

A little description of the Cycle and Ritual of Kwarup. The Ritual of Kwarup is considered the most important ritual of the Upper Xingú culture. This culture is composed of the tribes Kamaiurá, Aweti, Waurá, Yawalapiti, Mehinako, Karib, Kuikuro, Kalapalo e Nahukwa-Matipu. Most of them inhabit this place long ago having been contacted by white man in 1884. These fotos show a Ritual of Kwarup registered in 1975 in Kamaiurá tribe.

To understand the meaning of this ritual, we have to know a little about the mythology of the Upper Xingu culture. The action takes place in Murená, considered the center of the world by the Kamaiurá tribe. Mavutsini(n) is a mythical being, anthropomorphic, which has existed since the early beginnings. When starting the myth, Mavutsini(n) goes in search of a rope to make a bow. The owner of this rope was Yayat, a jaguar, potentially dangerous for him, although his nephew. When they meet, Mavutsini(n) was trying to steal the rope, and Yayat tries to kill him. But in return receives a proposal of marriage with the daughters of Mavutsini(n). They were cross-cousins of Yayat, whose marriage is preferred in the Upper Xingu culture. By offering his daughters, Mavutsini(n) reverses the situation transforming antagonism into alliance.

Aware of the danger of this marriage, the daughters of Mavutsini(n) refuse to marry the jaguar. Mavutsini(n) decides to create two new daughters: he cuts two trunks of the wood Kwarup, rises and sings to them till they become alive. Then, he marry these two new daughters to the jaguar. The youngest daughter gives birth to Kwat and Yaí (the Sun and the Moon). And the oldest daughter gives birth to the twins, the cultural heroes of the Upper Xingu tribe. They are responsible for the zoologic and geographic organization of the Upper Xingu. While Mavutsini(n) is responsible for the social structure of this culture.

Mavutsini(n) continued making people from trunks, till a man had sex with a woman giving birth to a child. From there on, Mavutsini(n) has interrupted this procedure. But left the tradition of the Ritual of Kwarup, made for those who died and are part of the family of the head of the tribe. The aim of this ritual is to remember the person who died and to continue the cycle of life, presenting at the end of this celebration the girls with age appropriated to get married.

The Cycle of Kwarup are the commemorations that are done between two Rituals of Kwarup. After the burial of the dead, with status of captain, it is forbidden to say his name. Three days after the burial, the apenap is built, which is a low fence of trunks upon the sepulture. After this, the maraká'ip are called to play and sing, and they are paid with food. At this moment begins the Cycle of Kwarup that can last from six months to one year and half. During this period, the Dance of Kwarup and the Huka-huka fight training are done every afternoon, and the Flute Urua Dance is performed during the whole day.

During the dry season, the head joins together with other chiefs and decide a date for the fishery. At this point begins the preparations for the Ritual of Kwarup. The apenap is destroyed to prepare the site for the Ritual of Kwarup. After they go inside the forest, where the logs for the kwarup are cut and hidden from women. Each dead man from the chief's Family will have a trunk transformed in a kwarup. Meanwhile in the tribe, the Dance of Flute Urua is performed during the whole day as well as the Dance of Kwarup in the late afternoon.

To provide food to the invited tribes, the men go fishing. They go far away from the tribe and sleep three days in hammocks inside the forest. For fishing they make a network of bark woven with vines. Before throwing the nets into the water, they pray to it using severe – a magic formula to attract the fish. At the end of the day, they throw the net in the river, and they place heavy sticks on the bottom and bamboos at the top of the net, in order to put it in

the vertical position. At night time, they do a ritual against the bites of alligator and stingray. Next day, they remove the prayer bowl early in the morning. They push it during the whole day until reaching a branch of dry river. Before start killing the fish, the shaman – spiritual leader – sinks the timbó root into the water. It makes the fish dizzy who ascends to the surface and is killed with the harpoon. The fish is smoked in the forest before be taken to the village.

As the fishery has been successful, the pareat – messengers – invite the tribes Waurá, Yalapiti, Kalapalo and Kuikuro. Meanwhile in the tribe they keep dancing the Flute Urua Dance and Dance of Kwarup. Two or three days after the pareat returns, they dig a hole for each kwarup where the trunk is placed, which is painted as a totem representing the dead to be honored. They call the maraka'ip that play and sing and are paid with food and cotton thread. At the end of the painting, they dance the Dance of Kwarup exceptionally in the morning as the maraka'ip sing and play. On this day of the kwarup painting, women are forbidden to leave home. So the boys and men have to cook.

After the painting, they put the kwarup in the center of the tribe where it was the apenap. The women are called to decorate the kwarups. Throughout the whole night, the women cry in a ritualistic way, to prevent the dead to be reborn.

When the invited tribes arrived, the pareat received them offering food and a place to sleep. The day after the painting, the tribes enter into the tribe, where they stay separate, and the chief of each one sits on a stool called apikawayat. Then the Ho-at Dance is performed by the invited tribes and after by the Kamiurá tribe. After they call for the Huka-huka fight competition between the tribes. After they dance the Flute Urua Dance. Follows the introduction of the girl, that was in reclusion, as a woman and as a future mother representing the continuation of the cycle of life.

In the end, the kwarup trunks are thrown in the lake near the tribe, and the tribes Exchange goods before returning home. The next day, a new Cycle of Kwarup begins.