

Personal notes from the book "Land of the Moon Children" (1956)

KUNA SHAMANISM

- I. At A Glance
 - a. Painted wooden idols
 - b. Ceremonial chants
 - c. Exorcising evil spirits
 - d. Puberty celebrations
 - e. Fertility rites of a ancient earth mother "religion"
 - f. Indian medicine

- II. Assimilation – Spiritual?
 - a. Embracing western world?
 1. San Blas Mission (see current info)
 2. Sponsorship from Southern Baptist
 3. Missionaries of Ailigandi
 - b. Check recent publications for religious conflicts
 - c. 1502 – Columbus – 750,000 Kunas – to 10,000 population
 - d. Carobe Cunas were naked, body painting cannibals at the time of Spanish explorers
 - e. Shamanism strong in 2004 (Baron) seen and heard on 17 different islands

- III. Powerful venom in tropics
 - a. Snakes
 - b. Lizards
 - c. Centipedes
 - d. Tarantulas
 - e. Scorpions
 - f. Dozens of plants

- IV. Natives
 - a. Short
 - b. Brown skinned
 - c. Pleasing features according to western standards
 - d. Many are absolutely beautiful (Baron, 1996)
 - e. Spanish arrived – Kuna naked with body painting – cannibals
 - f. Witch marks – nose
 - g. Some painted solid black to fight off devils
 - h. Women
 1. Golden nose rings
 2. Enormous ear plates
 3. A dozen gold-banded fingers
 - i. Chest – heavy strings of half dollars
 - j. Women – bind arms and legs tightly with long strands of red & yellow beads (beauty = skinny arms and legs)
 - k. Molas – complicated appliqué and inlay
 - l. Red paint on cheeks
 - m. Short-cropped hair – covered with red & yellow bandanas
 - n. Arrows & spears – short black palm barbs – rarely seen in 1996 (Baron)

- V. Houses
 - a. Natural materials
 - b. Matriarchy
 - 1. Oldest woman – final authority
 - c. Groom – a virtual slave of his mother-in-law (groom – made drunk during a 3 day “coming out orgy)
 - d. No mother-in-law jokes (father-in-law, the butt of much mirth)
 - e. Government
 - 1. Strictly local
 - 2. 1st chief
 - 3. 2nd chief
 - 4. Secretary
 - 5. Policemen
 - 6. Commissioners
 - i. Roads
 - ii. Boats
 - iii. House construction
 - 7. Large council house in each town (Sunmarket Neka) – men meet almost every evening to discuss current problems, bad behavior and the activity of devils in the region
 - i. Devil exorcising rites are carried out
 - ii. Adults are punished by popular vote – from fines to beatings
 - iii. Death penalty with machetes
 - iv. Sub-lethal doses of a poisonous plant (spigelia anthelma – sometimes administered)
 - v. Unwritten laws – customs and traditions enforced through punishment
 - vi. The “possessed” treated by witch doctors
 - vii. Crimes – may be committed in some ones dreams other than the “possessed”
- VI. Kiermina Island
 - a. Sunday school (10 years)
 - b. Religious meetings
 - c. Similar to American revivalist

1996 – Law passed granting 5000 Kuna & Embera Indians 1800 square kilometers of jungle land

1997 – Darien Border – 1200 special police forces to Darien Border July 8 to stop incursions by Colombian Gorillas

1997 – October – Kuna and Embera Indians abandon homes on Darien Border – Columbians continue to invade

1998 – October – 94% of Panamas 200,000 indigenous people live below the poverty line...87% = extreme poverty

1999 – September – A Kuna Yala Indian was elected President of Panama’s Legislative Assembly (British Broadcasting Corporation 11/24/99)

December 14, 1999, U.S. surrenders control of the canal-zone to Panama

*The above is only a partial outline of the chronology for indigenous peoples in Panama. (See above credits for the complete chronology)