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SIONA WOMEN AND MODERNIZATION:
EFFECTS ON THEIR STATUS AND MOBILITY

by

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Abstract: Incorporation into the modern economic sector has had an impact on the status of women among the Siona Indians of Colombia. The position of Siona women has not been adversely affected as long as they remain important producers of items consumed by the household. Many young women leave the community and emigrate to the cities to work as domestic servants. The paper examines the motivations for migrating and the networks of migration as well as the possibilities for upward mobility offered by migration. Comparison with other studies on domestic servants suggests that modernization and urbanization do not always lead to improvement in women's status. Emigration of women may also have negative consequences for the Siona community as a whole.

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SIONA WOMEN AND MODERNIZATION: EFFECTS ON THEIR STATUS AND MOBILITY

It is increasingly evident that modernization does not always have a beneficial effect on the status and roles of women. Traditionally researchers have viewed development as a positive influence on women's lives, granting them greater freedom and equality (Patai 1967). Boserup (1970) has suggested that development adversely affects women's status, for as men are encouraged to enter the cash economy of the modern sector, women's activities become devalued and their relative contribution to the family's productivity diminishes. Her conclusion has been supported by a number of studies (Chinchilla 1977; Draper 1975; Dole 1979; Figueroa 1976; Leacock 1972; Rubbo 1975; Salazar 1976; Taylor 1975; and Tinker 1976). This paper examines the effects of the introduction of a cash economy and wage labor on the Siona Indians of southern Colombia, with particular reference to women. Special attention is paid to the double minority status of Siona women, for it both limits and increases their possibilities for new roles and for mobility. In addition, this study assesses the impact that these new possibilities have on the assimilation process of the Siona.

The research is based on two phases of field work in the Siona community of Buena Vista (1970-74 and 1980) comprising a total of twenty-four months.¹ Methods included participant observation as well as the collection of genealogies and life histories. For the most part, numerical data presented here were gathered during the first phase of field work. The data gathered during 1980 support the conclusions drawn from the earlier period.

The Siona are the remnant of the large and powerful Western Tukanoan groups that dominated the Amazonian region encompassing the Putumayo, Caqueta, and Aguarico Rivers at the time of the Conquest. At that time the number of Western Tukanoan on the Putumayo was approximately 5000, the Siona comprising a major portion of these (Langdon 1974: 31-32). The Putumayo is a major tributary to the Amazon. This and the Putumayo's strategic location as the border between Colombia and its southern neighbors, Peru and Ecuador, meant that the Siona were first contacted by western civilization over three hundred years ago. Because of poor transportation networks, however, the area remained relatively isolated until recently. The most dramatic effects of contact have occurred during the past thirty years after the construction of the road linking the region to the highlands.

Buena Vista, the last Siona community on the Putumayo, in 1974, had a population of 118 persons, comprising twenty households. It is surrounded by white and Black settlers coming from other regions of Colombia as well as by lowland Quechua people known as Ingano. The Ingano have migrated in recent years from the Napo and Aguarico Rivers in Ecuador and represent a cultural group quite distinct from the Siona. Approximately 130 other Siona remain on the Putumayo outside of Buena Vista. They are living in pockets

of two or three households mixed among the other settlers up and down the river. The majority are located one to three days downstream from Buena Vista. Communication between Buena Vista residents and the other Siona is infrequent. Even less frequent is contact with the remaining Western Tukanoan peoples located on the Aguarico and Caqueta Rivers. In general these groups are less acculturated than the Siona.

Acculturation and assimilation are two distinct processes. Acculturation refers to contact with the dominant society. Although contact itself implies social and cultural change, in acculturation people retain their ethnic identity as well as features of the traditional culture. Assimilation, on the other hand, implies the process of losing ethnic identity and integrating into the larger society. In Colombia, Indian identity is easily shed in one or two generations. Much of the non-Indian population exhibits strong physical and cultural influences from the indigenous populations. In many Latin American countries these people are called mestizos, ladinos, or cholos. The Colombians, however, distinguish simply between Indians and whites (indios and blancos). Indian is a cultural distinction based on clothing, residence, and language. An Indian may become white by dropping all three of these features and adopting western clothing, Spanish, and residence away from the native community. Residence is the most significant feature in the maintenance of ethnic identity; as long as a person remains with the indigenous community, he is regarded as Indian in spite of the adoption of western clothing and Spanish. Indian populations that continue to retain their cultural identity are located in the marginal regions of the country, areas that, because of the marginality of land value or of poor transportation, have not been in demand by the white population.

