

BANIWA-CURRIPACO-WAKUENAICEDI - P. I. B.
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ETHNONYMS. Baniwa, Curripaco, Wakuenai.

ORIENTATION. Identification. The name "Baniwa" is a lingua geral (the old trade language of Jesuit missionaries spoken throughout the Northwest Amazon) term used since early colonial times to refer to the Arawak-speakers of the Içana River and its tributaries, Northwest Amazon, Brazil. "Curripaco" refers to one of five dialect-groups (which include the Baniwa of Brazil) inhabiting the upper Içana and Guainía rivers of Brazil, Venezuela and Colombia. Wakuenai, "People of Our Language," is an ethnonym used for all five dialect-groups inhabiting the upper Guainía of Venezuela. To simplify this discussion, the term Wakuenai will be used throughout. While each of these names is used regionally, the Wakuenai as often refer to themselves by phratric names (Hohodene, "Partridge Children," Oalipere dakenai, "Descendants of the Pleiades," Dzauinai, "Jaguar People.").

Location. Since aboriginal times, the Wakuenai have inhabited the Northwest Amazon region, between approximately 0°- 3° north latitude and 66°50' - 69°50' west longitude, on the present-day frontier borders of Brazil (Estado de Amazonas), Venezuela (Território Federal Amazonas), and Colombia (Comissariás del Guainía/Vaupés). In these three countries, their communities are distributed along the Içana River and its tributaries, the Upper Rio Negro-Guainía and its tributaries, the lower Xié and Uaupés, Inirida, Cassiquiare and middle Orinoco rivers.

Linguistic Affiliation. The Wakuenai belong to the northern Maipure family and speak five mutually intelligible dialects named in accordance with the linguistic forms of affirmation or negation, or with the names of descent units to which their speakers belong: 1) ãja-kûrri (=Curripaco), 2) ôjo-kârro, 3) ãje-kjênim, 4) kûrri-kârro, 5) ôjo-nâme. Originally, dialects were probably associated with distinct territories; today, although dialects may predominate in a given region, speakers of all five dialects are commonly found together. Lingua geral has completely replaced the Arawak language in a number of communities.

Demography. In 1985, the Wakuenai population in Brazil and Venezuela was calculated at 5,373 people living in 133 communities; in Colombia, their population is estimated to be about 400. There are also uncounted numbers living in or near urban centers (Manaus, Puerto Ayacucho). No figures are available for early post-contact times. History

and Cultural Relations. Linguistic, archaeological, and mythological evidence suggest that northern Maipure speakers occupied the Upper Rio Negro/Upper Orinoco valley from at least 3,500 B.P. where they encountered forest-dwelling and nomadic Maku peoples. By the time of first European contact in the mid-16th Century, this region was inhabited by a diversity of northern Maipure-speaking groups. From mid-18th Century sources, it can be determined that to the north and northwest of the Wakuenai were the Piapoco, Guaypunaves, Warekena, Baniya, and Pui-nave; to the northeast and east were Baré, Warekena, and Yavitero; to the southeast were Baré, Maipure, and Manao; to the south and southwest were Tariana, other Arawakan, and Tukanoan-speaking peoples; and to the west were Tukanoans and probably Cariban-speaking peoples. Wakuenai oral histories of their relations with other Arawak and Tukanoan peoples indicate **shifting patterns** of war-making and alliance. Fairly continuous contact with Europeans dates from mid-18th Century, when the Portuguese and Spanish slave trade penetrated the Upper Rio Negro/Orinoco, resulting in the intensification of intertribal warfare and severe depopulation of numerous tribes. Despite their losses, the Wakuenai appear to have remained relatively numerous and may have absorbed renegades of the slave-wars from other tribes. Following the abolition of Indian slavery in 1755, numerous Wakuenai were settled in colonial villages of the Rio Negro, where they came to form part of the caboclo (mestizo) population. Diseases and unstable conditions led many at the end of the 18th Century to return to their homelands and re-organize their society. In the early 19th Century, Brazilian and Venezuelan traders began working among the Wakuenai and, often in alliance with the frontier military, exploited Indian labor. Their abuses grew to be extreme by the 1850s, yet growing Indian resistance culminated in a series of millenarian movements in 1857-8, led by the Wakuenai prophet Kamiko whose influence lasted for nearly forty years and extended to various tribes of the region. By the 1870s, the rubber boom reached the Upper Rio Negro, intensifying exploitation of Wakuenai labor by white patrons. Coupled with abuses by frontier military in the beginning of this century, and epidemic diseases, the Wakuenai lived under a virtual reign of terror. In the 1940s, Protestant evangelism, introduced by the North American New Tribes Mission, stimulated a new wave of millenarian movements among the Wakuenai of Venezuela, Colombia, and Brazil. With the later installation of

