

Wan

1. Description

1.1 Name(s) of society, language, and language family: The Wan people speak Wan-there are two dialects, Myanamu and Kenmu; Wan is from the Southeastern branch of the Mande family. Today, younger members also speak French.

1.2 ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com): [ISO 639-3: wan](#)

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude): -12.30, 40.30

1.4 Brief history: Originally part of the Ghana and Mali empires, after those declined, the region splintered into several states. From here till colonization by the French, there were several kingdoms. Recently they were displaced geographically to the south because of the government and rebels fighting in 2002.

1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors: French missionaries/colonists banned slavery. Today, traditional crops have mostly been abandoned in favor of cash crops.

1.6 Ecology (natural environment): the terrain is mostly, forests and wooded savannah.

1.7 Population size was 22,000 in 1993, mean village size 850, home range size 1-3 acres, more for the very wealthy, density

2. Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s): Rice, millet, sorghum, yams

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources: meat-goat, chicken, fish, sheep and cattle, mushrooms, milk, peas, beans, peanuts.

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?: weapons such as bows and axes were used primarily for hunting, than warfare. Also used clubs and spears.

2.4 Food storage: Food such as yams and rice are stored in the fields where they're grown.

2.5 Sexual division of production: Men do the heavy farming, women perform most of the cooking, cleaning and child raising as well as some farm work, mostly tending to garden plots. Roasting meat is often done by men, however.

2.6 Land tenure: While the village collectively owns the land, individual families work it.

2.7 Ceramics: None. If they had ceramics, they would be able to store water and grain, which they were unable to do.

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:

2.9 Food taboos: Can't bring blana vine into the village-it's believed to cause impotence in males who eat it due to it's feminine nature.

2.10 Canoes/watercraft? For the ones who lived near lakes and rivers.

3. Anthropometry

3.1 Mean adult height (m and f): Couldn't find, my guess would be 6'2

3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f): Couldn't find

4. Life History, mating, marriage

4.1 Age at menarche (f): Approximately 13

4.2 Age at first birth (m and f): M /F

4.3 Completed family size (m and f): M depends on how many wives he has/F 6-7

4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f): 1-2 years

4.5 Age first marriage (m and f): M/F- as soon as could be arranged, around 11 for females, generally not younger than 16 for males. In 1939 a law passed making the legal age of marriage 14, which was changed later to 18. My guess as to why early marriages for girls were the norm was for the brideprice, which could then in turn be used as a dowry for a son.

4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce: Divorce was very uncommon, it was socially acceptable, however.

4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously: Polygyny was a common practice, but expensive.

4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?: significant dowry, also includes covering a large portion of the female initiation ceremony, unless the bride's family wanted to show off their wealth by paying for it themselves.

4.9 Inheritance patterns: patrilineal. The wife only has a claim to the land while her husband is alive.

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict: Mothers teach their daughters, and fathers teach their sons.

4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals: any homosexual tendencies are kept secret as homosexuality viewed as a sin

4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy): "Clans are composed of exogamous lineages" when marriages do occur within the clan, they are rules that prevent families already linked together from having members marry each other.

4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these "other fathers" recognized? Paternity is not partible, "without marriage a man has no legitimate offspring and is considered as nothing."

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)? No

4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape extremely low, around 2.3 per 100,00 people

4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin) anyone outside the family as long as the two families aren't already connected by marriage.

4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms? No

4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring couldn't find any

4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children? The father's family, although overall, the community is responsible, so if both parents died, the community would take care of them

4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females

4.22 Evidence for *couvades* Couldn't find

4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older)

4.24 Kin avoidance and respect?

4.24 Joking relationships? Didn't see anything on this.

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

4.26 Incest avoidance rules: Families already linked by marriage are not allowed to have members marry each other.

4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony? Yes

4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name? Having a ritual/coming of age ceremony performed for you can do this.

4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?) I didn't see anything concerning this. Most likely it wasn't an issue unless the village was quite small, where it would be more beneficial to marry outside the community.

4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)? Marriages appear to be arranged. Insofar as I can tell, the women in the family decide, or at least pick suitable candidates. See 9 for more details.

4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who:

Warfare/homicide

4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare: relatively low-under 9%, conflicts not protracted. Much higher more recently due to civil war

4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death: outgroup territorial skirmishes/ingroup

4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing:

4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations): traded with other groups, less trade now, due to growing cashcrops.

4.18 Cannibalism? None

5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size: 600 for smaller villages, 1100 for larger ones

5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality): agrarian society, not nomadic. They weren't very socially mobile either.

5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes): "The most important corporate group is the clan (gba) which is a residential patrilineal group comprising a quarter or ward (kplen) of a village" Generally, the eldest male is the head of the lineage.