Historical Background

Three phases of change resulting from contact may be distinguished for the Siona: the Colonial period; 1900 to 1950; and 1950 to the present. Each is characterized by distinct relations with the dominant society as well as differing rates of acculturation and/or assimilation. During the Colonial period, Franciscans established missions along the river and attempted to Christianize the natives. Their work began in the mid-seventeenth century and ended early in the nineteenth. In general their efforts met with failure because of native resistance and epidemics of western diseases that wiped out mission settlements (Langdon n.d.). During this period, the priests served as intermediaries between the Siona and the nation centered in the highlands by establishing trading of native goods for western products. Although their efforts effected several social and political changes, the Siona retained their distinct culture and autonomy. The major effect of this period was the significant depopulation caused by the epidemics. By 1800 the Western Tukanoan population numbered between 1500 and 2000, less than a third of its size at the time of contact.

The isolation of the area and the failure of the missions forced the Franciscans to abandon the area in the nineteenth century. During this

period, the Siona remained isolated from the rest of Colombia except for an occasional trader or government official passing through the region. In 1900 the Siona were still using their native language, with a few speaking a crude form of Spanish (Hardenberg 1912). The population at this time was about 1000.

The twentieth century brought drastic changes to the Siona's lives. Once the rubber boom began, the Church renewed its efforts. Siona children were forced into mission boarding schools, where epidemics once again took their toll. By 1925 the Western Tukanoan population numbered only 250, composed primarily of Siona. The experience of the Siona during this period was difficult, for the priests were harsh in their treatment of the Indians and worked actively to undermine many aspects of Siona culture, including language, clothing, and shamanistic practices. Following the rubber boom, the river was the scene of the Colombian-Peruvian conflict. Many Siona served on navy patrol boats at this time.

The first half of the twentieth century marked an increase in the pace of acculturation in response to the missionaries' efforts as well as to the economic and political interest in the region. This was also the period that marked the final decline of the Western Tukanoan population on the Putumayo River. Epidemics wiped out several communities. Survivors joined the three remaining ones or fled to the more isolated groups in Ecuador. In addition, Spanish became more common; traditional household, hunting, and fishing implements began to be replaced by western products. Fewer and fewer young males undertook shamanistic training, rejecting the highest position of esteem that a traditional Siona male could obtain. In spite of these changes, the Siona remained economically autonomous. They began to grow cash crops, but markets in the area were so few that the Siona remained outside the modern sector of the economy. They continued to depend on horticulture supplemented by hunting and gathering as their prime source of subsistence. Since there were still no effective roads from the highlands, settlers were few and remained primarily around the mission settlement of Puerto Asis, three days from Buena Vista.

In the 1950's petroleum was discovered near Puerto Asis and thus ended the isolation of the Putumayo River area from the rest of the nation. Exploitation of petroleum has been the most influential factor in the process of acculturation that had begun some 300 years earlier. With it came the first road. Settlers from the highlands flowed into the area and began settling in the jungle. Colonization doubled the population of the Putumayo area between 1950 and 1964 (Instituto Geográfico Agustín Codazzi 1972: 20). During this period the Siona population remained stable at 250. Puerto Asis became an important economic center where the farmers' products and the international goods coming up the river from the Atlantic were shipped on to the highlands. The Siona responded readily to the economic opportunities brought by the road. Year by year they came to rely more heavily upon the sale of cash crops to supplement their subsistence activities. Men began to engage in lumbering and the hunting of animals for pelts.