Catholic missions on the Içana, religious allegiances became seriously divided. Recently, encroachments by gold-panners and mining companies, as well as military projects to control the frontiers, have divided the Wakuenaí even more, although these pressures have stimulated new forms of political organization to defend their land, resources, and culture.

SETTLEMENTS. Most villages are built near the banks of major rivers and streams; a few are found at the headwaters of small streams, on the banks of lakes and ponds. Seasonally-occupied shelters are often built near garden lands or fishing-lakes. On several occasions in the past, temporary refuge settlements were built in the forest to escape outside pressures or epidemics. But the dominant orientation of settlement patterns and ecology continues to be riverine. Settlements are widely dispersed, distant from one another several hours by canoe or trail. There are more than 150 villages in all (the majority in Brazil) with populations ranging from 10 to over 150 but averaging 30-40 people. Larger villages have schools, chapels, and community houses (or "Conference Houses" among evangelists) and frequently serve as religious, social, and educational centers for smaller villages. Traditionally, settlements consisted of one or more multi-family longhouses (or roundhouses on the Guainía), divided into separate family compartments with the central space used for work or ritual purposes. Longhouses were oblong/rectangular constructions (e.g.: 20 m. long x 17 m. wide x 7 m. high) with front and back doors, no windows, and pitched roof of thatch, poles and reeds. The effects of contact, and most especially missionary pressures over the last 30 years, have done away with all longhouse constructions and given rise to settlements consisting of clusters of single-family houses. Houses are generally two-room constructions made of wattle-and-daub (variations: pole and thatch, bark walls) with thatch roof, organized in linear fashion or distributed around a rectangular plaza, facing the river, and with a network of trails behind the village leading to gardens and the forest. Mission centers, government posts, and military airstrips have served as attraction poles, producing larger settlements with a more distinctly caboclo pattern of housing.

ECONOMY. Subsistence and Commercial Activities. The two basic subsistence activities of the Wakuenaí are fishing and agriculture, which are of complementary and equal economic and cultural importance. These are supplemented by seasonal hunting and gathering of wild forest products. The primary cultigen is ma-

nioc, of which up to 50 varieties are known, cultivated on a swidden basis. Collective fishing expeditions are the predominant activity during the dry, summer months. Fishing techniques include a variety of traps and nets, hook and line, bow and arrow, machete and spear, barbasco poison. Both fishing and agricultural cycles are synchronized with a variety of natural indicators and mythical calendars, and linked to a series of important ritual activities. Hunting techniques still include blowguns and bow and arrow in certain areas but more commonly the shotgun is used. Traditionally, phratries were the most important social unit controlling resources within given territories. Given variations in environmental resources, fishing or agriculture may be more productive giving rise to cooperative arrangements of resource sharing within and among phratries. Extractivist and commercial activities have probably contributed the most to changing subsistence patterns. Since early contact times, the Wakuenai have participated in a series of extractivist activities: piacaba fibre, rubber, chicle, sorva, castanha, and most recently, minerals (gold). As these resources are found in different areas, seasonal labor migration has developed into a common pattern. Commercial activities have included production of artwork (baskets, manioc-graters, hammocks, feather ornaments) and manioc for sale to merchants, missions, and the government. As the demand for these products has increased, they have become nearly permanent occupations in many areas. Both extractivism and commercial production have thus created new productive sectors in Wakuenai economy which seriously interfere with traditional subsistence activities. Protestant evangelism has also contributed to change by undermining traditional exchange rituals and by introducing a different set of religious festivals with its own system of intervillage production. On the other hand, communities have adopted strategies to regain economic self-sufficiency: utilizing traditional agronomic practices to increase manioc production to benefit the community; through government assistance programs; or cooperatives. Industrial Arts. Aboriginal crafts included ceramics, weaving, manufacture of manioc-graters, blowguns and poison darts. Outside of manioc-graters and weaving, other industrial arts have declined considerably since the beginning of this century, or persist mainly where products are sold on the market. Trade. Archaeological and historical evidence suggest that the entire Upper Rio Negro basin was connected to other areas by an immense network

of riverine and overland trails used by both Arawak and non-Arawak peoples for trade, and that specialization existed in the production of trade items. Wakuenai manioc-graters, and quartzstone used in their manufacture and found on the Içana, were important trade items in both pre- and post-contact times. Trade with the Europeans was limited in the 18th Century but, by the early 19th Century, had become an integral part of Wakuenai economy.

