

# Waurá

## 1. Description

- 1.1 Name of society, language, and language family: Waurá, Waurá, Arawak. Also known as the Aura, Wauja or Uaura.
- 1.2 ISO code: 639-3: WAU
- 1.3 Location (latitude/longitude): The Waurá reside in Mato Grosso, Xingú Park, in the area surrounding Piyulaga Lake. The lake is linked by a channel to the right shore of the lower Batoví river, in the western region of the basin formed by the affluents of the upper Xingú River in the state of Mato Grosso (2). Their village is located 12 degrees and 30 minutes south, and fifty-four degrees west (3).
- 1.4 Brief history: German ethnologist Karl von den Steinen was the first European to record the existence of the Waurá tribe in 1884. He received hints that the tribe might exist (under the name vaurá) by other Native Americans he encountered on his expedition, and discovered exactly where they existed when given a map of the region by members of the Suyá tribe. They (along with the Mehinako) are the direct descendants of various groups who migrated from the extreme south-west of the Amazonian basin and established the first Xinguano villages between 800 and 900 a.d.(4).
- 1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors: Missionaries - mainly those that are Roman Catholics - have attempted to bring Christianity into the lives of the Waurá people. This has been somewhat successful. However, they also brought terrible disease, which have killed many members of the tribe over time (5). The Waurá also face land problems with their ranching neighbors (7).
- 1.6 Ecology: The Waurá people are generally peaceful, family-oriented, and live in harmony with the people and earth around them (3).
- 1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density: The current population (taken in March 2010) is just shy of 400 people. 320 people live in a typical Xinguano village, and 51 people live elsewhere, spread out among other villages (6).

## 2. Economy

- 2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s): They practice horticulture, raising maize, bitter manioc, sweet potatoes, yams, beans, peppers, and various fruits. They also keep orchards of mangabeira (3).
- 2.2 Main protein-lipid sources: Fishing and hunting provide the Waurá with their main protein/lipid sources. They fish in well-organized, large groups with nets, dip nets and baskets, and at night they use torches. They broil their game and fish in their skins (3).
- 2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?: Bows and arrows are used by hunting parties made up of men that stay out for days (3). Bows are about 63<sup>2</sup> feet (2 m.) long; those of greatest length (8<sup>^</sup> feet or 2.6 m.) are found among the Naravute and the shortest among the Waurá. The cross section is generally round, sometimes oval, and occasionally flat. Bows are made of aratazeiro or of pau d'arco. The string is made of twisted tucum fiber. Among the semicivilized Bacdiri of the Paranatinga River, Von den Steinen noticed that bows and arrows were smaller than elsewhere (10).
- 2.4 Food storage: They store ears of maize by hanging them from the roofs of the houses and keep manioc flour in pots (3).
- 2.5 Sexual division of production: Women make baskets, nets, bowls, and pottery while the men fish and hunt (3).
- 2.6 Land tenure:
- 2.7 Ceramics: Women make pots and animal-shaped bowls. These items are highly appreciated and very successful in the market of Brazilian indigenous goods. In addition to pottery, they are also known for their expressive and graphic baskets. There are 40-45 motifs that the Waurá use to decorate their cultural material. Their distinctive pottery is an emblem of the ethnicity and a large part of economic sustenance in the acquisition of industrialized goods (2).
- 2.8 Specified sharing patterns: None found.
- 2.9 Food taboos: None found.
- 2.10 Canoes/watercraft? Canoes are made out of bark from the jatoba tree or are acquired through trading with canoe-making groups (3).

## 3. Anthropometry

- 3.1 Mean adult height (m and f):
- 3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f):

#### **4. Life History, mating, marriage**

4.1 Age at menarche (f):

4.2 Age at first birth (m and f):

4.3 Completed family size (m and f):

4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f):

4.5 Age first marriage (m and f):

4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce:

4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously:

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

4.9 Inheritance patterns:

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict:

4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals:

4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy):

4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these “other fathers” recognized?:

4.14 What is the belief of the mother’s role in procreation exactly? (e.g., “receptacle in which fetus grows”)

4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)?

4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape: This either does not take place or is very uncommon, as no evidence of sexual coercion or rape was found. However, in the neighboring tribe, it is linked to dominance and control and rapes and gang rapes happen frequently (9).

4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin)

4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms? This is doubtful. Seeing as the men of the tribes do little to ensure the sexual pleasures of the women. No foreplay takes place before sexual acts and there is no word for “orgasm” in the Waurá language. It is suggested that the women have lower sexual drive than men, and therefore less thought is given to their sexual needs. They are not, however forced into sexual acts (9).

4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring

4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children?

4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females: Approximately 1:1 (11).

4.22 Evidence for couvade: No evidence was found to support this.

4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers: A study done on the Xingu tribes showed that the four wealthiest and tallest men [mean = 167.0 cm; 95% bootstrapped confidence interval (CI) = 163.4–173.2 cm] had an average of 7.5 extramarital partners each (CI = 6.3–9.3). Three of them were chiefs and more likely to sponsor and participate in important rituals. The other 11 men in the sample were mostly poor; one man was a chief, whereas the others were nonchiefs or designated into the lowest social stratum known as trash yard men. Their average height was significantly less, averaging 159.4 cm (CI = 156.8–161.7 cm). They had significantly fewer reported extramarital partners, averaging 3.5 each (CI = 2.8–4.4), which was less than one-half the average number reported for high-status men (1).

