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Aweti (Brazil) - Language Contexts

SEBASTIAN DRUDE

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Awetí (Brazil) – Language Contexts

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Language Name:	Awetí
Dialects:	None
Classification:	Tupian, Mawetí-Guaraní branch
ISO 639-3 Code:	awe
Glottolog Code:	awet1244
Population:	approximately 225
Location:	12°20' S, 53°22' W Upper Xingu, Mato Grosso, Brazil
Vitality rating:	Endangered / Vigorous (EGIDS 6a)

Summary

After a catastrophic reduction to only 23 individuals in 1953, today about 225 Awetí (in Awetí: Awytyza) live in now 5 villages the Xingu park in Brazil, where 10 ethnic groups speaking 6 languages live together for centuries. The Awetí speak a Tupian language closely related to the Tupí-Guaraní branch; many also know Kamayurá and increasingly Portuguese, as contact with the Bra-zilian society is growing more intense. Awetí has no dialects but genderlects, not clearly relatable to different adstrata. Awetí has been documented in the DOBES programme and some descriptive work has been published in the past decades.

Resumo

Após uma redução catastrófica para apenas 23 indivíduos em 1953, hoje cerca de 225 Awetí (em Awetí: Awɨtyza) vivem em 5 aldeias no parque do Xingu no Brasil, onde 10 grupos étnicos, falando 6 idiomas, vivem juntos há séculos. Os Awetí falam uma língua Tupí, próxima ao ramo Tupí-Guaraní; muitos também conhecem o Kamayurá e cada vez mais o Português, pois o contato com a sociedade brasileira é cada vez mais intenso. O Awetí não tem dialetos, mas sim generoletos, não claramente relacionados a diferentes adstratos. O Awetí foi documentado no programa DOBES e vários trabalhos descritivos têm sido publicados nas últimas décadas.

1. Introduction: the name Awetí

This paper presents the Awetí language, spoken by a small ethnic group of the same name in the region of the Xingu headwaters in central Brazil. Following this introduction, which also discusses the name, I give an overview of the people (Section 2), the research done so far (Section 3), the genetic affiliation of the language (Section 4), its internal variation (Section 5), and its sociolinguistic situation, including its vitality (Section 6). Inevitably, smaller parts of this text are updated and adapted versions of information I have published earlier (in particular, for Section 5, see Drude 2011a).

The name of the language originates from the ethnonym [aˈwɨti] by which the Awetí are known among neighbouring groups. They call themselves *Awɨtyza* [awɨˈtɨza] (with the Awetí collective suffix *-za*) and their own language *Awɨtyza tiʼingku* [awɨˈtɨza tʃĩˈʔĩŋku] 'language of the Awetí'. In the writings of the early explorers, who were German, the name appears as *Auetö* or similar, with representations of stressed and unstressed [ɨ] inspired by German orthography. The ⟨u⟩ was later substituted by ⟨w⟩ and the ⟨ö⟩ by ⟨i⟩, less frequently by ⟨o⟩, or sometimes even by ⟨e⟩ or ⟨y⟩. Thus, in older and non-Brazilian literature, one finds *Awetö*, *Aueto*, *Aueti*, *Auiti*, rarely also *Auetê* or recently even *Awetý*, etc. (see also Drude & Souza 2004).

Today, the most common designation for the people and their language is *Aweti* or *Awetí*. We usually use an accent on the final ⟨i⟩, to encourage a pronunciation with stress on the last syllable, which is how the name is pronounced in Portuguese, including by the Awetí themselves.[1] This name, or variants of it, is also used as surname when members of the group register for a Brazilian ID or other documents.

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[1] The common Brazilian pronunciation palatalizes the *[t]* in front of the final *[i]*. The ⟨w⟩ can be pronounced as a labiodental fricative or as a bilabial approximant: *[aveˈtʃi]* or *[aβeˈtʃi]*.

Sometimes (notably in Eberhard, Simons & Fennig 2020 and earlier editions) the Awetí are confused with other central Brazilian groups such as the *Arauine* or *Arawiti* (see below, section 5).

2. People, location, history, culture

Currently, there are about 225 Awetí individuals.[2] They live in the north-east of the state of Mato Grosso, Central Brazil, in the protected indigenous land *Parque Indígena do Xingu*. Geographically, the area is in the centre of the region of the headwaters and upper stream of the Xingu river (one of the main southern contributories to the Amazon), including areas that belong to several municipalities. The Awetí villages are located in the north of the municipality of Gaúcha do Norte.