By 1970 Buena Vista was the only Siona community left intact. White settlers lived on either side of its river borders. When the settlers began to encroach on this last bit of Siona territory, the government converted the Indians' land into a reserve to protect native land-rights. The reserve status has been an effective force in helping to prevent disintegration of this last Siona community. Many Siona remarked to me in 1980 that they would have fled to the more isolated regions in Ecuador if this action had not been taken.

The decade of the 1970's brought even more settlers. Puerto Asis increased from 5000 people in 1970 to approximately 30,000 in 1980. White settlers lined the river all the way to Buena Vista and far below it. They also occupied the territory on all sides of the reserve, destroying the valuable hunting grounds of the Siona. It was apparent in 1980 that the reserve, measuring five kilometers along the river and eighteen into the jungle, was too small for the Siona to maintain their livelihood with traditional subsistence patterns. Wage labor, performed only by single men in 1970, was common for most males by 1980. The traditional diet changed as fertile land and wildlife disappeared and families came to depend more on purchased foods.

This process of acculturation has not benefited the Siona. The history of Indian-white relations in Colombia since the conquest has been one of murder, brutality, exploitation, and discrimination (Corry 1976; Hardenburg 1912; Bonilla 1972; Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadísticas 1971; Friede 1973). The Siona's present position reflects past discrimination as well as the fact that they have lost their economic autonomy. In the modern sector, they are often exploited in the worst way, for they are in the lowest and least influential position, that of the small farmer or worker who has no control over prices received for his products or labor. In the meantime, inflation continues to drive up the prices of items purchased. Within the social realm, the Siona are held in low esteem by many Colombians who consider them, at worst, to be savages or animals to be shot and, at best, to be poor, stupid, ignorant individuals who can easily be cheated in commercial dealings. Politically they are under the jurisdiction of the División de Asuntos Indígenas and covered by a confusing body of laws. Although they have the right to vote, their legal status seems to be that of minors (Corry 1976: 5).

The Siona are well aware of their position in the class hierarchy of Colombia. They often stress the need for schooling so that they can "defend" themselves in their dealings with Colombians. The preference of the younger Siona for Spanish over their native tongue reflects this consciousness also. When questioned as to why they do not speak Siona, the younger Indians often reply that they are ashamed to. Some claim that they are cheated or paid lower prices for their crops than whites because the merchants believe them to be ignorant Indians. When dealing with non-Indian strangers, Siona are timid and withdrawn, rarely asserting themselves. For example, they hesitate to enter the newer, unfamiliar stores in Puerto Asis. Several times, when making purchases in small shops in town, I was

noticed by a passing Siona. If he or she wished to greet me, the Siona would stand outside the doorway and speak from there. If we were walking together and I entered a shop or restaurant where the Siona traditionally did not deal, only at my urging would the individual enter. In one instance when I was accompanying a Siona elder in traditional dress, non-Indian people gathered around him and proceeded to finger his clothing and beads. They did not speak to him and acted as if their invasion of his personal space had no consequence since he was an Indian. My Siona friend did not move or make any comment, although he appeared very nervous. The Siona know they are regarded by whites as inferior and, on the whole, respond with fear, distrust, and submissiveness.

The Siona have resolved this problem of fear and distrust in Puerto Asis by singling out a few businessmen whom they trust, and it is with these traders that the Siona deal almost exclusively. Although recent growth of the town has meant the opening of many new stores, the Siona continue to patronize the familiar shops even though their prices may be higher. Ties with these traders are often strengthened by establishing the link of "co-parenthood" (compadrazgo). That is, Siona parents ask shop owners to be godparents to their children. Once this relationship is established, the Siona often rely on the "co-parent" (compadre) to act on their behalf with other Colombians. As will be seen later, an example of this intermediary function is the situation in which Siona parents ask their co-parent to find their daughter a position as a domestic servant. The Siona do not work or travel outside their region without having established some contact in the strange location. Most often the contact is made through their co-parents' ties. The Siona also have co-parent relationships with white settlers, but relations are strained or nonexistent with the majority of their white neighbors.

