

Cayapa

also known as “Chachi”

Data source: eHRAF

Secondary source

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Entry tags: Syncretic Religions, Religion

The Cayapa are an aboriginal group who live along the Rio Cayapas in Ecuador. Around the time of the Spanish invasion in the 1530s, the Cayapa migrated to their present location. The Cayapa have had contact with Europeans and North Americans, and interact with Ecuador's provincial and national government (Barrett, 1925:30, 37). With the Spanish invasion also came the arrival of Catholic missionaries, who have left a lasting influence on the Cayapa religion, which is now a syncretic blend of Christianity and animism. Shamans are present but do not have an important position. Priests visit the Cayapa, and these visits are times of religious ceremonies and celebrations. Political leadership is not associated with religious leadership, but the religion permeates many spheres of life. This entry considers the Cayapa religious group to be coterminous with the society at large. Additionally, this entry focuses on the area of the Rio Cayapas drainage circa 1908.



Date Range: 1979 BCE - 1909 CE

Region: Rio Cayapas drainage

Region tags: South America, Ecuador

Rio Cayapas drainage, ca. 1908

Status of Participants:

✓ Elite ✓ Religious Specialists ✓ Non-elite (common people, general populace)

Sources

Print sources for understanding this subject:

- Source 1: Divale, W. 2004. Codebook of Variables for the Standard Cross-Cultural Sample. *World Cultures: The Journal of Cross-Cultural and Comparative Research*.
- Source 2: Murdock, G.P. & Wilson, S.F. (Jul., 1972). Settlement patterns and community organization: *Cross-Cultural Codes 3. Ethnology*, 11(3), 254-295.

Online sources for understanding this subject:

- Source 1 URL: <http://ehrafworldcultures.yale.edu/document?id=sd06-003>
- Source 1 Description: Barrett, S. A. (Samuel A. (1925). *Cayapa Indians Of Ecuador*. *Indian Notes And Monographs*. New York: Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation.

General Variables

Membership/Group Interactions

Are other religious groups in cultural contact with target religion:

– Yes

Notes: The Cayapa have contact with Europeans and North Americans (in addition to that with neighboring local groups), as well as interaction with the provincial and national government of Ecuador (Barrett, 1925:30). Cayapa religion has been influenced by Christianity, and is now a syncretic blend of Christianity and animism.



Is the cultural contact accommodating/pluralistic:

– Yes

Notes: "The provincial and national governments recognize, in a way, the rights of the Indians to full and peaceable possession of their territory, and have endeavored to protect them by enacting laws prohibiting the settlement of other peoples along the Rio Cayapas and its tributaries" (Barrett, 1925:37).



Is there violent conflict (within sample region):

– No

Notes: SCCS Variable 1649 (Frequency of Internal Warfare, Resolved Rating) indicates that "internal warfare seems to be absent or rare", and SCCS Variable 1654 (Pacification) indicates that the society is "not pacified for all or part of the twenty-five-year time period" (Ember and Ember, 1992; Retrieved from Divale, 2004).



Is there violent conflict (with groups outside the sample region):

– No

Notes: SCCS Variable 1650 (Frequency of External Warfare, Resolved Rating) indicates that "external warfare seems to be absent or rare", and SCCS Variable 1654 (Pacification) indicates that the society is "not pacified for all or part of the twenty-five-year time period" (Ember and Ember, 1992; Retrieved from Divale, 2004).

Does the religious group actively proselytize and recruit new members:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the Cayapa actively recruiting new members, especially since the religion is roughly coterminous with the society at large.

Does the religion have official political support

Answer 'yes' also in cases where the religious and political spheres are not distinguished from one another, but the religious group's activities are tied up with, and supported by, the functioning of the society at large.

– Yes

Notes: The Cayapa government does not give explicit official support to the religion, but the two aspects of society are roughly coterminous. The Cayapa government officials are inducted by a priest (Barrett, 1925:315), and these officials are also involved in religious ceremonies (see Barrett, 1925:386). There are no full-time religious specialists among the Cayapa. Anyone can become a shaman, and these individuals specialize in expelling spirits from people and houses. However, shaman is not an important position and cannot be considered a religious leader (see Barrett, 1925:351).