5.4 Post marital residence: The grooms home

5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense):

5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex):

5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships: Didn't see anything on this.

5.8 Village and house organization:

5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses): There are huts built specifically for girls undergoing the female initiation ceremony, during which time, "they do not touch the thatch of any dwelling where males sleep."

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere? Slept on the ground.

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

5.12 Trade: Traded crops such as cotton, and indigo plants, with neighboring groups, replaced for the most part with growing cash crops for export.

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies? Traditionally hierarchical/caste based-farmers and nobles, specialized professionals and slaves, until the colonists arrived and banned slavery. Slavery is still technically around, however. Possibly not anymore due to the relatively recent diaspora around 2002.

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

6.0 *Time allocation to RCR*: Varies, the female initiation ritual takes three weeks to complete.

6.1 *Specialization (shamans and medicine)*: The Circumcision Queen is the female equivalent to a shaman, who leads the female initiation. Some rituals have special meals to be eaten, not quite medicine, but close. Shamans use various roots, and herbs to make medicines.

6.2 *Stimulants*: Cocoa, coffee

6.3 *Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal)*: Female initiation, the majority expense is paid for by her fiancée, unless the family wants to show off its wealth. Takes place over three weeks, and includes dancing and festivities

6.4 *Other rituals*: There are cleansing rituals for a father if his daughter comes back to his house to give birth, otherwise it's believed his hunting prowess is spoiled.

6.5 *Myths (Creation)*:

6.6 *Cultural material (art, music, games)*: Their art consisted of masks, jewelry and other carvings. Music wise, they have a number of instruments, drums being prominent, as well as kora (somewhere between a harp and a lute). For games, I didn't find anything specific like dice, (which they most likely had) but they did have festivities and dancing, as well as oral stories for entertainment.

6.7 *Sex differences in RCR*: Clitoridectomy

6.8 *Missionary effect*: conversion to Islam (circa 13th CE) and later some Christianity, initially believed in animalism. Also, colonists outlawed slavery.

6.9 *RCR revival*: none

6.10 *Death and afterlife beliefs*: traditional-the soul/spirit is immortal, but can be lost partially or entirely by being immoral or not performing rituals. There was believed to be a kingdom of the dead, but the soul could also come back by reentering a human.

6.11 *Taboo of naming dead people?* No

6.12 *Is there teknonymy?* No

6.13 *Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.)* Traditionally venerated ancestors, and still do to some extent, but mostly Islamic today, and some Christians.

7. Adornment

7.1 *Body paint*: None

7.2 *Piercings*: ears, nose, lip

7.3 *Haircut*: I couldn't find anything about haircuts.

7.4 *Scarification*: I didn't find anything about scarification.

7.5 *Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.)*: beads were worn,

7.6 *Ceremonial/Ritual adornment*: Female initiation-gold/gold covered objects, the more the better. Hair ornaments, earrings necklaces, bracelets, decorated hats and belts.

7.7 *Sex differences in adornment*: Women were more fancily adorned.

7.8 *Missionary effect*: lack of/less gold, perhaps more a side effect of being colonized

7.9 *Cultural revival in adornment*: Whereas adornment used to consist of lots of gold, these days, wood, glass and plastic are used as materials as they are actually affordable.

8. Kinship systems

8.1 *Sibling classification system*:

8.2 *Sororate, levirate*: Not levirate.

8.3 *Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.)*: Nunne- women who are married out of the family, Wane-women who are married into the family.

9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):

"The act of marriage conveys two definite privileges to the out-going daughter who gains higher status. After marriage she has increased moral power over her natal group, being revered for the benefit which her marriage produced, i.e. the possibility of using her bridewealth to procure a wife for a man of the group. In her new position her natal group defers to her, when she chooses to intervene in a matter concerning the group and beseeches them to act in a certain way, her wishes are respected. Should her wishes not be respected, she also has the power to curse. Cursing, in this sense, is an oral invocation of evil or injury upon another person which is effective by inherent powers or an appeal to some spiritual power such as a mask. Nunne are held to have inherent powers ('automatically' conferred by out-marriage) to curse the members of their natal group, and such cursing is greatly feared for it can deny prosperity or success to the group. Wane, as outsiders in their husbands' groups, do not have the abilities of beseeching and cursing, what power they do have is dependent on their mobilizing the powers-physical, moral or spiritual-of their natal group or the power of cursing provided by the Kle [essentially female spiritual power]."

Numbered references

1. Ravenhill, Philip L. *The Social Organization of the Wan: A Patrilineal People of Ivory Coast*. 1976. 116-52. Print.
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3. Nikitina, Tatiana. "The Wan Project." *The Wan Project*. Web. <<http://www.projectwan.org/>>.