Relations Between the Sexes

Sex antagonism and sexual inequality have been documented for many Amazonian tribes (Quinn 1977: 215-217; Siskind 1973; Shapiro 1973). Male-female relations among the Siona, however, (Langdon 1974) more commonly fit the descriptions of interdependence and equality documented by Vickers (1975) for the Siona-Secoya of Ecuador and by Dole (1979) for the Amahuaca of Peru.

Siona ideology provides various images of both men and women. Both have negative and positive attributes. Women are associated with motherhood, creativity, and nurturing as well as with jealousy, voracity, and sexuality. Men are associated with supernatural power, protection, hunting, and sexuality. It is the conjunction of the sexes that brings about the origin of all things. It is the reciprocity of sex roles that creates order and continuity in society.

Living with the Siona, I was struck with the egalitarian relations between the sexes. Although the male is accorded highest respect in daily manners, such as serving him meals first, and in decision-making, women

participate in family and community decisions. They speak freely and are listened to with respect. A married couple forms an important unit marked by closeness and sharing. This egalitarianism is related to the nature of kinship and community structure and to the recognition of women as important contributors to the family's economic survival and well-being.

The kind of relations described here may result from the disruption and depopulation experienced by the Siona during the early years of contact (Langdon n.d.). Before the Conquest, the Siona resided in multi-family long houses organized by patrilineages. We know nothing of the relations between the sexes in the pre-Conquest period and can only speculate what they may have been.

Contact with the Spaniards destroyed the organizing power of the patrilineage as the basis of community structure, and the Siona reorganized in communities composed of kin and others allied with a particular shaman (Langdon n.d.). Polygyny gave way to monogamy, and the long house disappeared. Families lived in separate houses composed of one or two generations, which is the pattern today. Kinship reckoning is shallow, and today's Siona do not trace relatives beyond a few generations. The nuclear family is the economic unit. Shamanism, not kinship, is the basis for community organization. The role of master-shaman of a community is achieved, not inherited, and as communities gather and disband over time, realignments are made according to which shamans are perceived as powerful and trustworthy. Kinship may be a reason to trust a particular shaman, but it is not necessarily the most important reason.

Marriage practices give considerable freedom to women, although according to some elder Siona women, this may have not been so a hundred years ago. The young woman may choose who she will marry. Before marriage, which is marked by the birth of the first child, the young male lives with the woman's family for several months, proving his ability as a provider by hunting for the family and helping with gardening tasks. After a year or so, the young couple moves in with the husband's family and eventually builds a separate home near his parents. Reciprocal patterns of food sharing occur between the couple and both sets of in-laws, although the husband's parents receive more meat than the wife's.

As in other Amazonian societies, roles are divided by sex. Men are the hunters. Their ideal role is the protector and provider of the home through hunting and ritual knowledge. The woman's role is that of nurturing the family through the cultivation of crops and caring for the members of the family. An important aspect of her ideal role is to care appropriately for her in-laws by serving food. Besides distributing her agricultural products by cooking food for family members, the wife also distributes cooked game to all visitors after the initial division has been made to her parents and in-laws. The basic pattern of distribution of game takes place through visiting. When a man has made a large kill and has given pieces of meat to the appropriate relatives, his other relatives and friends visit his home. He then gives each visitor a meal composed of meat and manioc. The visitors

often do not eat this meal, but instead drink the broth and wrap the meat and manioc in leaves to take home. The hunter's wife plays a key role in this distribution of game for she chooses whom to feed and how much to give.

In understanding the egalitarianism between the sexes one must note that the egalitarianism lies not in the ideal division of labor but in the sharing of tasks regardless of which sex they are ideally assigned to. In particular, males perform many tasks associated with women. It is common to see a couple working together in the fields, gathering firewood, or collecting wild fruits and berries in the jungle. They are the primary economic unit in all tasks except hunting and the clearing of fields, which are done only by men. Men also spend considerable time watching and caring for children. In the home and in public, a father takes time to quiet a crying child or amuse one that is a bother. Both sexes discipline children.