Division of Labor. In subsistence activities, the division of labor between sexes is one of complementarity and interdependence rather than a rigid distinction between male and female roles. Men are responsible for cutting and burning new gardens; both men and women plant and weed new gardens; women harvest, replant, and process manioc and other plants. In the area of fishing, both men and women fish with hook and line and participate in collective fishing expeditions, but men fish more often, using a greater variety of techniques, while women more often process the catch. Men are responsible for hunting, gathering in the forest, house-building and maintenance, manufacture of weapons, making of canoes, basket-weaving, and cutting of manioc-graters. Women are responsible for preparation and cooking of animals and forest products, some gathering, preparation of adobe for houses, making of ceramics, and setting of stones in manioc-graters. Ritual (including manufacture of ritual objects) and shamanism are predominantly male activities. With the intense commercialization of basketry in the 1970s, women participated more in weaving. Extractivist activities have been almost exclusively done by men.

Land Tenure. Traditionally, phratries collectively controlled defined stretches of riverine territory and their resources. Members of other phratries could freely travel within a given phratry's territory but not systematically exploit its resources without obtaining permission from the local phratry. Failure to do so could result in warfare. Within a phratry's territory, sibs identified specific areas for use as agricultural lands and as sacred lands (sites of ancestral emergence/houses of souls of the recently-deceased) where no-one was permitted to hunt. Forced removal and exile, migrations, and other socio-historical circumstances have weakened land-holding principles resulting in a mixing of different phratries within a given territory. Phratric exogamy and marital exchange practices have also, over time, produced enclaves of affinal groups within a phratry's territory. Until the present, no major influx of non-indigenous colonists

has forced Wakuenai off their lands. In Colombia, in 1986, the national government created 5 separate reserves for the Wakuenai (but which include other indigenous peoples) on the frontier. In Venezuela, 10 of the 30 total Wakuenai communities actually have collective land ownership titles issued by the National Agrarian Institute. In Brazil, in 1989, the federal government created five separate reserves (4 "indigenous colonies," 1 "indigenous area"), surrounded by national forests, for the permanent possession and use of the Wakuenai.

KINSHIP. Kin Groups and Descent. Wakuenai society is divided into 5 or 6 exogamous phratries, each consisting of 4 or 5 patrilineal sibs ranked according to the order of emergence of mythical ancestral brother-spirits. In the past, sibs were categorized according to a system of ritual roles as chiefs, shamans, warriors, dancers, and servants; today, these roles are virtually non-existent. Phratries are generally named after the highest-ranked sib of the group; in one case, a group of 5 phratries has united into a larger, un-named unit of organization. On rare historical occasions, phratries have acted as corporate, decision-making groups but more important today is their strong sense of identity based on common mythical emergence sites and territories, an ideology of descent from first or historical ancestors, and ceremonial property (sacred flutes, chants, name-sets). The core of local communities is the male sibling group and, as on the phratric and sib level, male sibling ties form the basis of a system of hierarchical rank according to relative age; the meaning of hierarchical rank, however, is subject to local variations in practice. Traditionally, the agnatic sibling group of a community constituted the most important level of decision-making. **Kinship Terminology.** Terminological uses in general follow the Dravidian system.