4.24 Kin avoidance and respect? There is cohabitation of various kin in the village. Multiple families and generations will all live together in one house (2).

4.24 Joking relationships?

4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations

4.26 Incest avoidance rules

4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony?

4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name?

4.29 Is marriage usually within community or outside community?

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

4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who:

#### **Warfare/homicide**

4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare:

4.15 Out-group vs in-group cause of violent death:

4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing: No in-group killing was found to have taken place. Waurá are considered to be diplomats and are not violent with other neighboring groups (3).

4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations): They are known as diplomats among the people of the Xingú Indian Park, due to their ability to communicate with and to mediate disputes among neighboring tribes (3).

4.18 Cannibalism? No record of cannibalism within the tribe was found.

## **5. Socio-Political organization and interaction**

5.1 Mean local residential group size: Nearly all (270) of the existing Waurá live together in one circular village (2).

5.2 Mobility pattern: The Waurá stay in one village year-round, cultivating the land, as well as hunting and fishing. They are not a nomadic tribe (3).

5.3 Political system: They have a chiefdom.

5.4 Post marital residence: They live uxorilocally and virilocally - neither is prevalent (2).

5.5 Territoriality: The Waurá territory encompasses the south-western part of the "Parque Indígena do Xingu". Along its long, straight boundary it is lined with pastures and cleared areas belonging to the neighbouring fazendas of the north-east of Mato Grosso. Towards the end of the year 1980 the Waurá were faced with armed fazendeiros from the Alto Batoví region, who set fire to the three only houses of a small village called "Ulupuene". The Indios had constructed the village there for strategic reasons. It was supposed to protect this area from an invasion, since it had been forgotten in the official demarcation in 1960. Only in 1998 was this small enclave between the rivers Batoví and Ulupuene awarded to the Waurá. It is not only the land itself the Waurá care about, but also a "holy place" with rock paintings they call "Kamukuwaká" – about 40 km to the south from the mouth of Rio Ulupuene. While the court verdict of 1998 alleviated the conflict between the Indios and the neighbouring farmers for the time being, it did not end it. According to Waurá information they are approached on every occasion by anglers and hunters for permission to exploit the natural resources in the south-west of the reservation, an area that is under Waurá control and responsibility. The issue of securing all reservation borders is vital to its inhabitants, who feel increasingly besieged by ruthless exploiters of natural resources, and the boundaries are only respected when the Indios guard them (6). The Waurá are also actively trying to regain land that has been lost to ranchers that occupy Kamukuaka. They prevent the tribe from being able to hold ancient ceremonies there, and have turned much of the land into cattle pasture (7).

5.6 Social interaction divisions:

5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships:

5.8 Village and house organization: There is a single, large, circular village, with the typical Xinguano system of a central plaza and a house of flutes (2). There are also several multifamily houses arranged around the central plaza. They are located approximately 3 kilometers from the river (3).

5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses): There is a central men's house where sacred flutes, straw suits, woven masks, bullroarers, and other ritual paraphernalia are kept (3).

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?

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

5.12 Trade: Trade with Trumai Indians, canoe-making tribes, as well as civilized Brazilian markets (3).

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies?

## **6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)**

6 Time allocation to RCR:

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine): The Waurá have three classes of shamans: "Yakapá", "Pukaiwekeho" and "Yatamá". The Yakapá have the greatest therapeutic power and the most significant ritual prestige, thanks to their specialising in retrieving souls that have been abducted by the Apapaatai and Yerupoho – in this way they bring the sick back to life from their dangerous state. Another significant class of shaman is the "Pukaiwekeho", the master (or lord) of the shaman chants (invocations). Among the Waurá there are seven Pukaiwekeho, one of them with an unusual expressive power – he is famous in the entire region. Among these seven there are two that also work as Yakapá, which brings them double prestige. Combining these two kinds of shaman in one person is very lucrative: the teaching of the chants alone, which happens "in secret", merits high payment and requires a long time of dedication from the student. Finally there is The third class of shaman are the "Yatamá", those "who only smoke", they command the healing powers in tobacco smoke (6).

6.2 Stimulants: Tobacco is cultivated for smoking. This tobacco is also used by the Yatamá shamans to gain powers for healing the sick (3).

6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal): The Quarup or Kuarup is the principal funeral ritual of the Xingú tribes. It is a gathering of all neighbouring tribes to celebrate life, death, and rebirth. One of its central events is the presentation of all young girls who first menstruated since the last quarup and whose time has come to choose a partner, they tint their bodies and wear many ornaments and dance. The “Quarup” is a ritual performed by the Indians of the Xingu region, Brazil, in homage to their dead. In this ceremony, they not only honor past heroes, but also seek to pass on their virtues to the younger generations, keeping them alive in the spirit and practices of the tribe. The Urua flute is played during the Quarup ritual (8).