Thus, male and female relations among the Siona do not reflect overt antagonism between men and women nor a fear of women. Men perform "female" tasks. Women have a good deal of autonomy in their daily lives, in choosing whom they will marry, and in choosing to have children. (Abortion is still practiced but the past practice of infanticide has declined.) In the home and in public, women speak freely and are respected for their opinions. Basic values attached to women and their roles are based on respect and the recognition that the family functions successfully as each sex carries on its reciprocal obligations. This is apparent in daily life as well as in the mythology and folklore that depict the ideal life for the Siona. The theme that dominates the relations between the sexes is the concept of reciprocity, and both sexes are valued for their contributions.

In general, the adoption of cash crops, lumbering, and hunting for commercial gain have not significantly altered relations between the sexes. Men are considered the owners of the cash crops. They market the produce as well as other items such as lumber or pelts. The women have little, if anything, to do with market-oriented economic activities. Although it is changing rapidly, the diet remains heavily dependent upon traditional foods, and women continue to be the major producers of them. For most families, relations and decisions unrelated to money are still based on mutual respect, and the couples continue to share most tasks and companionship.

A more noticeable change in family relationships can be seen in the households of those more acculturated Siona men who have established stronger ties with the white community and who are more involved in the cash economy. A few of them spend significant amounts of time as wage laborers for whites; some have formed business partnerships with whites in farming or other activities. As a whole, these men are more familiar with white society. Several have drinking problems and emulate the macho behavior common among white men. They travel more often without their wives and may spend one or more nights in Puerto Asis, drinking excessively. Relations at home can be tense and occasionally these men beat their wives. For such men, modernization has meant a movement away from the traditional marriage

to a style reflecting the sexism of Colombian society. Gertrude Dole (1979: 116) has documented a similar process for the Amahuacan women whose husbands desire material goods and have worked for white patrons. Outside of these cases, however, most marriages on the reserve remain peaceful and egalitarian. It is likely that this will change with time and increasing acculturation.

Although the lives of women living in Buena Vista seem relatively unchanged, this is not so for the Siona women who no longer live there. Going over genealogies that encompass over four hundred individuals spanning five generations of Siona, I discovered an interesting trend. For the last sixty years, the majority of the Siona emigrating from the native enclaves have been young single females. Women have left in two ways: by establishing relationships with non-Siona males or as domestic servants in jobs white godparents have secured for them. Since residence is patrilocal, women have always left home upon finding mates. They married men of other Western Tukanoan groups or Kofan men, a group closely allied though not related linguistically. And they were replaced by women of the same groups. Ingano women and whites, on the other hand, have never been considered appropriate mates by Siona men because of their failure to adhere to Siona taboos concerning menstruation; they are considered to be animal-like and are not welcome in Siona households.

When a woman marries a white, she is no longer counted as a member of the community, even if she resides in Buena Vista. This situation is rare, however; most Siona girls who marry whites leave the community with them and do so secretly, without permission from their parents. They go with riverboat workers, civil officials coming through the area, someone they met in Puerto Asis, or a white neighbor. Very few have remained in the immediate area or have retained communication with their parents. They may send an occasional letter or make a few rare visits, but in general they lose contact, even if they move only as far as Puerto Asis. Biographical data indicate that these unions tend to end tragically. The woman is often deserted or suffers from periodic beatings. Some have turned to prostitution, and at least two have been murdered. Marriage or union with a white may be considered upward mobility, enabling one to enter white society, but the experiences of the women indicate that they remain part of the most exploited and maltreated segment of the society, poor women dependent upon men for their livelihood. These women experience a life very different from that of their sisters on the reserve.

Genealogical and biographical data show that Siona women have been involved with white men since the beginning of this century and the arrival of the rubber collectors. I have little data on interaction between the rubber collectors and Siona women, although at least a few single women were reported to have been taken to Peru to pay their families' debts around 1920. These women were never heard from again. Three women of that same generation were reported to have married whites. With the larger population of settlers since 1950, marrying white males has increased. Ten women in

their thirties or younger have chosen white mates. Five out of the seven households in Buena Vista with married daughters have at least one married to a white.