↳ Are the head of the polity and the head of the religion the same figure:
– No

↳ Are political officials equivalent to religious officials:
– No

Size and Structure

Number of adherents of religious group within sample region (estimated population, numerical):

– Estimated population, numeric: 1750

Notes: "...all the Cayapa, approximating fifteen hundred to two thousand individuals..." (Barrett, 1925:1).

Number of adherents of religious group within sample region (% of sample region population, numerical):

– I don't know

Scripture

Does the religious group have scriptures:

Scripture is a generic term used to designate revered texts that are considered particularly authoritative and sacred relative to other texts. Strictly speaking, it refers to written texts, but there are also "oral scriptures" (e.g. the Vedas of India).

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence indicating the presence of scripture among the Cayapa.

Architecture, Geography

Is monumental religious architecture present:

– Yes

Notes: According to Murdock and Wilson (1972), column 6 (large or impressive structures), "the most impressive structure (or type of structure) in the community is the residence of a category of influential individuals", an additional important type of large or impressive structure is that of "a temple, church, commemorative monument, or other essentially religious or ceremonial edifice."

↳ In the average settlement, what percentage of area is taken up by all religious monuments:

– I don't know

↳ Size of largest single religious monument, square meters:

– Square meters: 853

Notes: "This structure, which is the largest of the three churches of the Cayapa...is about 80 feet long, 35 feet wide, and about 25 feet high at the ridge of the building" (Barrett, 1925:61).

↳ Height of largest single religious monument, meters:

– Height, meters: 7

Notes: "This structure, which is the largest of the three churches of the Cayapa...is about 80 feet long, 35 feet wide, and about 25 feet high at the ridge of the building" (Barrett, 1925:61).

↳ In the largest settlement, what percentage of area is taken up by all religious monuments:

– I don't know

Is iconography present:

– I don't know

Are pilgrimages present:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence indicating the presence of pilgrimages.

Beliefs

Burial and Afterlife

Is a spirit-body distinction present:

Answer "no" only if personhood (or consciousness) is extinguished with death of the physical body. Answering yes does not necessarily imply the existence of Cartesian mind/body dualism, merely that some element of personhood (or consciousness) survives the death of the body.

– Yes

Notes: "Every animate being has a soul or shade which is a definite part of itself and without which life is impossible. This soul lives on after death. It has the form of the body it occupies, and has the power of leaving the body and wandering about when the body sleeps or is otherwise unconscious, and in this particular resembles a spirit" (Barrett, 1925:347).

↳ Spirit-mind is conceived of as having qualitatively different powers or properties than

other body parts:

– Yes

Notes: "The soul, called *kū'mī*, inhabits every human body as well as the bodies of certain other animate beings. In general it has the form of the body that it inhabits, and has the power of leaving the body during sleep and of traveling about at will. In their travels the souls visit many places, such as cemeteries, houses of friends, etc., and are subject to considerable danger while thus wandering about" (Barrett, 1925:357).

Belief in afterlife:

– Yes

Notes: "What seems to be an intrusive idea from Catholic sources is that human souls ascend at death to the upper world, but ideas concerning this abode and the ascension of souls are largely indefinite" (Barrett, 1925:359).

↳ Is the spatial location of the afterlife specified or described by the religious group:

– Yes

Notes: The afterlife is vaguely described as being in a space above the human world (Barrett, 1925:359).

↳ Afterlife in vaguely defined "above" space:

– Yes

Notes: "What seems to be an intrusive idea from Catholic sources is that human souls ascend at death to the upper world, but ideas concerning this abode and the ascension of souls are largely indefinite" (Barrett, 1925:359).

Reincarnation in this world:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence indicating the presence of a belief in reincarnation.

Are there special treatments for adherents' corpses:

– Yes

Notes: "On the death of an individual the body is dressed in his best clothing and wrapped carefully in mantas or other available cloth; it is then placed in a wooden box made after the fashion of a coffin, or if the wood is not at hand a kind of coffin is made of bamboo" (Barrett, 1925:331).

↳ Cremation:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence indicating the presence of cremation.

↳ Mummification:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence indicating the presence of mummification.

↳ Interment:

– Yes

Notes: "On the death of an individual the body is dressed in his best clothing and wrapped carefully in mantas or other available cloth; it is then placed in a wooden box made after the fashion of a coffin, or if the wood is not at hand a kind of coffin is made of bamboo...If death occurs very early in the morning, the corpse may be interred the same day; usually, however, it is kept until the following day" (Barrett, 1925:331).

