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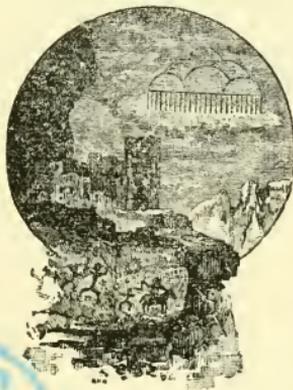
HANDBOOK OF SOUTH AMERICAN INDIANS

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THE PURÍ-COROADO LINGUISTIC FAMILY

By ALFRED MÉTRAUX

TRIBAL DIVISIONS AND HISTORY

The *Coroado*, *Purí*, and *Coropó* were closely related linguistically and culturally (map 1, *No. 13*). One hundred years ago the *Coroado* still remembered a time when they formed a single tribe with the *Purí*, who later, as the result of a feud between two families, became their enemies.

Coroado.—At the beginning of the 19th century, the *Coroado* occupied the plain bounded in the east by the Serra de São Geraldo (São Jozé) and in the west by the Serra da Onza, both ramifications of the Serra do Mar (lat. 21° S., long. 42° W.). They lived mainly along the Xipotó Novo River (Rio dos Coroados), but were also reported on the Rio da Pomba and on the Parahyba River (map 7). According to Eschwege (1818, 1 : 125), the *Coroado* were originally divided into three main subgroups: the *Maritong*, the *Cobanipaque*, and a third, the name of which had been forgotten. Two small bands that lived on the Rio Preto were called the *Tamprun* and the *Sasaricon* (*Sazaricon*) (Saint Hilaire, 1830-51, 1 : 125). The Portuguese named them the *Coroado* (the Crowned Ones), as they are known in the literature, because of their circular tonsure. This tribe, the true *Coroado*, should not be confused with the *Caingang*, who are sometimes known by the same name.

During the 17th century, the *Coroado* were raided by the Paulists and, as a result, they remained bitter enemies of the Whites until 1763, when they were induced to make peace. In 1767 they were placed under the authority of special government agents. Harshly treated by the colonists who exploited them, they were already in full decadence by 1813. There were many *Coroado* in the Capuchin mission of São Fidelis, founded in 1776 on the right side of the Parahyba River.

In 1813, the *Coroado* were scattered in 150 settlements, each consisting of one or two families. The total population was about 1,900 (Eschwege, 1800, 1 : 120). Saint-Hilaire (1830-51, 1 : 43) said that five or six hundred lived on the Rio Bonito, near Ubá.

In recent years some *Coroado* still remained in the Aldea da Pedra on the upper Parahyba River under the care of Italian Capuchins.

Purí.—The former habitat of the *Purí* extended from the Parahyba River to the Serra de Mantiqueira and the upper reaches of the Rio Doce (map 7). The *Purí* were divided into the following subtribes: *Sabonan*, *Uambori*, and *Xamiuna*. The name *Purí* was a derogatory designation bestowed on them by the *Coroado*.

In the 18th century, several hundred *Purí* were lured to Villa Rica, where they were sold as slaves. About 500 in the region of Piranga and Santa Rita placed

themselves under the protection of the Portuguese and were settled near Rio Pardo by Captain Marlière, who is responsible for most of the information available on them. In 1800, a group of 87 *Purí* were placed in the Mission of São João de Queluz, where many others joined them.¹ In 1815 Wied-Neuwied saw a group of *Purí* near São Fidelis. Spix and Martius encountered another group near São João Baptista.

The tribe originally totaled about 4,000, but, after their contact with the Whites, dwindled rapidly. In 1885 there were still some *Purí* groups on the tributaries of the Manhuassu River. Their locations, given by Ehrenreich (1886), were as follows: Quartel do Príncipe (a border town between Minas Gerais and Espírito Santo); Santa Lucia, near Carangola; Cachoeirinha, near Alegre; and Joannes on the Rio Doce, between Santa Maria de Belen and Cuieté. One hundred and twenty-two *Purí* were also established in the Aldeamento de Muriahé. Today some *Purí* remnants may exist in the region of the lower Parahyba River.

Coropó.—The *Coropó* lived mainly on the Rio da Pomba and on the southern side of the upper Parahyba River. Eschwege (1818, 1:76) states that in 1813 all of them were acculturated and spoke Portuguese; they resided in 29 villages and numbered 291 (97 men, 96 women, 58 boys, and 40 girls).

Their language is related to *Coroado*, but not so closely as *Purí*, which is a dialect of *Coroado*.

