infant and another small child or two clinging to them they ridicule them by making covert remarks such as, "We aren't opossums to live like that!"

There is a high correlation between sex and division of labor in Siona-Secoya society, but it is not absolute. Tool making, hunting, felling trees, and making canoes are male activities. Infant care, food processing and cooking, pot making and yard weeding are female activities. Both men and women plant and weed gardens, fish, carry firewood, and fish. The Siona-Secoya recognize four major spatial domains (not counting supernatural domains): house /wá'é/, garden /siq/, forest /?airo/, and river /siaya/. The houses and yards are considered the primary domain of the women, and the forest is the primary domain of the men. The garden is an intermediate domain which is shared by both sexes, and the river is likewise an area for significant activities by both males and females. This system of domains is openly expressed by Siona-Secoya males and females; women often say that they are afraid of the deep forest and that it is the men who must venture into that region. Perhaps the most common event expressing this reciprocal relationship is when a male hunter returns from the forest with several animals and drops them at the feet of his wife; she then must clean the

carcasses and prepare the meal as the man relaxes in the hammock. Furthermore, no meal is considered complete without both meat and ?aó (manioc cake). Meat is the archetypical male contriution and manioc cake the female.

Another manifestation of male-female reciprocity occurs at childbirth; when the woman's contractions indicate that delivery is near the husband goes into the forest to cut palm fronds and then constructs a small shelter at the edge of the garden and forest. The woman and an older kinswoman then walk out to the shelter while the man returns to the vacant main house by a different trail to begin the couvade by reclining in his hammock. After the delivery is completed in the shelter by the forest, the woman and child return to the house and begin a one-month period of isolation. For the first four days after the birth the wife, child and husband must bathe together with warm water and Inga leaves.

In arguing for a model of male-female roles based on reciprocity rather than total male dominance I cannot ignore the fact that women have little direct political power. The most influential individuals in traditional Siona-Secoya society are shamans and headmen and women are excluded from these statuses. Nevertheless even headmen and shamans do not have political authority in the absolute sense, but lead by influence and example. As might be expected, women often exert considerable influence on decisions ostensibly reached by males; the opinions of several older women are particularly respected by the community as a whole. Women do participate in yagé(Banisteriopsis) ceremonies and partake fully of the hallucinogenic potions; women are also herbalists who concoct remedies for various ailments, although they are not considered as knowledgeable or powerful as male shamans. In the political and spiritual domains, therefore, therefore, there is a male bias in Siona-Secoya culture, but there still remain

significant female participation in both areas.

As among the Mundurucú, wife beating is not a common feature of Siona-Secoya life. In 18 months of fieldwork at the village of Shushufindi during 1973-75 there were only two cases of physical conflict between spouses and both occurred at drinking parties when the participants were inebriated. Furthermore, women are not passive when hit by their husbands, but fight back or destroy the possessions of their spouses. In one case I observed an enraged woman who had been hit by her husband grabbed a machete and whacked holes in a set of aluminum pots which her husband had recently purchased with money gained in weeks of special ocelot hunting. After both sobered up and felt remorse the wife was seen attempting to smooth out the flared edges of the cuts in a futile attempt to make the pots serviceable again. Women who feel their husbands are poor providers or overly abusive leave them and return to the households of consanguine kin or move in with another male.

#### INTER-ETHNIC CONTACT AND THE STATUS OF WOMEN

The Siona-Secoya have experienced contacts with non-native outsiders since the 18th century, but the intensity of such contacts has increased dramatically since the 1940s to the present as the eastern regions of Ecuador have been increasingly incorporated into the national life. These contacts have been with missionaries, military men, itinerant river traders, Quichua migrants, oil company employees, and white colonists. In terms of the status of women, I classify the consequences of these contacts into three categories, which are inter-ethnic sexual exploitation, inter-ethnic marriages, and acculturative influences on intracultural sex-role behavior.