6.4 Other rituals: Men perform daily wrestling matches in the central plaza. Women’s and mixed dance festivals occur there during the dry season as well (3).

6.5 Myths: The mythology of the Waurá tells about the demigod Kwamutõ who once, threatened by a “jaguar man”, offered him his five daughters for marriage. But when he returned to his village his five daughters refused to fulfil the promise. So Kwamutõ had an idea: he cut five tree trunks to size and painted them. Then he blew tobacco smoke at them and sang before them, accompanied by the rhythm of the rattle. Early in the following morning the trunks came alive. Kwamutõ commanded the daughters made from the trunks to meet with the “jaguar man” – three of them died on the way and two married him. One of the two, who was heavily pregnant, was killed by her mother-in-law in an argument. Two twins were taken from her belly. These were raised by their aunt, whom they called “mummy”. When the twins had grown up they learned that their real mother had been killed even before they were born. Filled with sadness the lads – they were called “Sun” and “Moon” – cut down a tree trunk to commemorate and say goodbye to their mother. Thus the twins staged the first “kwarup”, which in the course of the centuries became the major death ritual among the peoples of the upper Xingu, dedicated to leader personalities of high lineage and admired deeds.

Thus, since they were aware of the lack of humans in this world, the two mythological heroes Sun and Moon decided to cut more kwarup tree trunks and give birth to the first human beings – using the same methods as their grandfather Kwamutõ. They created the Xingu Indios, the wild Indios (from the perspective of the Xingu) and the white people – who left this land and did not return until much later with their firearms.

They also have Yerupoho and Apapaatai, who are masked animals and monsters (6).

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games): As is the case among the other tribes of the upper Xingu, the Waurá have a true musical vision of the universe. Music is one of the highest domains of a symbolic world order – the connection between man and woman, human and non-human beings (6). Despite the process of technological change under way since 1884 – when Karl von den Steinen made contact with the Wauja and relations with non-Indians became more systematic – many items of traditional material culture still remain in use, including those that could be easily substituted for plastic, glass or metallic items. But it is for symbolic – much more than functional – reasons, that traditional artefacts continue to perform a role in the reproduction of Wauja culture. Material culture is also responsible for the reproduction of Wauja culture for the exterior, not only on the ‘White man’s’ market, but also within the Indigenous Park as a whole. For example, requests for bead waistbands with designs are made by the Kayapó of Jarina-Capoto, an area to the north of the Park (4).

6.7 Sex differences in RCR: Only the men of the tribe perform in daily wrestling matches in the central plaza (3).

6.8 Missionary effect: Christians - mainly Roman Catholics - have attempted to bring Christianity into the lives of the Waurá people. This has been somewhat successful. However, they also brought terrible disease, which killed many members of the tribe (5).

6.9 RCR revival: The Waurá today have recovered socially, politically and demographically from a critical reduction of their population in the 1960s due to epidemics, a period in which their ritual life was intensified, according to Wauja ethnographers. That is, the Waurá did not abandon the use of their musical instruments, which were still seen to have great power, during the period of demographic loss (12).

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs:

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?

6.12 Is there teknonymy?

6.13 Briefly describe religion: Missionaries have come to the village of the Waurá people and have successfully converted some people to Christianity. In recent studies, twenty percent of the people of the tribe practiced Christianity. Of that twenty percent, ninety-five percent were Roman Catholic, and five percent were Protestant (5).

## 7. Adornment

7.1 Body paint: Urucú is used for body paint (3).

7.2 Piercings: Men pierce their earlobes (3) and also have ear plugs (6).

7.3 Haircut:

- 7.4 Scarification: Scarification takes places during the solar eclipse and is done with dogfish teeth. They open up long, shallow cuts on their arms so as to “menstruate” so that the sun’s blood can flow out of their bodies and leave them sickness-free (9).
- 7.5 Adornment: Both sexes wear waistbands and different kinds of necklaces (3). The Waurá consider the birds’ feathers as their “clothing”. After being shot down the birds are “undressed”. Their feathers are then processed as “shreds” to one or more ornaments. Feathers from various birds are used to make headdresses (6).
- 7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment: The headdresses bear a special significance in rituals. It rarely happens that a grown man dances with anything less than his complete set: ear stud, diadem and bracelets. And even when they use masks they still wear their entire headdress. Together with the body painting it is the expression of a beauty that contributes decisively to the joy and animation of the festivities (6).
- 7.7 Sex differences in adornment: Men decorate their bodies with bands on their upper arms and ankles (3).
- 7.8 Missionary effect: Christians - mainly Roman Catholics - have attempted to bring Christianity into the lives of the Waurá people. This has been somewhat successful. However, they also brought terrible disease, which killed many members of the tribe (5).
- 7.9 Cultural revival in adornment: It has remained generally unchanged through contact from the outside world.

## 8. Kinship systems

8.1 Sibling classification system:

8.2 Sororate, levirate:

8.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.):

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