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY. Marriage. Wakuenai marriage rules prescribe phratric exogamy and a preference is expressed for marriage with patrilateral cross-cousins (although either cross-cousin category is acceptable). Direct sister-exchange is often practiced between preferred affinal lineages and sibs, and in some cases, preference is expressed for marriages between people from equivalently-ranked sibs of different phratries. Marriages are usually monogamous and arranged by the parents of the bride and bridegroom. Patrivirilocality is the dominant residence pattern; however, the rule of brideservice gives rise to temporary, and sometimes permanent, uxorilocality. Communities thus often include affinal relatives and can evolve into multisib/-phratric communities or,

in cases of two-long-standing exchange-partners, moieties. Evangelical missionary intolerance has greatly undermined residence patterns and cross-cousin marriage, thus contributing to permanent uxori-locality. Husband-wife bonds are usually stable through a lifetime but, in cases of infidelity or maltreatment, the affected party simply leaves his/her spouse. Domestic Unit. Households generally consist of nuclear families, although elderly parents may reside with one of their married children. Even in the multi-family longhouses of the past, nuclear families were distinct spatial, social, and economic units. Nevertheless, villages today often appear as patrilocal extended families of several generations, with important interconnections among individual households. Inheritance. The Wakuenai do not have a system of private property in lands or resources regulated by transmission. Phratry members' unlimited access to lands and resources is best understood as collective ownership. Cultivated gardens and houses are, nevertheless, considered private spaces to which access is limited to nuclear families and which, like other products of labor, belong to their individual owners. Traditionally, houses were abandoned after the death of their owners and garden lands could later be used by other phratry members. An individual's few possessions are either buried with the deceased, or divided among his/her children. Socialization. Past the age of weaning (3 years), children gradually begin to learn their roles - girls help their mothers in gardens and domestic chores, boys often form play-packs engaging in male pursuits such as hunting and fishing. Parents or grandparents discipline children by scolding or admonishing. The most intensive instruction is accomplished in initiation rites (8-10 years old for boys; first menstruation for girls), when children are taught the laws of the ancestors on correct social living (generosity, avoidance of violence and revenge), receive instruction in sacred myths and rituals, and learn a variety of skills useful to later adult life. Through ritual fasting and abstinence, initiates learn to control physical needs demonstrating they are fully cultural beings capable of controlling their own destinies. Missionary intolerance of these rituals has greatly undermined their performance and consequently the traditional basis of authority over children. Mission schools and cult activities have in many cases completely substituted the socializing function of initiation rites.

SOCIOPOLITICAL ORGANIZATION. Social Organization. Traditional social organization is based on a series of structural processes and distinctions which set in motion the ongoing dynamics of

social life. Important among these are distinctions between kinsmen and affinal, or "other" groups regulating marriage, political, and ritual relations; the hierarchical system of rank based on relative age, regulating social and economic relations and balanced by reciprocity and exchange; the complementary opposition of male/female roles necessary for social reproduction and subsistence activities; and the system of beliefs and practices related to the ancestors, central to life-cycle rites and the integration of society, as well as having been central to historical millenarian movements. The imposition of international boundaries through Wakuenai territory has undermined traditional alliances and led to greater interethnic marriages with other Indian societies in each of the three countries. Evangelical missionaries have created divisions by prohibiting marriages to non-evangelicals, campaigning against ritual symbols, social practices, and traditional leadership, and encouraging urban migration. The fragmentation of Wakuenai lands into distinct reserves in Brazil, most of them open to development, may also have serious consequences for future social integration.

Political Organization. Oral histories indicate the existence of supreme war leaders in pre-contact times, but warfare and raiding were abandoned by most groups by the late 19th Century. The system of hierarchical rank among sibs probably never served as a model of institutional political power, and decision-making in the past, as now, was based on general consensus and mutual assent of village elders and leaders. Leadership is exercised often by the eldest brother of the local group of agnatic siblings, yet there are as many exceptions to this, depending on local preferences and individual aspirations, as to leave unclear whether there is a rule for succession. In their exercise of authority, leaders vary a great deal, some encouraging community labor, others allowing individual families to work independently. Yet leaders must receive community consent in any decision they take, are expected to act as intermediaries in internal matters, and as interlocutors in relations with outsiders. Besides this, they organize labor, preside over meetings and religious activities, distribute community production, and enforce community standards. Should a leader not fulfill these obligations, community elders decide by consensus on his replacement. In evangelical communities, the structure of religious authority is superimposed on the traditional hierarchy of elders and may thus weaken leaders' authority. In Catholic communities, young mission-trained catechists often conflict with the authority of leaders and elders. Recently, associations of Wakuenai leaders in Brazil have formed to defend land and resource rights.