The southern part of the Parque Indígena do Xingu constitutes a distinct cultural area, called the Upper Xingu (more correctly Xingu Headwaters), which is famous for its multilingual setting (Franchetto 2011). Today, there are ten ethnic groups who speak six languages belonging to four different genetic units: the Wauja and Mehinaku speak two major varieties of a language belonging to the Arawak (or Aruak) language family, to which the language of the Yawalapiti also belongs. Today, the Kalapalo, Kuikuro, Matipú, Nahukwá and Naruvotu speak different varieties of one Karib language, centred around the two major varieties, Kuikuro and Kalapalo. Two peoples speak Tupian languages, the Kamayurá and the Awetí. Finally, at the cultural and geographical margin of the area there are the Trumai, speaking a language isolate. We refer to all these collectively as Xinguan.

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[2] A recent figure of 365 Awetí comes from Da Silva Sinha (2018), who visited one of then four Awetí villages in 2015–2016. This number seems to be unrealistically high, though, because an official census by the indigenous health authorities *Sistema de Informação da Atenção à Saúde Indígena* (SIASI) and the *Secretaria Especial de Saúde Indígena* (SESAI) from 2014 counted just 192 members of the group (source: *Instituto Socioambiental*, https://pib.socioambiental.org/pt/Povo:Aweti (accessed 2020-10-17).
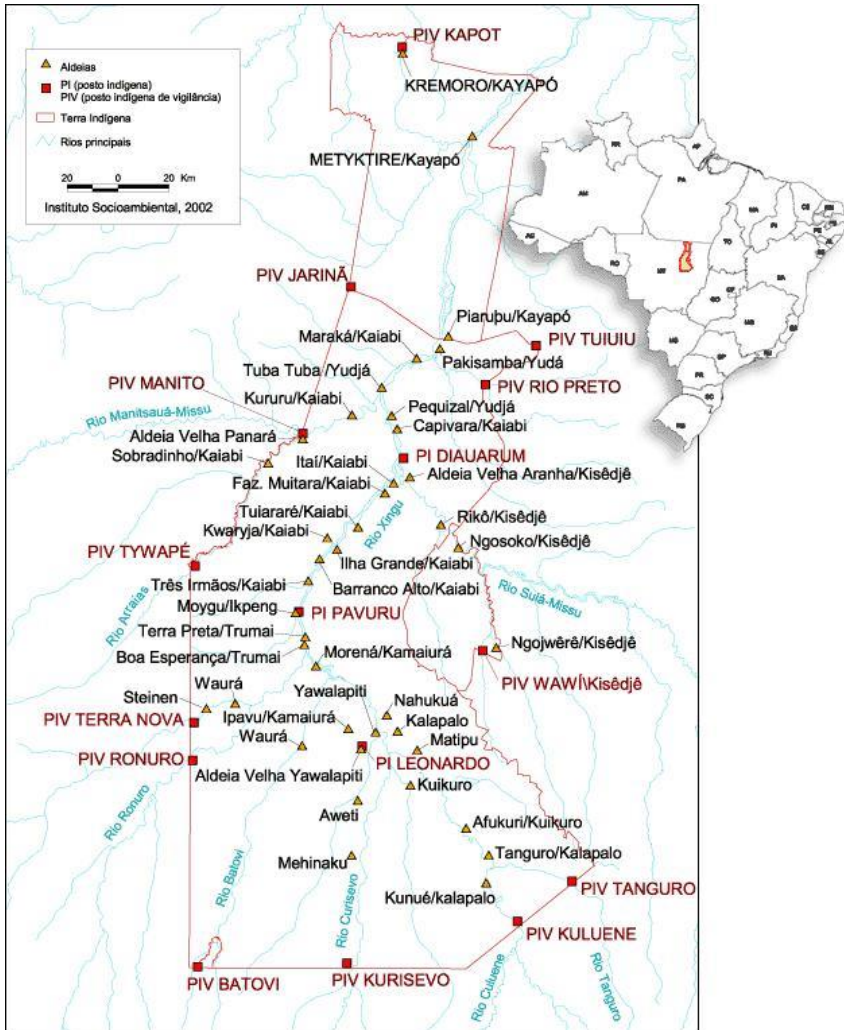
Figure 1: Indigenous villages in the Parque Indígena do Xingu, 2002

In the northern part of the Park there live other groups, several of which were brought there when their traditional lands were taken from them. They interact much less with the southern Xinguans than these among themselves.

The Awetí entered the Upper Xingu well before 1800, possibly even in the 17th century, first as enemies, and were integrated into the Xinguan society around 1800. The Awetí of today are the product of the merger of several groups which were diminished by wars and diseases. Local oral traditions, including from the Awetí themselves, have it that they are predominantly

descendants of a group called *Enumaniá,* and of surviving *Awetí* women after the *Awetí* men had been killed (Souza 2001). We discuss this further below.

