

## 1. Description

**1.1 Name of society, language, and language family:** Tunebo (Angosturas, Barro Negro, Central, and Western) Refer to themselves as the U'wa. Chibchan language family.

**1.2 ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com):** Angosturas, Barro Negro, and Western: 639-3: tnd. Central: 639-3: tuf

**1.3 Location (latitude/longitude):** (7 °N, 72°W) Northern Colombia. Northern Slopes of Sierra Nevada de Cocuy, Boyaca and Arauca regions; Satoca, Calafita, Tegria (Boyaca), Cobaria (Boyaca). Also in Venezuela (1).

**1.4 Brief history:** The Tunebo originally extended to the west of Sierra Nevada de Cocuy, but were gradually forced back across the mountains into the basin by white and *mestizo* settlers. The Sierra rises to 5,493 meters and extends 25 kilometers in a north-south direction. It has acted as a significant barrier to further encroachment by settlers (1).

**1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors:** Missionary activity started in 1910. Colombian settlers have been increasingly permeating Tunebo territory. The Summer Institute of Linguistics has been in contact with the Tunebo since 1961 and evangelical Protestants have more recently began attempts to convert. These groups have had an increasing influence on the Tunebo, yet they continue to embrace their initial culture and language (1).

**1.6 Ecology:** Mountainous. Varies with season because they migrate up and down their respective mountain valleys to tend to different crops in different environments. Altitude levels range between 400 to 3,000 meters (1).

**1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density:** Population-Angosturas: 50, Barro Negro: 300, Central: 1,500, Western: 700. Approximately 2,700 total (1).

## 2. Economy

**2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s):** Maize, sweet manioc, sweet potatoes, yams, peach palms, roots, and tubers (1).

**2.2 Main protein-lipid sources:** Tapir, peccaries, deer, anteaters, armadillos, pacas, squirrels, monkeys, toucans, macaws, and turkeys (1).

**2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?:** Bow and arrow used for hunting (1).

**2.4 Food storage:** Deep storage tanks are built into the ground in which leaf-wrapped packages of maize and other foods are preserved for weeks and months under running water (1).

**2.5 Sexual division of production:** Women are responsible for planting, weeding, and harvesting. Men cut trees to clear land and build the storage tanks. The men do the hunting while the women do most of the fishing. Women also capture small rodents in traps (1).

**2.6 Land tenure:** (See 2.5) “Men cut trees to clear the land and tend the sisal plants. They also build deep storage tanks in the ground in which leaf-wrapped packages of maize and other victuals are preserved for weeks and months under running water” (1). “Gardens of 4 to 6 hectares are prepared by recultivating agricultural land that has lain fallow” (1). Farmers sow and plant their crops among fallen tree trunks, boulders, and

chopped up leaves and stems, rather than burning their fields before cultivation. After 4 years of cultivation fields are left barren for about 12 years, but in some lowland areas fields are kept under semipermanent cultivation. (1).

**2.7 Ceramics:** Women make earthen cooking pots, eating bowls, and water containers. It is the men's responsibility to fire the women's pottery. Men also make string bags of varying sizes out of twisted sisal cordage and plaited baskets for valuable possessions. Women make their own carrying and storage bags from twisted string of tree bast (1).

**2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:** No data

**2.9 Food taboos:** Bears, jaguars, and some snakes and birds are not hunted. Some regional groups are reluctant to hunt large mammals like tapir and peccaries (1).

**2.10 Canoes/watercraft?** Not found

### **3. Anthropometry**

**3.1 Mean adult height (m and f):** No exact data but short on average (3).

**3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f):** No exact data but noted as stocky (3).

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

**4.1 Age at menarche (f):** Not found

**4.2 Age at first birth (m and f):** Not found

**4.3 Completed family size (m and f):** Not found

**4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f):** Not found

**4.5 Age first marriage (m and f):** Not found

**4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce:** Not found

**4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously:** Percent found but mostly monogamous with some polygyny.

**4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?:** Not found

**4.9 Inheritance patterns:** Each man inherits a hunting track from his great-grandfather, whose name he bears (1).

**4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict:** Unknown

**4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals:** Not found

**4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy):** Clans were traditionally exogamous and considered themselves related to neighboring clans. "The women of the eastern segment of a particular clan married men of the western segment of the neighboring clan to the east, and the women of the western segment of a given clan married men of the eastern segment of the neighboring clan to the west" (1). The three traditional clans that still exist today continue to follow this practice. However, population decline has led to replacement by clan-endogamous unions (1).

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

**4.14 What is the belief of the mother's role in procreation exactly? (e.g., "receptacle in which fetus grows"):** Unknown

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

**4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape:** Unknown

**4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin):** Cross-cousin marriage, especially with a mother's brother's daughter is preferred (1).

- 4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?:** No major restrictions noted
- 4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring:**  
Unknown
- 4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children?:** Unknown
- 4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females:** Unknown
- 4.22 Evidence for couvades:** None found
- 4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older):**  
Unknown
- 4.24 Kin avoidance and respect?:** Unknown
- 4.24 Joking relationships?:** Unknown
- 4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations:** Unknown
- 4.26 Incest avoidance rules:** No data
- 4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony?:** No data
- 4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name?:** Each man bears his great-grandfather's name (1).
- 4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?):** See 4.12.
- 4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)?:** Unknown
- 4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who:** None found

## **Warfare/homicide**

- 4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare:** No data
- 4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death:** No data
- 4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing:** No data
- 4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations):** Relationships with neighboring clans but no data found on neighboring societies.
- 4.18 Cannibalism?:** None recorded