Social Control. Community meetings, elders' counsel, shamans' cures, and ostracism have served as important forms of social control. In cases of serious crimes, shamans from other tribes are sought for retribution. Witchcraft continues to be an important force despite missionary intervention. **Conflict.** The most serious conflicts in recent years have been due to the divisions produced by radical practices and pressures of missionaries in their destruction of traditional cultural values and forms; pressures from outside economic interests; and the contradictions between new materialist and individualist values and wealth differences, and traditional communitarian laws and values. In many cases, these conflicts have led to family and community migration, ostracism of leaders, and an increase in sorcery accusations.

RELIGION AND EXPRESSIVE CULTURE. Religious Beliefs. Traditional religious beliefs centered on ancestral spirits and the laws of the ancestors; the creative and generative relations among humans, animals, and the spirit-world; a profound faith in the abilities of shamans and ritual specialists to mediate between humans and the deities, in exceptional cases incorporating the powers of the highest deities; and a cosmic history remembered in sacred myths, which recounts the heroic deeds of the deities, and the creation of the world through various cataclysmic destructions and renewals. These beliefs have served as the basis for millenarian movements since the mid-19th Century. Christian missionaries have greatly modified these beliefs, in many cases undermining them altogether, in others superimposing Christian on pre-existing beliefs (e.g., millenarianism), reinforcing the latter rather than completely destroying them. **Practitioners.** Traditionally, shamans were key figures in Wakuenai culture. There is a hierarchy of shamans differentiated by levels of knowledge and capacities, from the most powerful 'seers', prophetic and sometimes messianic figures, to lesser shamans able to perform limited kinds of cures. There is also a class of specialists, 'spell-owners,' similarly differentiated by knowledge, whose function is to perform spells and chants, from the most elaborate set of chants and spell-blowing at rites of passage, to the simplest curing spell. A third specialization is the ritual dance-leader who leads ceremonial dances and songs in the annual cycle of festivals. The elders are known for their knowledge of myths and lore and, as a class, elder men form the core of dance-lines at initiation rites. Among Catholics, the catechists serve as intermediaries between the missions and communities, while among protestants, pastors, deacons, and elders proselytize, preach the gospel, lead the community in prayer, and organize the cycle of religious meetings and services.

Supernaturals. The most important deities of Wakuenai religion are: a Transformer/Creator/Trickster/Seer-shaman, who dwells in the highest level of the cosmos, about whom there is an elaborate mythology organized in several cycles; the Creator's son, an extraordinary human-animal-spirit being whose body consists of all material things, who teaches humanity sacred knowledge, whose song opens the world to its present form; the patron of shamans; the owner of the earth, who begins the cultivation of gardens; the Anaconda Lord of Earthly Waters; and a legion of lesser water, earth, and air spirits who both help and harm humanity. The cosmos consists of approximately 10 tiers of heaven, earth, and below-the-earth each inhabited by a different class of spirits.

Ceremonies. The traditional ceremonial cycle consisted of a series of festivals of exchange, named in accordance with the principal dance-instrument used and held whenever there was a surplus of wild fruits, fish, or game, generally among affinal groups. The most important of these were the Initiation Rituals, held in the early wet season, when sacred flutes and trumpets were played. Another, the Surubi (fish) festival used flutes made to resemble these fish and were distinctive to the Wakuenai. Mission-introduced festivals have largely replaced the traditional cycle but, in certain areas, their revitalization is a powerful force in affirming ethnic identity and protesting domination by outsiders, as were the millenarian dances of the past century.

Arts. Cerimonial singing, ritual chanting, the playing of ritual instruments, myth-telling, ornaments and body-painting, and - in prehistoric times - petroglyphs were among the important art forms.

Medicine. Traditional medicine is based on the use of herbal remedies, curing rituals by shamans and spell-owners, and dietary restrictions. In general, illness is seen as a process of partial disintegration of the soul and curing as its restoration. Evangelical missionaries have enforced, not entirely successfully, the exclusive use of Western medicines, while among Catholics, traditional medicine has developed in conjunction with the introduction of Western medicine.

Death and Afterlife. Serious illness and death are believed to be the result of sorcery, malevolent spirits, or the failure to observe ritual restrictions. At death, the two parts of a person's soul separate, the collective animal-shaped soul becoming integrated to sib ancestral houses of animal souls, while the individual, human body-shaped soul, after passage through a dark netherworld of shades, is purified by fire and then journeys to the celestial paradise of the Creator where it is reunited with its collective ancestral soul.

A similar process of polarization of souls is believed to occur with animal and bird species. Traditionally, funeral rites and secondary burial were important practices.

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