The first peaceful contact of the Xinguan peoples with the non-indigenous world happened in 1884, when an expedition lead by the German Karl von den Steinen came to the region. He visited the Awetí when he returned in 1887 (Steinen 1886, 1894). Subsequent German, and later Brazilian, expeditions, and also some sporadic visits of Xinguans to Brazilian settlements, brought several epidemic outbreaks of diseases such as measles and smallpox, which until around 1950-1960 drastically reduced the whole Xinguan indigenous population, down to possibly less than 20% of the numbers in the 1880s (estimates give more than 3,000 Xinguans in 1887, and little more than 600 around 1955).[3] The lowest count of the Awetí had 23 individuals in 1954, after eight Awetí died of measles.

In the 1960s the indigenous reserve was created (much smaller than the area originally occupied) and medical care was established; subsequently, population numbers started to increase again. When I first visited the group in 1998, there was only one Awetí village of about 90 individuals.

Contact with the outside world has been increasing, especially from the 1980s onwards. Western goods (clothes, fishing and cooking utensils) and technology (bicycles, motorboats, radios and television sets, nowadays mobile phones and computers) are increasingly common in the Xinguan villages, and economic activities to earn money are increasingly important.

Still, the Awetí, as the other Xinguan groups, are mainly fishers and gardeners (staples include manioc, corn, sweet potato etc. and some fruits, such as pineapple and *pequi* [Caryocar brasiliense]). Hunting and collecting wild fruit seasonally complete the subsistence to a much smaller degree. They continue to have strong shamanism and a wealth of rituals dedicated to different kinds of supernatural entities and associated illnesses, which maintain the social coherence of the group and the leadership of the 'noble' families of the *morekwat* (chiefs). Several major rituals are inter-tribal and reinforce the peaceful coexistence and material and symbolical interchange between the different groups. Almost all Xinguan groups, including the Awetí, have abandoned a varying number of rituals during times of low population numbers; several, such as the *Kuarup* (famous in Brazil), dedicated to noble deceased, or the sportive competition *Jawari* or the female *Jamurikumã* have been taken up again more recently (Drude & Souza 2004).

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[3] Note that archaeological findings point at a much higher population in the then larger cultural area, in the tens of thousands, for around 1400–1600 (Heckenberger 2001).

Generally, the Upper Xinguan cultural system entails that all members share many cultural elements (myths, rituals, music, a peaceful and restrained ethos, etc.), marriages among different villages and therefore (classificatory) kinship relations among all members of all groups, and an exchange of goods (Coelho 1993; Figueiredo 2010). Traditionally, each Xinguan group specializes in some of the important goods; the Awetí used to produce a specific kind of bow and arrows. Today they are known for their vegetal salt, and their hammocks made of fibre from *buriti* palm (Mauritia flexuosa) leaves (with which they also cover their houses).[4]

Among the Xinguan groups, the Awetí have a closer relationship with the Kamayurá, who speak a language which belongs to the Tupí-Guaraní branch of Tupí and is therefore the closest linguistic 'relative' in the region. Most marriages of Awetí (apart from those with other Awetí, which is the default and ideal) are with Kamayurá.[5]

From 2002 onwards, the Awetí split into now five villages (see the blue marks in Figure 2, next page). The main Awetí village *Tazu'jyt tetam* (now about 100 people) is located at their traditional site between the lower Curisevo and Tuatuari rivers, near their 'port' called *Tsuepelu* (apparently the same as 130 years ago when it was visited by von den Steinen in 1887). The second village, *Tazating tetam* (about 55 people), was established around 2003. It also lies between these two rivers, some 20 km downriver (northwards), closer to the FUNAI[6] Leonardo Indigenous Post. The third village, *Mirassol*, with the former chief Yakumin and his extended family (about 25 people), was established farther south around 2008, also close to the Curisevo, at the border of the park, near Gaúcha do Norte. More recently, two other villages were established: *São Jorge* (with around 15 people), and in 2020, *Miyarasu* (with around 30 people). We know little about these two.

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[4] There is much literature about the Upper Xingu and its culture, including good overviews and collections (Steinen 1886; Steinen 1894; Villas Boas & Villas Boas 1970; Hartmann 1986; Coelho 1993; Franchetto & Heckenberger 2001; Franchetto 2011).

[5] The Kamayurá language happens to be the first Brazilian Indigenous Language to be described in a grammar by a Brazilian scholar, Lucy Seki (2000).