↳ Corpse is extended (lying flat on front or back):

– Yes

Notes: It can be assumed that the corpse is extended as it is laid in a coffin (see Barrett, 1925:331).

↳ Cannibalism:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence indicating the presence of cannibalism.

↳ Exposure to elements (e.g. air drying):

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence indicating the presence of exposing corpses to the elements.

↳ Feeding to animals:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence indicating the presence of feeding corpses to animals.

↳ Secondary burial:

– No

Notes: SCCS Variable 1850 (Secondary Bone/Body Treatment: Original Scale) indicates that "secondary contact with the body or bones of the deceased does not occur" (Schroeder, 2001; Retrieved from Divale, 2004).

Are co-sacrifices present in tomb/burial:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence indicating the presence of co-sacrifices.

Are grave goods present:

– Yes

Notes: "In large measure the property of the deceased is destroyed or disposed of by the surviving relatives. Some of his property, along with some of their own, is usually buried with the corpse" (Barrett, 1925:334).

↳ Personal effects:
– I don't know

↳ Valuable items:
– I don't know

↳ Other grave goods:
– Yes

Notes: "Some of his [the deceased] property, along with some of their [the deceased's relatives] own, is usually buried with the corpse" (Barrett, 1925:334).

Are formal burials present:

– Yes

Notes: "If death occurs very early in the morning, the corpse may be interred the same day; usually, however, it is kept until the following day. Meantime the relatives and friends living within comparatively easy reach are notified. All who are able, journey to the cemetery, which is but a short distance from the village, and there a Catholic funeral service is held over the remains, after which they are buried in a shallow grave" (Barrett, 1925:331).

↳ In cemetery:
– Yes

Notes: Barrett, 1925:331

↳ Domestic (individuals interred beneath house, or in areas used for normal domestic activities):
– No

Supernatural Beings

Are supernatural beings present:

– Yes

Notes: Previously human spirits as well as a variety of non-human spirits are present. See questions below for further details.

↳ A supreme high god is present:

– No

Notes: SCCS Variable 238 (Note, identical to Ethnographic Atlas Column 34), Religion: high gods, indicates that "a high god is absent or not reported in substantial descriptions of religious beliefs" (Murdock, 1962-1971; Retrieved from Divale, 2004).

↳ Previously human spirits are present:

– Yes

Notes: "After death, souls travel about as they do in sleep, frequenting for a time special burial places and the homes which their bodies formerly inhabited" (Barrett, 1925:358). Human spirits are not extensively described in ethnographic evidence, and do not seem to play a significant or active role in the Cayapa daily life.

↳ Human spirits can be seen:

– I don't know

↳ Human spirits can be physically felt:

– I don't know

↳ Previously human spirits have knowledge of this world:

– I don't know

↳ Human spirits have deliberate causal efficacy in the world:

– Yes

Notes: "...after death, since the soul of the departed is believed to return to the house and may cause illness or even death of other members of the family, shamans are called in and the particular soul expelled" (Barrett, 1925:347).

↳ Human spirits have indirect causal efficacy in the world:

"Indirect causal efficacy" refers to not being seen as consciously, directly and actively intervening in the human world, but their overall well being or general attitude has effects on, e.g., quality of harvest, success in war, health, etc.

– I don't know

↳ Human spirits have memory of life:

– I don't know

↳ Human spirits communicate with the living:

– I don't know

↳ Non-human supernatural beings are present:

– Yes

Notes: "In addition to human beings and other animate creatures, the world is peopled by a myriad of spirits of many kinds" (Barrett, 1925:360).

↳ These supernatural beings can be seen:

– Yes

Notes: "These [cave] spirits, though ordinarily invisible, have the power to make themselves visible to human beings at will and when a person is off in the jungle, or in any lonely place, he is likely to be visited by a bū"tcūlya and invited to return with the spirit to his cave" (Barrett, 1925:365).

↳ These supernatural beings have indirect causal efficacy in the world:

"Indirect causal efficacy" refers to not being seen as consciously, directly and actively intervening in the human world, but their overall well being or general attitude has effects on, e.g., quality of harvest, success in war, health, etc.