Also increasing is the number of young women leaving the community to work as domestic servants. Five out of the seven households with teenage females have had at least one daughter working as a domestic servant, and a number of young married women had worked as domestics when younger. The increase of women leaving to work as servants is related to improvements in the transportation and communication networks.

With the approval, or often at the suggestion, of their parents, young women secure jobs in Puerto Asis through their white godparents. One very traditional Siona mother sent her fourteen-year-old daughter to work in Puerto Asis, stating that such work teaches girls to be obedient.² After working a time in Puerto Asis, a girl may then secure a position with one of their godparent's relatives residing in a large city, such a Bogota, the capital. A few of these girls may send money home and visit every year or so. Others have little, if any, contact with their families. Occasionally a small child or baby born out of wedlock may be sent to the girl's parents to raise. Although parents view domestic work as temporary and expect the daughter to return to Buena Vista after a few years, about half of them never return. Like those who leave the community with white men, they disappear into white society.

Data on males, on the other hand, reveal far smaller numbers leaving for reasons of marriage or work, although many have served in the armed forces. During the Peruvian conflict, Siona youth served in the navy on the lower Putumayo River. In recent years, most Siona youth have been drafted into the army. Only one male has not returned home. After serving in the Peruvian conflict, he chose the navy as a career and took his Siona wife and brother-in-law to live with him on the north coast of Colombia. Unmarried males occasionally leave to work temporarily as day-laborers in the region, but until now they have all returned.

The marriage patterns of the men also contrast with those of the women. One case of a Siona marrying a white woman and one case of a Siona marrying a black woman have been reported. Because of a shortage of women from the preferred Indian groups, more and more men are marrying Ingano women. This pattern of marriage in which Siona women marry higher-ranking whites while men do not reflects the kind of interethnic relations common in many areas. Women achieve upward mobility through marriage while men do not since their white wives would lose status by marrying below their position.

At first glance, the fact that more women than men leave the community for work elsewhere may appear perplexing. Seen from the perspective of the wider society, however, it is not. Many young Siona males desire to leave but simply do not have the opportunities. They are facing a saturated labor market. Indian women, however, are desired by whites as domestic servants. Urban Colombians consider them to be excellent domestic servants, possessing

qualities of honesty, timidity, and obedience. These qualities are considered difficult to find among the urban poor, who often rob their employers. In addition, Indian women can be paid less than city women, particularly when they have been contacted and transported from the rural area.³ There is no similar demand for male Indian labor.

An interesting example reflects the above observations. A group of Protestant missionaries from the city of Cali visited the Siona in their search for converts. They took to Cali two Siona women to work for them as maids and one Siona youth for a brief training program. Shortly thereafter, several youths traveled to Cali, assuming they could find jobs through these missionaries. They were quickly discouraged by the missionaries and sent home. One of the Siona women was sent home later, after she had become pregnant by the son of the family for whom she worked.

Domestic Servants and Upward Mobility

In many parts of Latin America, upper and middle class families depend upon live-in maids to help run their households. Most households lack modern time-saving appliances and products such as washing machines, ready-made foods, and the like. Moreover, the society is dependent upon messengers to carry out many services that may be performed by impersonal clerks and functionaries in the bureaucracies of the economically developed countries (Nett 1966: 443). Thus, domestic servants take care not only of household chores such as housecleaning, laundry, cooking, and child care, but also a series of errands and other small tasks to help the household run smoothly. The requirements of the job are open-ended as opposed to clearly defined specific tasks, and the good servant becomes a "Jill of all trades" (Nett 1966: 441). As workers, the domestic servants constitute part of the "cheap" labor force. In 1980 they earned \$15 to \$40 a month in Colombia, depending on geographic location and the employer's socio-economic class. Hours are long, generally 12 to 16 hours a day, with one half-day off a week. Domestic servants receive no social security or health benefits. The few laws regarding minimum wages and working hours are rarely enforced. In short, domestics represent an essential work force to many households but are also one of the lowest-paid segments of the working population. In addition, they represent the segment with the least amount of personal freedom because of their long working hours and the conjunction of residence with place of employment.