[6] *Fundação Nacional do Índio*, Brazil's central government's agency dealing with indigenous affairs.
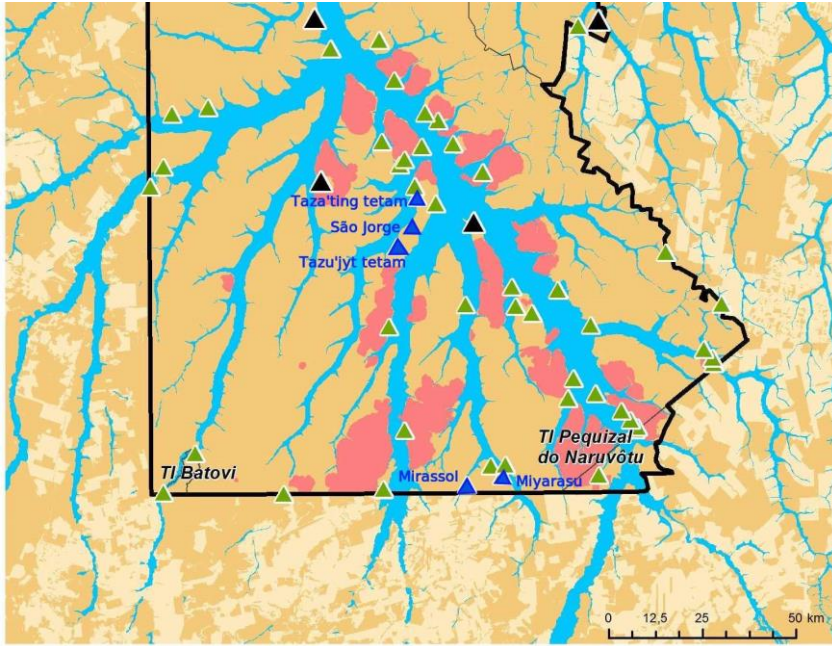
Figure 2: Probable location of current Awetí villages (in blue) in the Parque Indígena do Xingu

The establishment of secondary villages evidences a demographic recovery after a long series of catastrophic epidemics lasting until the middle of the 20th century when the population was reduced to a small number of individuals. On the other hand, it has meant a significant weakening of unity as an ethnic group, as the critical mass for performing major rituals has just barely been reached, even if all Awetí lived in a single village. Traditional ritual life in the smaller villages is rather restricted, and intergenerational transmission of the traditional culture and possibly even the language is threatened. As will be laid out in more detail in Section 6, in most smaller villages Kamayurá is a strong second language, and most children grow up bilingually or even predominantly in Kamayurá there. Still, Awetí is being acquired actively by all children, at least in the two larger villages, and is vital for the time being (Reiter 2010).

3. History of research

The Awetí arguably have been, until recently, the least studied Xinguan ethnic group. Before the late 1960s, the Awetí were only occasionally mentioned in

the reports of expeditions or travellers (for an overview, see Hartmann 1986, whose attempts to visit the Awetí in the early 1980s failed). Von den Steinen (1894) and Schmidt (1905) each collected (often inconsistent) wordlists with a couple of hundred entries.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s the Awetí were visited once by an anthropologist, George Zarur, and several times by a linguist, Ruth Monserrat. Zarur (1975) is a master's thesis about aspects of the cultural system, with special reference to the Awetí. In the 1970s, Monserrat published a segmental phonological statement (Emmerich & Monserrat 1972) and a description of the person prefixes (Monserrat 1976a; republished 2012a). To that time, she also made oral presentations and produced manuscripts on aspects of the language, which partially have been published more recently: on morpho-phonology (Monserrat 1976a), on nasalization (Monserrat 2012b) and on negation (Monserrat 2012c). She later used her Awetí data for more general papers (Monserrat & Soares 1983; Monserrat 2002). However, Monserrat discontinued her fieldwork and study based on direct interaction with speakers in the mid-1970s. Still, her data has served as the basis for more recent work by post-graduate students, principally at the University of Brasilia (Santos 2005; Santos et al. 2005; Corrêa da Silva 2007).

Research resumed in the 1990s with linguistic and anthropological studies. The anthropologist Coelho Souza, who also worked on the language, published a major paper about the history of the Awetí (Souza 2001). Borella (2000) is a master's thesis on aspects of the morphology and syntax, mainly based on one short field stay in 1998, and in need of substantial revision. Figueiredo (2010) is a Ph.D. thesis in anthropology, based on extensive fieldwork between 2006 and 2010.

A long-term research project on and with the Awetí was started by myself in 1998, with a total of about 18 months of direct work with speakers, mostly in Awetí villages, until 2010. After an initial two-year phase, funded by the German Academic Exchange Service DAAD, the project was included in the research programme *Documentation of Endangered Languages* (DOBES, Volkswagen Foundation). Therefore, from 2000 to 2006 the focus changed from the analysis and description of the language to the compilation and editing of an extensive corpus of material on the language in use, and on aspects of the cultural context. In the remaining years until 2011 I had support as a Dilthey Fellow, also by the Volkswagen Foundation, and focused more on the analysis and description of Awetí.

