



José Medeiros

## 3c. Brazil - the Country and its People

Here you will find out how Brazil developed over the centuries and why people travelled to live in the country.

### 3.1 Isolated indigenous peoples of Brazil

In May 2008 Funai – Fundação Nacional do Índio, the Brazilian Indian Protection Agency – released photographs of an uncontacted indigenous group living in the Brazil-Peru border region in the Amazon rainforest.



José Medeiros

NATIVE INDIAN CHILDREN

This Question & Answer page will give you information about the isolated indigenous tribes of Brazil, some of the last uncontacted peoples on Earth.

Look at the links on the next page to read about these people.



### **1 When and how were the photos released on May 29 2008 taken?**

The images were obtained during 20 hours of flight in a light aeroplane between April 28 and May 2 2008.

### **2 Who took the photos and why?**

The Indians were photographed by the Brazilian Indian Protection Agency, who are dedicated to locating and preserving isolated indigenous groups.

### **3 Where was the group located?**

On the left bank of the Envira River in Acre state, near the Brazil-Peru border.

### **4 What ethnic group do the groups photographed belong to?**

The observers could tell the warriors photographed looked strong and healthy but were unable to tell which ethnic group they belonged to.

### **5 Are there more groups nearby?**

José Carlos Meirelles, the coordinator of the programme, said they spotted other huts near the Amazon Basin waterways on the right bank of the Envira River. He said there are four isolated indigenous groups in the Envira River area and they have been monitoring them for 20 years.

### **6 How many isolated indigenous groups are there in Brazil today?**

A study carried out in 2006 pointed to the existence of 68 groups of isolated Indians.

### **7 Where do the isolated indigenous groups live?**

They live in the states of Acre, Amazonas, Maranhão, Mato Grosso, Pará, Rondônia and Roraima. There are also references to a single group living in Goiás state.

The largest numbers of isolated tribes are in Acre, Amazonas, Mato Grosso, Pará and Rondônia.

### **8 How do isolated indigenous groups live?**

They hunt, fish, and collect fruits and plants. They also grow certain foods. The group photographed by the Envira River lives in six large huts (malocas) and has a large cultivated area.

### **9 How can they stay isolated?**

They live a semi-nomadic existence and avoid contact with other indigenous groups as well as with non-Indians. When invaders encroach on their territory they move deeper into the forest.

### **10 What language do isolated indigenous groups speak?**

It is not known what language they speak. Today, 180 languages are spoken by the indigenous groups in Brazil. But it is estimated that about 1,300 were spoken at the time of the arrival of the first Portuguese colonizers in Brazil.

### **11 How are the isolated Indians being helped?**

The anthropologists who are studying these tribes are not contacting them. Instead they are working to define the limits of their territory, to prevent invasions, and to keep the groups isolated and protected from violence and from diseases such as the common cold passed on by non-Indian people. The Indians have not built up immunity to such illnesses.

Naturally, the survival of uncontacted groups and Brazilian indigenous tribes in general depends on environmental preservation. Everything that threatens the Amazon forest is also a threat to indigenous life.

### **SEE THESE LINKS!**

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in\\_pictures/7426869.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in_pictures/7426869.stm)

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/7426794.stm>