



DENI DEMARCATION 2003

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BRIEFING

Facts and Figures on the Deni indigenous people

All data from the Report of Identification and Delimitation of Deni Indigenous Lands by FUNAI anthropologist Rodrigo Padua Rodrigues Chaves - August 2000

Linguistic family: Arawa

Total population: 736 people (2001 updated census), distributed through 116 residences in 8 villages on the Cuniuá and Xeruã rivers. In 1953, the Deni population was estimated at 1,000 people.

Other indigenous populations of the Purus and Juruá River Basins that belong to the same linguistic family are Paumari, Jamamandi, Banawa-Yafi, Jarawara, Kulina e Suruwaha. The Hi-Miraman, who also live in this area, are uncontacted, so their linguistic group is unknown to us.

Area to be demarcated: 1,530,000 hectares

Location: Southeast of Amazonas State, near the municipalities of Tapauá and Itamarati. There are no rivers connecting the Cuniuá and Xeruã villages and the distance between the Xeruã and Cuniuá Rivers is 150km in a straight line, i.e. as the crow flies.

Diet: fish and game such as tapirs and wild pigs; domestic chickens and ducks; small planted areas of manioc, potato, cará (a type of root), banana and papaya; gathering of wild fruits such as açai and patauá (palm fruits).

Handicrafts: Handicraft making is not an economic activity; but the Deni are skilled at making necklaces, hammocks, baskets, bracelets, rings, wooden sculptures, toys, arrows and bows, blowguns and other items for their own use and for limited trading.

Economics: Oil extracted from the copaíba tree is the main product traded by the Deni. The “regatão” (the boat-man who sells salt, fuel and other imported products to the Deni) pays R\$ 1.50 per liter of copaíba oil while in Manaus it can sell for up to R\$ 8.00. Copaíba oil is used by the cosmetic, pharmaceutical and paint industries.

Ethno pharmacology: The Deni collect many plant and vine species; they use poisons to fish and hunt and latex to relieve aches and diseases. According to FUNAI anthropologist Rodrigo de Padua Rodrigues Chaves, “the collection and preparation of these plants follows strict procedures so as to bring positive results to the person who uses them. The zupinehe (shaman) is the one who best knows these plants, but many other Deni also know how to use them”. The use of rapé, a mild hallucinogenic made of roasted tobacco leaves and ashes of pupui tree bark, is commonly used during day and night by men and women.

Chronology of contact and relationship with colonization fronts:

1940-50: Deni traded animal skins such as jaguars for rifles and ammunition with colonizers

1950: Deni engaged in rubber tapping as laborers



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1960-70: sorva extraction (sorva is a latex extracted from trees that until the 80's was used for producing chewing gum) and logging around their lands

1980 to date: copaíba oil extraction and commercial logging for the local patrons and regatoes

1995: The Malaysian logging giant WTK purchase lands that overlapped with the Deni traditional territory in the Brazilian Amazon. WTK's original idea was to use the property to exploit timber.

Main current threats to the Deni Lands:

- Fishing boats from Cruzeiro do Sul (in Acre state), Manaus, Carauari and Eirunepé (in Amazonas state) at the mouth of the Xeruã River – at the confluence of the Juruá River. Fishing boats can carry up to 70 tons of fish, and reduce stock levels to the point where the Deni's subsistence fishing is threatened.
- The hunting of wild game, including some endangered species such as manatees, pirarucus and turtles, to be served as food in urban centers such as Manaus and Belém.
- Illegal logging of commercial valuable species such as andiroba, cedar, jacareúba, louro and sumaúma.