With the archive resulting from the *Awetí Language Documentation Project* (2006), Awetí became one of the first languages in South America to possess a large modern documentation. The collections consist so far of around 1,700 files comprising over 120 Gigabytes, organized into about 230 sessions (thematic units), each described and organized by structured metadata, and containing audio and/or video material. One part of the archive documents cultural features and contains some 40 hours of mostly video

recordings of rituals and everyday activities. The larger part of the archive focuses on linguistic material (with almost 100 hours of at least audio), including mostly monologue discourses such as autobiographies, descriptions, cultural explanations, and in particular traditional texts such as narratives, but also elicited material, wordlists, and dialogues. For a sizable part of these linguistic recordings there is basic annotation: a transcription in Awetí orthography, and much more often than not also a translation at least into Portuguese and partly also into English.

It is the very nature of documentation of this type that it is never finished. In the case of the Awetí collections: (1) the metadata need to be further detailed and completed; (2) much existing and new annotation needs to be revised and added to, including basic annotation (transcription, translation, notes) but also glossing, part-of-speech categories, sound structure, and grammatical structure; (3) more material remains to be added, including more documentation (partly produced by the Awetí themselves, who actively took part in the DOBES project; some of them have been trained in relevant aspects of the documentation work).[7] As a consequence, the archive is currently being reorganized, as well as completed with additional material dating from 1998–1999 and 2006–2010.

The published knowledge of the Awetí language has increased considerably over the last 20 years, with work on genderlects (Drude 2002, including a revision of the person system), the genealogical position of Awetí (Drude 2006, 2011a; Galucio et al. 2015; Meira & Drude 2015), the tense-aspect-mood system (Drude 2008a, covering most of the verbal inflectional system), nasal harmony (Drude 2008b, 2009), stress (Drude 2011b), orthography (Drude, Awete & Aweti 2019), reduplication (Drude 2014), nominalization and subordination (Drude 2011c), and multiple verb constructions (syntactic derivation, Drude 2011d). A description of the phonology has just been submitted for publication (Drude to appear).

There also have been two PhD theses on Awetí: (1) Wary Kamaiurá Sabino (2016) of the *Laboratório de Línguas Indígenas* (LaLi) at the University of Brasília largely applies the analysis of Tupinambá developed in the 1950s by Rodrigues to Awetí, and unfortunately shows need of revision, despite the fact that it supposedly was written by a native speaker; and (2) Sabine Reiter (2011) of the Aweti DOBES project 2001–2005 focuses on

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[7] Care has been taken to respect the individual rights of the speakers, and sensitive parts are closed for the general public, but the metadata is open and already fully accessible, as is most of the cultural media. The archive, especially the linguistic corpus of annotated naturalistic material, already provides an excellent basis for an in-depth study of the language.

ideophones, and contains a 210 page overview of the language. This is so far the best original extensive description.

Nevertheless, the overall quantity of published description and analysis remains unsatisfactory.

4. Language: genetic affiliation

Von den Steinen (1894) identified Awetí as a Tupían language. With 53 to 71 languages (several with major dialects) used by a total of about 100 different ethnic groups, Tupí is one of the largest and most widespread linguistic families of South America (Fabre 2001; Hammarström et al. 2020).

Modern studies postulate that the Tupí family contains ten clearly distinct branches or sub-families, four of which comprise only one language each: Puroborá (still remembered by a few semi-speakers), Ramarama,[8] Sateré-Mawé, and Awetí. In addition, Karitiana is the only surviving language of the Arikém subfamily, and it seems that in a few years the same will be true of Mundurukú and Juruna, as their respective sister-languages, Kuruaya and Xipaya, are now known only by very few elderly (semi-)speakers. Only Mondé (four languages, one with several major dialects) and Tuparí (five languages) maintain a more stable internal diversity, in addition to Tupí-Guaraní, the largest (36 to 48 languages) and geographically most widespread branch.

Until the 1950s, only a few Tupí languages, all belonging to the Tupí-Guaraní branch, were well known to researchers. Other Tupían languages, in particular those in Rondônia, were then thought to be 'mixed' or 'impure'. From the 1950s onwards, work in particular by Rodrigues (e.g. 1958) showed that Tupí is indeed a large family (sometimes also called a 'stock', a term widely used in Brazil in its translation into Portuguese as 'tronco') with internal ramifications, and that the Tupí-Guaraní (TG) branch is merely one of the sub-families. Until the late 1970s, the very poorly known Awetí language was thought to belong to the Tupí-Guaraní branch, like its neighbour Kamayurá. When more and better data became available, this view was refined and Awetí, just like Sataré-Mawé (S-M), was removed from Tupí-Guaraní into a branch of its own (Rodrigues 1984). However, even if on mostly impressionistic grounds, one could not fail to notice a greater similarity of Awetí (and S-M) with TG, which suggested that there are intermediate levels of affinity grouping TG, Awetí, and S-M together.