– Yes

Notes: "When in a bad temper, Thunder [otherwise known as kū'īdya] talks loudly and growls, thus making the thundering noise. His bad disposition is especially manifest in the rainy season, while at other periods he is mild-tempered, growling only occasionally" (Barrett, 1925:361).

↳ These supernatural beings exhibit negative emotion:

– Yes

Notes: "It is said that in the dry season Thunder is quite contented and lives at peace with the world. In the rainy season, however, he becomes restless and very much discontented with human beings and with conditions generally, and it is then that, according to the first informant mentioned, he flies from place to place through the clouds, flapping his wings and making an uproarious noise, swinging his sword and causing the flashes of lightning. In due time, however, his wrath subsides and he becomes weary, and during the remainder of the year he grows restless only occasionally, with the result that thunderstorms rarely occur and lightning is seldom seen" (Barrett, 1925:362).

↳ These supernatural beings possess/exhibit some other feature:

– Yes [specify]: Cause illnesses

Notes: "Among the Cayapa practically all illness is attributed to the presence of malevolent spirits. In large measure the particular spirits which cause illness reside in small, black, water-worn stones, in fragments of ancient pottery, in mammals, snakes, insects, and the like" (Barrett, 1925:344).

↳ Mixed human-divine beings are present:

– I don't know

↳ Does the religious group possess a variety of supernatural beings:

– Yes

Notes: In addition to the spirits of deceased humans, there is a variety of non-human supernatural beings among the Cayapa. Different classes of spirits are present, but not organized in a pantheon style. For a detailed account of these beings, see Barrett, 1925:360-381.

Supernatural Monitoring

Is supernatural monitoring present:

This refers to surveillance by supernatural beings of humans' behaviour and/or thought particularly as it relates to social norms or potential norm violations.

– No

Notes: There does not appear to be any ethnographic evidence that supernatural beings monitor human behavior and/or thought as it relates to social norms.

Do supernatural beings mete out punishment:

– I don't know

Notes: Insufficient ethnographic evidence. Spirits can cause illness and death, but it is not clear if this is due to punishment or just malevolent beings.

Do supernatural beings bestow rewards:

– I don't know

Notes: Insufficient ethnographic evidence.

Messianism/Eschatology

Are messianic beliefs present:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of messianic beliefs.

Practices

Membership Costs and Practices

Does membership in this religious group require fasting:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence or requirement of fasting.

Does membership in this religious group require painful physical positions or transitory

painful wounds:

– Yes

Notes: "At about 10 A.M. [during the Easter celebrations] the sub-chief took his place at the extreme left of the altar, and criers were sent to summon all to the church for the annual castigation with the cat-o'-nine-tails, which punishment is obligatory upon all the Indians, both old and young" (Barrett, 1925:392).

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of adults:

"Adults" here referring to an emic or indigenous category; if that category is different from the popular Western definition of a human who is 18-years-old or older and who is legally responsible for his/her actions, then please specify that difference in the Comments/Sources: box below.

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of human sacrifice.

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of children:

"Children" here referring to an emic or indigenous category; if that category is different from the popular Western definition, please specify that different in the Comments/Sources: box below.

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of human sacrifice.

Does membership in this religious group require self-sacrifice (suicide):

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of human sacrifice.

Does membership in this religious group require participation in large-scale rituals:

i.e. involving two or more households; includes large-scale "ceremonies" and "festivals."

– Yes

Notes: Easter, "Semana Santa", and Christmas, "Noche Buena", are the most important holidays and religious rituals. Easter is particularly significant, and everyone is obliged to attend the paramount church services, which are led by *sindico*, or wardens of the church (Barrett, 1925:386).



Are there orthopraxy checks:

Orthopraxy checks are mechanisms used to ensure that rituals are performed in a standardized way, e.g. through the supervisory prominence of a professionalized priesthood or other system of governance, appeal to texts detailing the proper procedure, etc.

– Yes

Notes: The paramount church services are led by *sindico*, or wardens of the church (Barrett, 1925:386).

Society and Institutions

Levels of Social Complexity

The society to which the religious group belongs is best characterized as (please choose one):

This question refers to the wider society in which the religious group is located.