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

- 5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size:** Unknown
- 5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality):** The Tunebo travel up and down their respective mountain valleys seasonally (1).
- 5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes):** “The subtribal divisions of Tunebo society are clans only in the sense that they claim descent from a particular ancestor and are socially integrated groups” (1). These clans are governed by four principal shamans and have no political chiefs (1).
- 5.4 Post marital residence:** “May be uxorilocal or virilocal, according to the rules governing the exchange of women between allied clans or between segmental groups of the same clan. It may also fluctuate between uxorilocality and virilocality according to whether a man, during his seasonal residency in the foothill region of his and his wife's clans, works for his own father or for his father-in-law” (1).
- 5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense):** see 5.8
- 5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex):** No data

**5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships:** No data

**5.8 Village and house organization:** Small semielliptical single-family houses with thatched roofs serve as shelter for the women and children. Rectangular, gabled dwellings house nuclear families. Houses are oriented in east-west direction, with the front toward the sunrise. Houses are windowless with the front door on the eastern facade and the secondary door into the western end of the house. Houses serve as sanctuaries. Each family owns two or more houses in different altitudinal zones of its clan's territory. Visitors are never invited in (1).

**5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses):** Large elliptical communal houses with thatched roofs serve as ceremonial homes for the men (1).

**5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?** Sleep on leaves covering the ground or on platform beds and men sometimes sleep in hammocks (1).

**5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc:** Historically divided into eight geographically dispersed clans, but only three traditional clans still exist.

**5.12 Trade:** Ponchos and loincloths are obtained through trade (1).

**5.13 Indications of social hierarchies?** No

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

**6 Time allocation to RCR:** Songs are performed from August to October and are spread over a total of seventeen nights. Take place in groups of two nights at a time and there is a final culminating sequence of three nights (3).

**6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine):** Shamans or witch doctors are referred to as *karekas* and they are responsible for the spiritual life of each group. Their authority is derived from magical powers and communication with the spirit world, and is mostly based on intimidation. *Karekas* are believed to go to "dark places" and assume the form of man-eating jaguars, and when he dies he may become a jaguar and join forces with the devil who is also typically portrayed in the form of a jaguar. The *kareka* is responsible for the organization of the ceremonial dances. The *kareka's* power is thought to come from his magic wand known as *rubriza*, which was originally thought to have been given to the Tunebos by God (3).

**6.2 Stimulants:** Used to prevent fatigue during ceremonial dances. Each night the principal dancers travel around the bonfire for a total of about twenty-five miles so stimulants are heavily relied upon. Stimulants include dried coca leaves mixed with chalk for chewing to dispel fatigue. Yopa snuff is inhaled by the tube or blown up the nostrils to induce hallucinations (3).

**6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal):** The shaman or *kareka* must "breathe with" the *rubriza* over a dead body or the soul cannot rise to heaven. The *rubriza* is also used in baptismal rites and believed to have powerful medicinal properties (3).

**6.4 Other rituals:**

**6.5 Myths (Creation):** The first of the eight ceremonial songs "deals with the creation of the world in the form of a house supported on beams and columns over the sea, beneath which is hell. On top of the earth are the hills, gorges, rivers, and other places given by God. Among the beams supporting the earth lies an old man in a hammock, who is in charge of the world. When *karekas* die they come to him, and the shaking of his hammock causes the world to tremble and gives rise to landslides and earthquakes" (3).

At the end of all the songs the Tunebos give thanks for creation and pray that order remains upheld (3).

**6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games):** No data

**6.7 Sex differences in RCR:** During the ceremonial dances a bonfire is lit near one end of the hut where the men begin to perform dances. Women and children sit on the other end of the hut where it is dark. They are welcome to join in following the men.

Hammocks are hung around the hut for older men and dancers to rest in (3). “The main mass of the dancers is in two parts: on the inside the women, who do not sing but simply walk round following the chief singers, and on the outside another short chain of men and women holding hands (3).

**6.8 Missionary effect:** Little progress has been made in the conversion of the Tunebo, but a vigorous program is being pursued against the *karekas* and the dances. They have also imposed a new set of songs for the dances based on the Christian doctrine, and have forbidden the annual dances to occur without a missionary present (3). “The destruction of the *rubrizas* is having a profound effect on Tunebo morale, for without it, the Tunebos believe that they have no protection against diseases or the spirit world: they can neither be baptized nor can their souls go to heaven” (3).

**6.9 RCR revival:** These prohibitions have had little effect on the ceremonial dances.

**6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs:** See 6.3

**6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?** None found

**6.12 Is there teknonymy?** No.

**6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.):** There appears to be no organized religious life other than the annual ceremonial dances.

## 7. Adornment

**7.1 Body paint:** No data found

**7.2 Piercings:** No data found

**7.3 Haircut:** No data found

**7.4 Scarification:** No data found

**7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.):** Teeth necklaces.

**7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment:** No special uniform. Dances are performed in their ordinary brown ruanas or ponchos of felted cloth with a cotton loincloth and teeth necklaces. Principal singers wear plaited straw hats laced with brightly colored feathers that serve as a common symbol of authority among similar tribes (3).

**7.7 Sex differences in adornment:** Wives and unmarried daughters wear a dark brown woolen poncho, which their husbands and fathers obtain for them through trade. Men weave a red belt for the women to wear around their waists. Men wear loincloths (1).

**7.8 Missionary effect:** Men sometimes wear trousers over their traditional loincloths on colder days.

**7.9 Cultural revival in adornment:**

## 8. Kinship systems

8.1 Sibling classification system:

8.2 Sororate, levirate: Polygyny of the sororal type is permitted and remarrying widows appear to be subject to levirate marriage rules (1).

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

## **9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):**

### **Numbered references**

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