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[8]   We follow Gabas Jr. (2000) who argues that the putative other languages of that branch, such as Umutina, are in fact the same language as Karo, with their words written in different ways due to the different nationality of the respective researchers.

Research in the late 1990s and the first decade of the 20th century by the *Tupí Comparative Project* under Denny Moore (Museu Goeldi), and in particular by Sérgio Meira and myself, was able to confirm this intermediate genetic unit, labelled Mawetí-Guaraní (MATG), as an abbreviation for the cumbersome but more explicit term Sateré-Mawé–Awetí–Tupí-Guaraní (Drude 2006).[9] Drude & Meira (2015, in prep.) reconstructed the segmental phonology of the postulated proto-language proto-MATG for some 375 cognates.

Within MATG, we postulate (in accordance with earlier hypotheses by Rodrigues, e.g. Rodrigues & Dietrich 1997) that Awetí and TG form a branch opposed to S-M, although no unequivocal cases of exclusively shared innovative sound changes could be identified. Still, besides the 224 cognate sets that have reflexes in all three of S-M, Awetí and (reconstructed forms of) proto-TG, we found 88 confirmed cognates between only Awetí and proto-TG; in contrast to only 46 cognates shared between only S-M and proto-TG; and no more than eight between S-M and Awetí. This branching, with an Awetí-TG intermediate branch, has been confirmed by statistical work (Galucio et al. 2015). In summary, the genetic position of Awetí is presented in Figure 3.
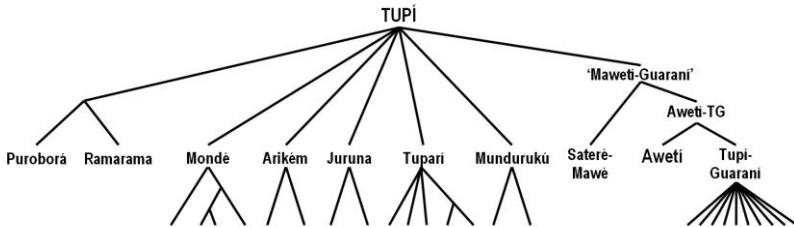

Figure 3: Awetí as one of the 10 branches of Tupí (Tupi Comparative Project, 2006)

This tree representation includes another major grouping, consisting of the Ramarama and Puroborá subfamilies (Galucio & Gabas 2002). It is very possible that other more comprehensive branches can be established. Rodrigues (2007) proposes an opposition of a western (Rondonian) branch

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[9] There is some altercation around this term which has since been adopted in other work. It therefore needs to be stated that: (1) Meira and Drude never failed to credit Rodrigues for first postulating the intermediate sub-family; and (2) there is apparently not any published work where Rodrigues would have established an explicit term for the sub-family, 'Sateré-Mawé–Awetí–Tupí-Guaraní' or other. (And even if the longer name was established by Rodrigues somewhere, introducing a shorter term still seems justified.)

versus an eastern branch, and concrete binary splits within both. Work in the *Tupi Comparative Project* points at other groupings (Galucio et al. 2015). Generally, we feel that it is still too early to advance concrete hypotheses which most probably will have to be adjusted with more evidence than is available today.

5. Language: internal variation

Historically, the Awetí seem to have resulted from the merger of several distinct groups.[10] The original linguistic configuration of these groups is very uncertain and may well have been fairly complex. The linguistic origins of what today are the *Kamayurá* and *Awetí* may have involved several different varieties, or even separate languages, from the TG subfamily and/or languages similar to modern Awetí.

Bastos (e.g., 1989: 524-567) lists the *Anumani'á* among the Tupían contingents that played a role in forming the latter-day *Kamayurá*, although this group is probably rather the main predecessor of the contemporary *Awetí*, known by them as *Enumaniá*. Indeed, by their own account, today's Awetí are the result of a prehistoric fusion of at least two groups: the Awetí 'proper' (*Awytyza 'ytoto*, henceforth *Awytyza*), and the *Enumaniá*. This occurred when *Awytyza* were already culturally integrated into the Upper Xingu network, but remained allied with the 'wild' *Enumaniá* ('wild' from the point of view of the Upper Xingu peoples). Then almost all the *Awytyza*, especially the men, were killed by the *Tonoly* (a non-Xinguan tribe, possibly a subgroup of the *Kayabí*, though Bastos (2000: 337) identifies them as the *Ikpeng*), and subsequently the *Enumaniá* took revenge, absorbed the remaining *Awytyza* women and children, and occupied their place in the Upper Xingu system, 'becoming civilized', i.e. accepting/adopting the cultural patterns and ethos of Xinguan society (which has a predominantly Arawakan basis).