– A band

Notes: "At present each family regularly lives entirely separated from every other family, and usually at a considerable distance from its nearest neighbor, though occasionally two or three houses may be within sight of one another along the river. In no case, however, is there an approach to communal life, each family forming an individual unit with family property-rights. There is, to be sure, a central government, the head of which is an hereditary chief, or gobernador, as he is at present called after the Spanish fashion. The purposes of this central government are strictly those of preserving law and order, settling controversies between individuals, and punishing infringements upon recognized social customs. In no case is there any interference by the central government with property or other recognized family rights and privileges" (Barrett, 1925:39). Additionally, the Cayapa have no political authority beyond the local community, which is reflective of autonomous bands and villages (Ethnographic Atlas column 33, Murdock, 1967; retrieved from Divale, 2004).

Education

Does the religious group provide formal education to its adherents:

– I don't know

Notes: Insufficient ethnographic information.

Is formal education available to the group's adherents through an institution(s) other than the religious group:

– I don't know

Notes: Insufficient ethnographic information.

Public Works

Does the religious group in question provide public food storage:

– No

Notes: According to SCCS variable 20, food storage, food is stored in individual households (Murdock and Morrow, 1970; Retrieved from Divale, 2004).

Is public food storage provided to the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– No

Notes: According to SCCS variable 20, food storage, food is stored in individual households (Murdock and Morrow, 1970; Retrieved from Divale, 2004).

Taxation

Does the religious group in question levy taxes or tithes:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of taxation.

Enforcement

Does the religious group in question provide an institutionalized police force:

– No

Notes: Each of the three divisions of the Cayapa has a government which includes hereditary officials titled "Gobernador, secretario de la gobernación, teniente político, alcalde, comisario, capitán, sargento" (Barrett, 1925:312). The Gobernador is essentially the chief, and all other officials are officers of the law. The Gobernador controls law and order through these officials, but there is no official police force.

Does the religious group in question provide institutionalized judges:

– Yes

Notes: "There is, to be sure, a central government [among the Cayapa], the head of which is an hereditary chief, or gobernador, as he is at present called after the Spanish fashion. The purposes of this central government are strictly those of preserving law and order, settling controversies between individuals, and punishing infringements upon recognized social customs. In no case is there any interference by the central government with property or other recognized family rights and privileges" (Barrett, 1925:39).

Do the group's adherents interact with an institutionalized judicial system provided by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

Notes: "Be it said to the credit of the provincial authorities, that they recognize the right of the Cayapa to govern themselves and to punish their own offenders, and further that they attempt to protect the Indians from impositions by others" (Barrett, 1925:38).

Does the religious group in question enforce institutionalized punishment:

– No

Notes: Each of the three divisional chiefs (Gobernadores) is responsible for maintaining order in his respective division. These responsibilities include the enforcement of punishment, but this is not institutionalized or consistent across divisions. (See Barrett, 1925:313-314).

Does the religious group in question have a formal legal code:

– No

Notes: "Perhaps the operations of the Cayapa governmental machinery are shown to best advantage in the settlement of what may be termed civil difficulties, for, as has been previously pointed out, there

are few fixed laws among the Cayapa, largely for the reason that few crimes are committed. The laws are more in the nature of canons of ethics than statutory enactments, and they may be varied to a certain extent by public opinion concerning the particular case in hand" (Barrett, 1925:314).

Written Language

Does the religious group in question possess its own distinct written language:

– No

Notes: "...the Cayapa have no written language and express nothing in writing of any kind" (Barrett, 1925:457).

Food Production

Does the religious group in question provide food for themselves:

– Yes

Notes: The Cayapa rely predominantly on agriculture and fishing for subsistence. The diet is supplemented with contributions from animal husbandry, hunting, and gathering. Source of information from Ethnographic Atlas (Murdock, 1962-1971), retrieved from Divale, 2004; Variables 203-207, 232.



Please characterize the forms/level of food production [choose all that apply]:

- Gathering
- Hunting (including marine animals)
- Fishing
- Pastoralism
- Small-scale agriculture / horticultural gardens or orchards

Notes: The Cayapa rely predominantly on agriculture and fishing for subsistence. The diet is supplemented with contributions from animal husbandry, hunting, and gathering. Source of information from Ethnographic Atlas (Murdock, 1962-1971), retrieved from Divale, 2004; Variables 203-207, 232.