CULTURE

SUBSISTENCE ACTIVITIES

Originally the *Purí* were typical forest nomads, who subsisted by hunting and collecting fruits and roots, especially the fruits of the sapucaia tree (*Lecythis pisonis*), palm shoots, caratinga (*Convolvulus* sp.), cava, and many other tubers. During the dry season, the *Coroado* gathered larvae of bixo da taquara, which they kept in bamboo receptacles, using the fat mainly for preparing corn cakes. Like most forest nomads, they were constantly on the lookout for honey.

The *Coroado* established in aldeas learned to grow crops and, at the beginning of the 19th century, cultivated maize, gourds, bananas, cará (*Dioscorea* sp.), and beans. They were poor farmers, however, and continued to subsist, in large measure, on the produce of the bush. The *Purí*, who lacked agriculture, looted the fields of the colonists and of the civilized Indians, mainly for sugarcane, of which they were inordinately fond. Such inroads caused continuous warfare between the nomadic Indians and the sedentary population of the region.

The *Purí* and *Coroado* are said to have been skillful stalkers and expert trackers. They lured birds by perfectly imitated calls. Nothing is known of their other hunting methods except that they caught animals in pitfalls and traps. Birds were captured by means of a noose fixed to the end of a long pole.

¹ According to Ayres de Casal (1845, 2:26), at the beginning of the 19th century some Christianized *Purí* lived in the village of Valença, between the Parahyba River and the Rio Preto. With them lived *Arary*, *Pitta*, and *Xumetto* Indians.

Fishing, which is barely mentioned in our sources and must have been of secondary importance, was practiced with bows and arrows and with long, multipointed spears. Hooks were introduced by the Portuguese.

The *Purí* baked their food in earth ovens or boiled it in sections of green bamboo (taquara-açu). They also roasted meat on spits. The *Coroado*, who raised some crops, had more elaborate cooking techniques and utensils, such as basketry sifters and various earthenware vessels. They prepared mush with maize pounded in cylindrical wooden mortars, boiled game, roasted it on a spit, or smoked it on a babracot. They seasoned food with malagüeta (*Capsicum frutescens*) fruits but used no salt.

DOMESTICATED ANIMALS

At the beginning of the 19th century, both the *Coroado* and the *Purí* had dogs and fowl which they had recently acquired from the Whites. They valued their dogs highly and took good care of them, but had not yet learned to train them for hunting.

HOUSES

The nomadic *Purí* built crude shelters by resting a few palm fronds against a transverse stick tied to two trees and covering them with additional leaves (pl. 110, *bottom*). The hut of the more sedentary *Coroado*, though of better construction, was obviously derived from the primitive *Purí* lean-to. It had the form of a thatched gabled roof resting directly on the ground (pl. 110, *top*). Larger huts with wattle-and-daub walls were imitations of the Mestizo house.²

The main piece of *Coroado* furniture was the cotton hammock. Some *Purí* used hammocks (pl. 105, *a*) of embauba (*Cecropia* sp.) fibers, but most of them slept in the ashes of their camp fires. The *Coroado* hut contained a platform for storing food and small articles, a wooden mortar, gourds, and various pieces of pottery. At night the *Purí* and *Coroado* kept a fire burning near their hammocks against the cold of the night and to ward off mosquitoes.

DRESS AND ORNAMENTS

The aboriginal *Purí*, *Coroado*, and *Coropó* went naked; but the men, when first described, had already adopted European clothes, while *Coroado* women wore home-made skirts.

² The statement by Ayres de Casal (1845), 2: 50) that from 50 to 100 people lived in a single house is certainly an exaggeration.

Feather headdresses and feather bracelets were worn by both *Purí* and *Coroado* men. Both *Purí* and *Coroado* hung around their necks or slung across their chests necklaces composed of animal teeth and of various seeds (*Canna glauca*, *Abrus precatorius*, *Ormosia coccinea*, etc.) Young women of both tribes wrapped bark strips around their wrists and around their legs, under the knees and around the ankles. These bindings, which served to make the joints slender, were removed after marriage.

The *Coroado* tonsure, which resembled that of a Franciscan monk, accounts for their name. Some *Purí* shaved the entire head.

All body hair was removed. Both *Purí* and *Coroado* painted dots and linear motifs in red (urucú or red clay) and black (genipa) on their persons. *Purí* children were often decorated with black spots all over the body.

Among the *Coroado*, both sexes were tattooed by a method not reported elsewhere in South America except for the *Tehuelche*: The skin was pinched between the fingers, and with a needle and a thread wet with pigment it was stitched through in circular designs or in crude representations of animals and birds (Eschwege, 1818, 1: 137).

TRANSPORTATION

No craft of any kind seems to have been used by these tribes, a lack that may be ascribed to the absence of large rivers in their mountainous and forested country.