According to the Awetí, therefore, they are the descendants of the *Enumaniá* rather than the *Awytyza*, and their language is that of the *Enumaniá*. However, the little that can be recalled of the language of the *Awytyza 'ytoto* indicates that there were no more than dialectal differences between the two. Generally, I see no clear signs that the Awetí language resulted from intensive contact between languages from different linguistic families, nor even from different branches of Tupí. Rather, most words show regular sound correspondences with Tupí-Guaraní cognates, suggesting that Awetí is indeed a genuine independent Tupían language. Also, the Awetí lexicon has remarkably few Tupí-Guaraní loan words, despite their close contact with TG (Kamayurá).

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[10] This section is an adjusted and updated version of sections in Drude (2011).

There are no recent dialects: as detailed in Section 2, the new villages have formed too recently to allow for any significant dialectal differentiation. Similarly, writing has been introduced too recently to permit the development of a distinct written modality, and there are also no other (whistled or similar) modalities. Of course, there are some register differences, especially for certain genres of formal speech (e.g., used by shamans or *morekwat* in rituals, or in storytelling).

Mainly, however, Awetí has two marked major social varieties, one used by men and the other by women (Drude 2002). The existence of these genderlects could initially be taken to suggest language contact or even a language merger – similar, for instance, to what has been postulated in the case of the Karib-Arawak fusion on the Antilles (see, e.g., Steinen 1894: 158). At first glance, such a hypothesis would seem to fit with the narratives concerning the *Awytyza 'ytoto* and *Enumaniá*. However, it cannot be substantiated. For one thing, the Awetí themselves do not associate properties of the female variety with the language of the *Awytyza* (nor elements of the male variety with the language of the *Enumaniá*), nor vice versa.

More importantly, the formal differences between the two varieties are not located at the phonetic/phonological level, nor in different lexical items in the case of content words (with very few emblematic exceptions), but rather in: (a) deictic pronouns and related topicalization particles; and (b) first person singular and third person singular and plural pronouns, and the partly-related third person nominal prefixes. Looking for a possible explanation in terms of different substrata or adstrata, we should note that the male variety forms for (a) are clearly derived from the female forms. Thus, both varieties seem to have the same source. The forms in (b), in turn, provide contradictory evidence: in some cases the female forms relate more closely to S-M, in others to TG, but most, in particular the male forms, do not relate to neither S-M or TG, nor any other branch of Tupí, as far as we can tell. These more grammatical than lexical differences seem, however, not to provide good evidence for postulating that the male variety may have resulted from some adstratum influence. Nevertheless, the divergent forms have a high text frequency, making the differences between the two genderlects fairly salient.

We have no evidence of other languages or varieties closely related to Awetí, neither in the present nor in the past. Nevertheless, in several places, in particular in Eberhard et al. (2020),[11] *Arauine* and/or *Arauite,* or similar names, are given as a designation of the *Awetí* or of related ethnic groups or languages. The *Arawine*, however, were clearly a distinct group, and the few reported words indicate that they spoke a Tupí-Guaraní language (Baldus 1970). In

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[11] And earlier editions of the *Ethnologue*.

particular, the reported first person possessive prefix *ie-* (or *nie-* in nasal contexts; in IPA notation possibly [*jɛ*] and [*nɛ̃*], respectively) indicates a closer relationship between *Arawine* and the languages spoken by the *Asuriní* of the Xingu, *Kamayurá* or *Kayabí. Arawiti* in turn was the ethnonym-like designation for two families resulting from inter-marriages between Awetí men and Yawalapiti women, dwelling close to the Awetí village in 1887 (Steinen 1894: 111). Nothing else is known about this emergent group, which apparently had ceased to exist by the time of subsequent expeditions, but it seems improbable that they spoke any language other than Awetí or Yawalapiti.

In sum, all the evidence at our disposal suggests that there is only one language of the Awetí branch of Tupí, namely Awetí itself, with two major varieties, the male and female genderlects, but no signs of any related major influence from substrata or adstrata of other linguistic families or branches of Tupí. Dialectal varieties of Awetí may have existed in the past, though (*Awytyza* vs. *Enumaniá*, perhaps also that of the *Wyrawat/Warawara*, mentioned as early Awetí allies, too), but if so, they were lost at the latest when the Awetí were reduced to a few families in the first half of the 20th century.

