

1082
U.S. - SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION
BUREAU OF AMERICAN ETHNOLOGY
BULLETIN 143

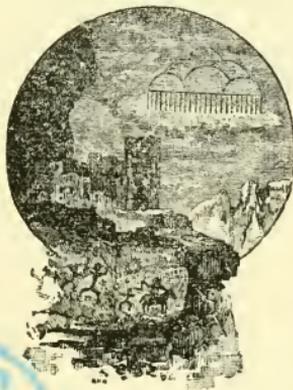
HANDBOOK OF SOUTH AMERICAN INDIANS

JULIAN H. STEWARD, *Editor*

Volume 1
THE MARGINAL TRIBES

Prepared in Cooperation With the United States Department of State as a Project of
the Interdepartmental Committee on Cultural and Scientific Cooperation

Extraído do vol. 1 do Handbook of South American
Indians, digitalizado pelo Internet Archive.
Disponível em <http://www.etnolingua.org/hsai>



UNITED STATES
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE
WASHINGTON : 1946

THE BOTOCUDO

By ALFRED MÉTRAUX

TRIBAL DIVISIONS AND HISTORY

The Botocudo (*Aimboré, Amburé, Aimoré, Guerens, En-hérakmung, Engeräkung*) were also called *Borun*, the tribal designation for Indians (map 1, No. 15; map 7). According to Pero de Magalhães (1922, pp. 139-141) the *Aimoré* were, in the 16th century, found along the coast from the Capitania dos Ilhéos to Porto Seguro. They had probably migrated from the interior of the "sertão" (lat 18° S., long. 42° W.) to pillage and kill in the coastal region. Cardim (1939, p. 174), who also places them along an 80-league strip of land near the coast, reports their raids in the region of Porto Seguro, Ilhéos, and Camamu.

About 1560 the *Botocudo*, who were harassing the *Tupinaqui* and the Portuguese, were driven into the "sertão" by the governor of Bahia, Men de Sá. In the second half of the 17th century, perhaps in alliance with other tribes, they laid waste the towns of Porto Seguro, Santo Amaro, and Santa Cruz. For more than a hundred years they harassed the Mestizo and Portuguese settlements of the coast and remained the undisputed masters of the Serra dos Aimorés. Their raids led to bloody reprisals, and until the second half of the 19th century the colonists hunted them down. In the beginning of the 19th century there were already many families or bands settled near ranches, where they served as day laborers, or established in "aldeas" (eight in 1817). These tame *Botocudo* were quick to adopt agriculture and became the auxiliaries of the Whites against their "wild" fellow tribesmen. (See Tschudi, 1866, 2: 257-265.)

At the beginning of the 19th century their boundaries were the Rio Pardo and Rio Doce (lat. 15° to 19° S.), and they wandered from one river to the other along the State of Minas Gerais. The extreme point reached on the Rio Doce was San José da Barra Longa; on the Rio Grande de Belmonte, Minas Novas. Some *Botocudo* groups lived north of the Rio Pardo, but the bulk of the tribe inhabited the forests of the Rio Doce and of the Rio Grande de Belmonte.

On occasion they descended the São Mateus River as far as the coast. In 1862 Tschudi (1866, 2: 264-267) found the *Botocudo* divided into the following groups: (1) The *Naknenuk*, on the upper Mucuri and Todos os Santos Rivers, who were split into small bands or extended families, each bearing the name of their leader: (2) the *Aranau*, on the same river, south of the Serra Mapmap Crak: (3) the *Bakué*, in the region between the Rio do Pampan and Santa Clara; and (4) the *Urufu*, west of the last almost to the seashore. Small family groups

were scattered near the headwaters of the Rio Pardo; in the southern valley of the Mucurí River, on Riberão de Saudade, lived the *Poschischa*; east of Riberão das Lages lived the *Mekmek*, *Shiporok*, and *Potik*; and in the region of the headwaters of the São Mateus River lived the *Porokun*, *Batata*, etc. The *Shiporok*, who were the *Botocudo* visited by Maximilian Wied-Neuwied, lived on the Urucú River, a large southern tributary of the Mucurí River.

The bands enumerated by Ehrenreich (1887, pp. 8-11) are: (1) The *Nak-nenuk* between the Mucurí, Rio Doce, Sassuh Rivers, and the Serra dos Aimorés; (2) *Nak-erchä*, on the upper and middle Guandu River; (3) *Etwet*, on the Pocran River, a tributary of the Manhuassu River; (4) *Takruk-krak*, between the Serra dos Aimorés and the Sassuh Grande River; (5) *Nep-ncp*, east of the Serra dos Aimorés to the region of the São Mateus River; (6) *Nak-poruk*, on the left side of the Rio Doce between Figueira and the Guandu River; (7) *Arauan*, on the Arauan River, a tributary of the Urupuca River; (8) *Bakües*, north of the Mucurí River to the southern tributaries of the Jequitinhonha River; (9) *Pampan*, on the Pampan River, tributary of the Mucurí River; and (10) *Nock-nocy*.

At the time of Ehrenreich's visit, the *Botocudo* numbered about 5,000; 886 were settled in an "aldeamento" at N. S. dos Anjos de Itambacury and 241 in another "colony" at Immaculada Conceição do Rio Doce. The *Botocudo* visited in our day are those of the Rio Doce divided into: (1) The *Minhagiruns* of the Pancas River, a tributary of the Rio Doce near Colatina; (2) *Botocudo* of Natividade de Manhaçu, near the Barra of the Manhaçu River on the border line of Minas Gerais and Espírito Santo; and (3) *Botocudo* of Lapa, about 37 or 43 miles (60 or 70 km.) upstream from Manhaçu. The natives of the two latter settlements called themselves *Gutu-krak*.