When I first visited the Siona-Secoya briefly during an ethnographic survey in the summer of 1972 I told a local man that I planned to return in a year to live among his people for an extended time. One of the first questions he asked me was if I was married, and I replied that I was not. His reply to me was, "When you come to live with us you can bring your own woman. We will be glad to have you both. I will build you a house next to my own." The thinly-disguised implication of his comment was that difficulty could be expected if I were to live in the village as a single male. What I correctly suspected was that the Siona-Secoya has experienced a series of inter-ethnic incidents in which their women had been either seduced or raped by outsiders. Subsequently I was to learn the details of several incidents in which women had been detained and raped by military personnel at jungle outposts, or given alcohol and seduced by river traders and occasional travellers through the region. The Siona-Secoya resent these events and insofar as possible attempt to structure contact situations so that the women are in the background; obviously, the best insurance against this problem occurs when outsiders are accompanied by their own women. Siona-Secoya women who have been raped are considered genuine victims, but the event is nevertheless traumatic to the individual and the group because it reminds them of their relative powerlessness in the white world. Women who are seduced by outsiders generally lose respect within the community and become the focus of much backbiting and may even be beaten or have their heads shaved. I know of two cases in which pregnancies resulted from such situations; one of these infants was killed while the other is being raised as a Siona child. Although the prostitution of Indian women to white road construction workers or prospectors has been reported frequently in Brazil, no Siona-Secoya women have suffered this fate to my knowledge.

There have been a number of marriages between Siona-Secoya and members of other ethnic groups. The most successful of these have been marriages in which Siona have taken wives or husbands from their traditional Cofán neighbors to the west. Although Cofán is a distinctive non-Tucanoan language, its cultural patterns are quite similar to the Siona and these marriages have proven stable through the years. In the past ten years two Siona-Secoya males and one woman have married Quichua spouses, but only one of these unions (between an Siona-Secoya male and a Quichua female) has survived. In one divorce, a Siona male complained that his Quichua wife did not know how to make manioc cakes and that his wife's brothers exploited him for labor. In the other failed union a Quichua man abandoned his Siona-Secoya wife and took up residence with a Quichua woman in a distant Quichua settlement. In addition, one highly acculturated Siona male married the daughter of a Colombian colonist from the Putumayo River, but she subsequently left him, and another Siona male married a Witoto woman from the Putumayo but was carried off by her kinsmen and died under mysterious circumstances. Overall, the record for these inter-ethnic marriages has not been an auspicious one and most Siona-Secoya parents discourage their children from entering into such unions.

Other acculturative pressures are having a gradual but lasting effect on Siona-Secoya sex roles. Firstly, missionaries have trained two women as promotores de salud, or practical nurses, and have supplied them with antibiotics, anti-venom serums, and other modern medicines to combat illnesses. So for the first time women practitioners are able to challenge the traditional male shamans in the area of health care. Interestingly, however, the Summer Institute of Linguistics mission has deliberately chosen men to pursue teacher training, because the missionary strategy is that the teacher is to

be the new leadership status to usurp the influence of the headman. When asked why no women are chosen to be teachers, the SIL staff reply that the Indians would not respect women teachers in the same way that they respect the men, and that the effectiveness of the educational program would be diminished. In this instance a North American stereotype of sex roles is being superimposed on the traditional Indian pattern; it is acceptable for the women to be nurses, but not to occupy the most significant leadership position in the village.

In an economic sense, women have been able to capitalize on the contact situation by selling chickens, eggs, and handcrafts to traders. Much of this income, however, is spent on newly-acquired tastes for lipstick, hair oil, plastic combs, dress material, and sewing supplies. Nevertheless, the fundamental division of labor in subsistence activities has been little affected to date.

#### CONCLUSION

Although the various ethnographers whose data have been cited in this paper report their observations on sex-role behavior in units of analysis which are not always directly comparable, there does appear to exist a range of male-female relationship patterns within the Amazon within which certain general tendencies are suggested. The status of women appears to be relatively high among matrilineal societies such as the Mundurucú and relatively low among aggressive, patrilineal societies such as the Jivaro and Yanomamö. But even in some patrilineal societies such as the Siona-Secoya who do have a male bias in such areas as political or spiritual leadership, women enjoy relative freedom in mate selection, divorce, and participation in rituals. Sex-role behavior derives primarily

from the sexual division of labor which is ultimately based on sexual dimorphism; women bear children and nurse small infants; men are larger, stronger and faster, and are better adapted to deep forest hunting and felling large trees. Between these extremes there is a large area of overlapping capabilities and these are reflected in non-sexual specific tasks such as the weeding of gardens and fishing. In sum, the Siona-Secoya and many other Amazonian societies appear to place far more emphasis on sexual reciprocity and cooperation than male domination of females. Contacts with the outside world have provided Siona-Secoya women with some negative experiences as well as access to some new roles which they have accepted with ease. But the "liberation" of the women may not be a lasting good if the same processes of contact and change lead to a breakdown of Siona-Secoya social organization and loss of habitat. Ultimately, the welfare of both men and women is dependent upon the welfare and durability of the native society as a whole.



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