6. Language: sociolinguistic situation and vitality

Each of the approximately 155 indigenous languages in Brazil is in danger of disappearing within a few generations. They are all small by number of speakers, with only a handful having more than 10,000, and even the largest language has not more than 50,000 speakers, which is alarmingly tiny on a global scale. The typical (median) value is below 300 speakers per language in Brazil. The major factor affecting language vitality, however, is the rapid expansion of Brazilian national society into its 'hinterland'. The younger generations of almost all indigenous groups are in much closer contact with the surrounding society than a few decades ago; in many cases they speak fluent Portuguese. For almost all, if not all, groups, it is uncertain how much of the traditional culture will be carried on by the future generations, including transmission of the languages.

These general facts hold also for Awetí. The Upper Xingu, rather isolated except for support staff and a few researchers until the 1980s, is now in a very rapid process of approximation to the wider society. It is not uncommon for younger Awetí to visit the nearby towns of Gaúcha do Norte and Canarana at least twice a year, and several stay there for one or several weeks, for different reasons. Most young Awetí now learn Portuguese well before they are 15 years old; this was rather the exception even only 20 years ago.

Awetí is also in a close relationship with Kamayurá. Most Awetí are at least passively bilingual in Kamayurá, due to ties of kinship and because Kamayurá is a more prestigious language in the Upper Xingu (it is also larger, currently having around 800–1,000 speakers).

Due to Awetí-Kamayurá marriages, several children have grown up as true bilinguals, and many have passive command of Kamayurá. This holds particularly for the second, third, and the most recent fifth village: these are formed of extended families, the central couples of which involve Awetí-Kamayurá intermarriages. Despite this fact, the 2009 linguistic census in the second village found a stable situation for Awetí: even children whose parents prefer to speak Kamayurá between themselves have Awetí as their primary language (see Reiter 2010, an extensive sociolinguistic and vitality study).

Awetí continues to be the 'public language' of the main village (*Tazu'jyt tetam*) and the second village (*Tazating tetam / Saidão*). There it is also the language children predominantly use among themselves (children tend to spend much more time with other children rather than adults, under the supervision of older siblings, young aunts or uncles, or cousins). We have no first-hand information about the third village (*Mirassol*). Still, judging from active competence and predominant earlier language choices of most adults there, it is most probable that the major language in that village is rather Kamayurá, and the same may hold for the most recently established *Miyarasu* village. We do not know enough about the recent fourth village *S. Jorge* to report anything about its sociolinguistic reality, but as it is an offspring of the main village, and with most fluent Kamayurá speakers having left to other villages, I suspect it might be rather predominantly Awetí-speaking. Table 1 summarizes the (estimated) sociolinguistic situation in the current Awetí villages.[12]

	Tazu'jyt tt.	**Tazating tt.**	**Mirassol**	**S. Jorge**	**Miyarasu**
Population	102	54	~ 25	~ 15	~ 28
Aweti	all speak, dominant	all speak, dominant	some bilinguals, little use	all speak, dominant*	many bilinguals*
Kamayurá	few bilinguals*	many bilinguals	all speak, dominant	some bilinguals, little use*	all speak, dominant*
Awetí vitality	full transmission	fair transmission	(unknown)	fair transmission*	low transmission*

Table 1: Population, strength of Awetí and Kamayrá, and Awetí local vitality, by village.

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[12] * indicates a conjectured value.

Other indigenous languages play a minor role: a few Awetí speakers understand, or in some cases speak, one or another Xinguan language (Mehinaku/Waurá, Yawalapiti, Kuikuro/Kalapalo, or Trumai), due to intermarriages. This is the regular traditional pattern in the Upper Xingu and has never threatened any of the languages, as code-mixing is carefully avoided.[13]

In summary, Awetí is to be considered vital, and, despite periods of catastrophic population decline and of ethnic intermarriages, with Kamayurá in particular, it has proven to be strong so far, at least in the two bigger of the current five villages. This is indeed remarkable: I am yet to find another case of a language that has been able to survive and stabilize, despite having had, at one point, only 23 speakers. The neighbouring Yawalapiti, for instance, similarly to the Awetí, were reduced to just around 20 individuals and, due to intermarriages, the language became minoritised (though still emblematic) in the Yawalapiti village, and is now on the verge of extinction. Similarly, Trumai is being replaced in all its villages, in this case by Portuguese.

At the same time, the presence of Portuguese is increasing through schooling, new media, and much intensified contact with the national society inside and outside the indigenous park, causing several abrupt and profound social, economic, and cultural changes throughout the area, including among the Awetí. It is possible, but at this point not imminent nor inevitable, that Portuguese will grow stronger and become the first language of a majority of ethnic Awetí in one or two generations. On the other hand, if the general protective setting of the Xingu Indigenous Land is maintained, it is also possible that the language will continue to be strong over the next generations.

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[13] That may be a reason (in addition to the area existing for only a few hundred years) that evidence for an incipient linguistic area (*Sprachbund*) is overall rather weak (but see Seki 1999, 2011).

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