Women carried their goods in large baskets. Children were suspended on the hip with a bark sling or carried on their mother's back, supported by a tumpline or hanging in a net.

MANUFACTURES

Basketry.—*Coroado* basketry did not differ from that of the more advanced *Tupí* tribes, judging from specimens figured by Eschwege (1818, 1: pl. 2, figs. *s*, *q*; Wied-Neuwied, 1820–21, pl. 12, fig. 7). They made rectangular fans to activate the fire, long carrying baskets with open tops, and other containers of various sizes.

Weaving.—The *Coroado* made cotton hammocks and clothes. According to Saint-Hilaire (1830–51, 2: 46) they wove embauba fibers.

Netting.—Carrying nets are mentioned.

Pottery.—The *Coroado* were fair potters and made large bulging jars with pointed bottoms and short necks (fig. 68, *a*). *Purí* pots were more primitive. They were globular and of a shape suggesting that of the sapucaia (*Lecythis ollaria*) fruit.

Tools.—Stone axes (fig. 68, *c*) were still used at the beginning of the last century. The stone ax blade was lashed between two sticks.

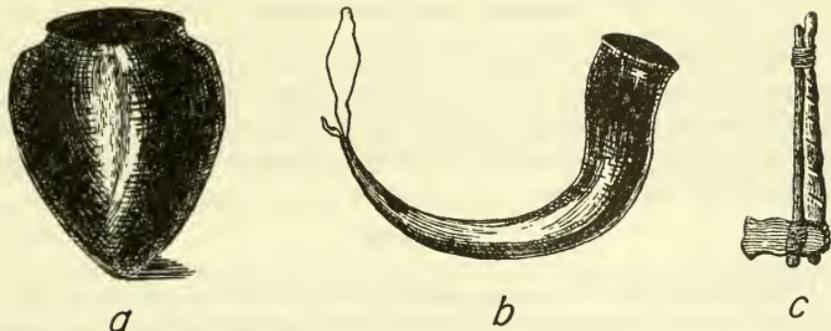


FIGURE 68.—*Coroado* manufactures. *a*, Pottery jar; *b*, side-blown trumpet made of cow horn; *c*, hafted ax. (Redrawn from Eschwege, 1818, opposite p. 242.)

Weapons.—Bow staves were carved of ayri or brejauba (*Astrocaryum ayri*) wood. They had a circular cross section and were about $6\frac{1}{2}$ feet (2 m.) long. The string was of caraguatá or of tucum (*Astrocaryum* sp.) fibers.

Arrow shafts were made of taquara da frecha (*Saccharum sagittarum*) with feathering of the arched (tangential) type. Arrowheads were taquara blades, barbed wooden rods, and bulging knobs.

Lances are mentioned, but there is no reference to clubs.

Children used pellet bows (pl. 105, *b*) as playthings and to develop their marksmanship.

Fire making.—Fire was produced by a drill which was generally inserted into an arrow shaft. Hearth and drill were made of a dry creeper.

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ORGANIZATION

The *Coroado* tribe was split into small groups or bands, each of which comprised one or two extended families totaling some 40 people. Each group lived apart, uniting with others only for defense against enemies or to wage war. Such a group was under the authority of a chief, generally the oldest man of the community.

Within the group there existed a great amount of cooperation. They cultivated their fields in common, hunted together, and enjoyed "commonly the produce of their work" (Eschwege, 1818, 1: 126-127). Young people submitted willingly to the authority of older persons and of valiant hunters and warriors. Leaders were distinguished by beautiful feather diadems.

COURTESY RITES

When two parties of *Purí* met, one would make a speech and then both would burst into laments for the dead.

WARFARE AND CANNIBALISM

Both the *Purí* and *Coroado* have been accused of cannibalism, without convincing evidence. It is said that when celebrating a victory feast, the *Coroado* dipped the arm of a slain enemy in chicha and licked it. They kept the skulls of their victims as trophies and made flutes out of their bones.

LIFE CYCLE

Childbirth.—The *Coroado* woman when pregnant observed chastity. She and her husband refrained from eating the flesh of certain animals and lived chiefly on fish and fruits. Delivery took place in the forest in a spot protected from moonlight, which was considered harmful to a newborn baby. Soon after the birth, the mother washed herself and resumed her normal activities. A few days later, both she and the baby were fumigated with tobacco smoke by a shaman, an occasion which was celebrated by hearty drinking. Children were nursed until they were 4 to 5 years old.

Marriage.—Men married at the age of 18, girls when they were about 12. The marriage ceremony is said to have consisted of the presentation of game and fruit to the bride's parents. Acceptance of the gift sealed the marriage. The new couple settled with the family of either spouse. Monogamy seems to have prevailed, though chiefs or good hunters had two or more wives. Marital ties were brittle and easily dissolved. Women were often blamed for the separation because of their misconduct.