Financial exploitation of domestic servants is only one aspect of their status in society; certain characteristics of the master-servant relationship as described by Nett and by Rubbo and Taussig (n.d.) also create negative consequences. The servant is not an impersonal worker in the home of others performing set and well-defined tasks. She is a human being who must answer to multiple and vaguely defined needs. She is part of many of the family's intimacies, and in some ways she is part of the family. Thus many employers treat their servants, particularly those who have been with the family for years, in a manner resembling that of a semi-adopted child. These employers take some responsibility for certain

personal problems in the servants' lives, and pay for health expenses, the education of the servants' children, and other costs that the servants may not be able to handle. Not all master-servant relationships are characterized by such a sense of responsibility on the part of the employer, but the assumption that the relationship has a personal basis that goes beyond the impersonal contractual arrangement is implicit.

In this kind of employer-employee relationship, the servant holds the status of child. She is called muchacha or "girl" and is denied full adult status regardless of her age. Like a child, she is scolded and guided and is never expected to think for herself or take the initiative in any activity. This childlike status has psychological implications. One of them is the denial of personal needs. The servant is required to perform her various tasks in a versatile and personable way and absorb the bad tempers or "capriciousness" of her masters. At the same time, her own needs and bad moods are denied. The woman who has children has very limited access to them as she spends time rearing her employer's children (Rubbo and Taussig n.d.). Another psychological consequence of the relationship is the constant acknowledgement of one's inferiority in all interactions. The relationship is founded on hierarchal positions of assumed superiority and inferiority. The good servant must demonstrate in all her actions that she is inferior to her masters. Thus, a servant's status is one of a perpetual child-like woman who must accept her inferior position if she is to perform successfully in her job.

In Colombia, private domestic service occupies 37% of the economically active women (Boserup 1970: 102).⁴ The pattern of Siona women's migration to urban centers to work as domestics reflects a general trend in Latin America. Urbanization has been increasing in the last twenty-five years because of a large influx of migrants from the rural areas as well as high birth rates. Often rural crises and poverty have pushed the migrants to the cities and new jobs created by growing industries have drawn them. In most countries, women make up a larger proportion of the migrants (Blumberg 1978: 110; Balan 1969: 5; Elizaga 1970: 20). Of these migrants, most are young (ages 15-29), and over half are single. Recent female migrants are employed more frequently as domestic servants (Jelin 1977). One in three of these women work as domestic servants, while only one in five of the earlier migrants are domestics (Elizaga 1970: 162). In a survey of a rural black community near Cali 18% of the women worked as domestic servants and 35% had done so within the last ten years (Rubbo and Taussig n.d.: 42). Smith (1973) has documented a seven-year career cycle among Peruvian domestics. By the end of seven years, the woman had changed location of employment several times, often gaining better pay, and then she dropped out to get married or to find another occupation.

Although work as domestic servants offers geographic mobility and the opportunity for a young woman to earn money and gain a certain amount of autonomy from her family, there is no conclusive evidence that it necessarily implies upward mobility. Smith (1973) has argued that the job of domestic servant plays a crucial role in the acculturation process of the

provincial girl into the vast lower class, that it is a channel for upward mobility, and that the children of domestic servants often achieve higher levels of education than their mothers. Others, however, have focussed on the options open to lower-class women, noting that domestic servants receive the lowest pay for the longest hours, and that the occupation itself is a dead end, leading nowhere and teaching no new skills (Arizpe 1977; Chinchilla 1977; Figueroa 1976). In Guatemala, Chinchilla found that poor uneducated women are confined increasingly to the tertiary labor sector, largely as domestics, while middle- and upper-class women are moving into white-collar jobs. The growing industries require trained people, and, as a consequence, lower-class women remain with limited options. Rubbo and Taussig's study of domestic servants shows no upward mobility.