Death observances.—The *Coroado* placed their dead in large jars, if these were available, after they had broken the limbs of the corpse, lest the ghost return to haunt the living. A person was buried in his hut, his possessions were deposited over the grave, and the house was burned or abandoned. If the deceased had been a chief, the whole settlement was deserted. Relatives cut their hair, and the women painted their bodies black. They uttered funeral laments at dawn, in the evening, and every time they happened to pass by a grave. The *Purí* pronounced funeral speeches in honor of their dead (pl. 108). The soul of the departed went to a pleasant wood full of sapucaia trees and game, where it was happy in the company of all the deceased.

ESTHETIC AND RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Musical instruments.—A cow-horn trumpet with a lateral mouth-piece was one of the main musical instruments. With it the *Purí* sounded alarms and gathered men for attacks or for drinking bouts. In the Museum of Vienna there is a composite trumpet attributed to the *Coroado*. The bell consists of a spiral twisted skin, most likely

that of an armadillo (Izikowitz, 1935, p. 234). The blowhole is on the side. Eschwege (1818, 1: 127) mentions also trumpets made of the long bones and even of the skulls of enemies.

Dances and songs.—There are several good descriptions of *Coroado* and *Purí* dances (pl. 108). (Spix and Martius, 1823-28, 1: 373; Eschwege, 1818, 1: 142; Saint-Hilaire, 1830-51, 1: 39.) These tribes danced in two straight lines, the men in front with bows and arrows, the women behind.

In the first three steps they [the *Purí*] put the left foot forward and bent the left side; at the first and third step they stamped with the left foot, and at the second with the right; in the following three steps they advanced the right foot at the first and last, bending on the right side. In this manner they advanced a little alternately in short steps. As soon as the song was concluded, they ran back in disorder as if in flight; first the women with their daughters, and then the men with their sons. After this they placed themselves in the same order as before and the scene was repeated. [Spix and Martius, 1823-31, 1: 373.]

A dance to celebrate the killing of a jaguar rested on the same principle, but the dancers stooped, holding their hands on their waists and jumping with more vivacity.

Songs referred to beer or praised the looks of a person in the audience (Eschwege, 1818, 1: 142).

Drinking bouts.—The *Coroado* acquired the habit of drinking maize beer after they had become agriculturists under White coercion. They raised maize more for beer than for food. Fermentation was accelerated by the addition of saliva. Before starting a drinking bout, a chief would chant, dance around the beer jar, and taste the greasy surface (pl. 109).

Narcotics.—The *Coroado* smoked tobacco in clay pipes or in bamboo tubes.

SHAMANISM AND RELIGION

Ghosts, which often appeared in the guise of lizards, caimans, jaguars, deer, or deer-footed men, were the souls of wicked persons or of people who had not been buried according to prescribed rites.

Shamans.—Shamans consulted the souls of the dead about the outcome of important events, such as a war party or an expedition to collect ipecacuanha. They also summoned spirits to inquire where abundant game could be found or to ascertain whether they were threatened by a war party. When the *Coroado* feared an attack by their traditional enemy, the *Purí*, their shamans conjured up the soul of a dead *Purí* and asked him the whereabouts of his fellow tribesmen. If the answers were alarming, the shamans advised the people to take defensive measures and to build a fence around the camp.

The *Coroado* shaman conjured spirits at night while blowing clouds of smoke from his pipe. Spectators could hear the steps of the ap-

proaching spirits and their whistled answers to the questions of the shaman. The spirits departed crying "like macuco birds."

The *Coroado* lived in great fear of sorcerers. If witchcraft were suspected to be the cause of a death, some flesh or skin was cut from the victim's head and countermagic was practiced on it.

Medicine.—Sick people were treated by shamans, who sucked them, fumigated them with tobacco smoke, and rubbed them with saliva or with certain herbs. The *Purí* exposed sick people to a steam bath—the patient crouched on all fours over a large glowing hot stone, which women sprinkled with water from their mouths.

The *Coroado* practiced bloodletting with a small bow and an arrow headed with a piece of crystal. This operation was also performed at intervals on healthy persons, especially women. The *Coroado* incised the skin around a sore spot with a sharp stone or a piece of bamboo. Some men, to improve their marksmanship, cut themselves slightly across the upper arm (Eschwege, 1818, 1: 137).

Shamans used various herbs in their massages and put different leaves and grasses on wounds and infections. Most of their drugs were for external use, and it has been observed that, like the Chaco Indians, the *Coroado* showed a strong reluctance to taking internal medicines.

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