The Siona data are insufficient to allow us to evaluate the role of domestic service in the upward mobility of Siona women since data on those women who do not return to their home communities are lacking. Some speculations can be made, however, as to the benefits of women's emigration. Approximately half of them work for a few years and return, marrying a Siona man and resuming the traditional female role. Those who stay in the city most often lose contact with their home communities. There is evidence that they change jobs and bear children. Yet their relatives in the Putumayo often know little about them or how to contact them. These women are moving from the status of Indian to that of white in the city, becoming part of the large urban lower class. It could be argued, as Smith (1973) has done, that working for middle and upper-class families provides a form of resocialization from which the women's children, if not the women themselves, benefit. Yet in the few Siona cases reported where women working as domestics have children, they have sent the children to relatives in the Putumayo to be raised. The women themselves are poorly equipped for any other occupation. Their low wages and long hours hardly give them the time or money to pursue studies or training. Finally, the psychological consequences of assuming the role of the inferior servant may be little hope or thought of upward mobility. The Siona know that whites consider them inferior. The domestic servant must live constantly with this sense of inferiority. Domestic service may result, in fact, in a more thorough acceptance of a status inferior to that of whites.

Conclusions

This paper has explored the effect of development on the Siona, with particular reference to women. It has examined their status within the community and their opportunities to leave the community and to assimilate into the larger society. In Buena Vista development has resulted in a growing concentration of economic resources among males as they gain control of the cash. Thus far this has not led to a significant deterioration of the woman's status. Such deterioration may occur eventually as the traditional means of subsistence are abandoned, a consequence that has been documented for other groups (Hamamsy 1957; Draper 1975; Dole 1979). In addition, modernization has increased women's options for geographical mobility because of their double minority status as Indian and female. One

avenue of emigration is union or marriage with whites. The other is employment as domestic servants. At this point, the benefits of these avenues of emigration for women's lives must be questioned, and geographic mobility should not be confused with social and economic mobility. The great majority of females become separated entirely from their families and community. Those who leave with white males suffer the consequences of being female in a culture more sexist than their own. Those who enter the labor force become part of the most exploited sector of Colombian economy as well as the one that is characterized by a high rate of poverty and unemployment. The women take no skills with them other than those of hard work and honesty, and the master-servant relationship emphasizes their inferiority. Although the data are not available for us to assess the upward mobility of these women, it seems unlikely that assimilation into white society will be of great benefit to their lives.

The emigration of women may also be evaluated for its impact on the Siona community itself. Historical and economic factors, such as depopulation, the growth of the colonist population, and increasing dependence on a market economy have brought about a rapid acculturation process for the entire community. But it is the women, rather than the men, who are assimilating more rapidly into Colombian society because of the commodity value attached to female Indians as domestic servants and because of their marriages to whites. This in turn becomes a factor in the acculturation process of the Siona remaining in Buena Vista. It leaves a shortage of marriageable women. The young men are forced to select their mates from among the Inganos, a group vastly different from the Siona in marriage and other cultural practices. In this sense, the Siona are losing their identity as a distinct Indian group and becoming part of the more generalized ethnic group of Indians. Thus, the emigration of women is an important factor in the long history of deterioration of the once large and powerful Western Tukanoan in southern Colombia.

NOTES

1. The research was supported in part by the Tulane University International Center for Medical Research grant AI-10050 from NIAID, NIH, U.S. Public Health Service.
2. Jelin (1977: 136) states that "It is quite likely that many rural families allow their daughters to move to the city just because there are jobs in domestic service available, jobs in which the basic subsistence needs of the young women, food and shelter, will be covered."
3. Arzipe (1977) reports that Mazahua women in Mexico City are paid less than urban women. Rubio and Taussig (n.d.: 50) also document the high demand for Indian women as servants in Colombia.
4. This figure is representative of the role of domestic service as a major occupational category for economically active women throughout Latin America. In 1970 two-fifths of the working women were domestic servants (Figueroa 1976: 46). Chinchilla reports that 43.4% of the working women in Guatemala in 1973 were domestics (1977: 52).

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