In 1939, Nimuendajú encountered 10 survivors near Itambacury, 25 miles (40 km.) southwest of Teófilo Otoni, and 68 at Guido Marlière on the Rio Doce. They represented a number of once independent bands, such as the *Chonvugn*, *Nakpié*, and *Nakrehé*.¹

In 1862, Tschudi (1866, 2 : 267) reckoned those of the Mucurí Basin at from 2,800 to 3,000. The *Botocudo*, long considered typical *Ge*, are today recognized as an independent family.

The term "*Botocudo*" has also been applied to two other groups related neither to the above groups nor to each other, viz., the "*Botocudo* of Santa Catarina," who are related to the *Caingang*, (p. 448), and hence are *Southern Ge*; and the "*Botocudo*" of Paraná, between the Ivaí and the Piquirý Rivers, who speak a *Guaraní* dialect and correspond to Von Ihering's "*Noto-Botocudos*," Telemaco Borba's "*Aré*," and V. Frič's "*Šetá*."

CULTURE

SUBSISTENCE ACTIVITIES

Farming.—Under Brazilian influence, the *Botocudo*, who had hitherto stolen cultivated plants from Whites at the risk of their lives, became farmers during the last century. Already in Wied-Neuwied's day, they had begun to practice some agriculture; and 30 years ago the *Borun* made clearings to raise manioc, sweet potatoes, and bananas, living there until the end of the harvest. As is often the case when

¹ In 1926, the east *Nak-nenuk* lived at the station of Pancas (Fróes de Abreu, 1929, p. 3).

agriculture is acquired from Europeans, the men tilled the soil and planted, but women harvested.

Collecting.—The economy rested essentially on hunting by men and collecting by women. In the woods were found the pods of the inga (*Inga* sp.) and of the feijão do monte and the fruits of the maracujá (*Passiflora* sp.), the araticu (*Annona montana*), the guayaba (*Psidium guajava*), the jabuticaba (*Mourivira pusa*), and the imbú (*Spondias tuberosa*). The dry season, when the sapucaia (*Lecythis pisonis*) and the cocos imburu (*Cocos* sp.) ripened, was the happiest time of the year. At that time, the Indians scattered through the woods and hills to harvest these fruits. After breaking the hard nuts of the cocos with a heavy stone, they extracted the white kernel with a bone chisel. They were fond of the terminal shoots of the issara and other palms. They dug out the roots of the creepers called cara do matto, and roasted creepers full of a tasty pith.

In September they ate the fruit of the arborescent nettle (cansação); in October, the genipa fruit; and later, the bush pineapples.

The *Botocudo* regarded as a great delicacy the larvae of *Macrodonia*² *cervicornis*, which they pulled out of bottle trees (*Chorisia ventricosa*) with a pointed stick. They also consumed other insect larvae, including those of the *Rhynchophorus*³ *palmarum*. They had a real passion for honey, and upon finding a tree with a beehive, they would fell it, enlarge the hole, and remove the combs and pupae. If they could not get the honey at the bottom of the cavity, they soaked it up with a brush, made of shredded fibers, and squeezed it out into water.

Hunting.—Though game was not overabundant, the *Botocudo* were particularly skillful in following tracks and in finding their way in the thickest jungle. They lured game by perfectly imitating their cries and built small hunting blinds from which to shoot. They soon learned to hunt with dogs stolen or bought from the Whites.

Fishing.—Until the *Botocudo* acquired European hooks they caught fish only by shooting them with special bows of coco de palmito and featherless arrows, but before discharging these they threw a crushed root into the water, probably as a bait.⁴

Cooking.—Large animals were singed over the fire and then roasted for a short time on a stick, for the *Botocudo* liked meat half raw. Surplus meat was hung from the huts and exposed to smoke. Most foods were roasted or baked under the ashes, but some were boiled in large sections of green bamboos. They did not use any condiment.

² Formerly *Prionus*.

³ Formerly *Curculio*.

⁴ Ehrenreich (1887, p. 29) states that they drugged fish with the timbó creeper (*Paullinia* sp.).

HOUSES AND VILLAGES

There were two types of huts: those for long use were constructed by driving stakes in a circle and covering them with leaves, grass, or branches; temporary shelters were made by sticking large palm fronds in the ground, their slender ends forming an arched or domed roof. Several families shared these dwellings. Curiously enough, in more recent times the *Botocudo* had only primitive wind screens made by leaning a few branches or leaves against a horizontal pole tied to two trees or a crude frame, additional branches and leaves being placed in front or on the side in rough weather. One or more families camped under the protection of such a screen, each with a separate fire. The largest villages consisted of about eight shelters.

The *Botocudo* slept on the ground on a skin, on some boughs, or on a layer of fibers of the pao d'estopa.

DRESS AND ORNAMENTS

Both sexes went naked (pl. 106). Men encased their penises in a sheath (pl. 105, *e*) of leaves or bound their foreskins with cotton thread. They also held their penises raised against the abdomen with a belt. Later they adopted the loincloth or an apron of fibers.

The *Botocudo* owe their name to the large cylindrical wooden plugs worn by men and women alike in the ear lobes and lower lips. These cylinders, of light wood (*Chorisia ventricosa*), were 3 to 4 inches (7.6 to 10 cm.) in diameter and 1 inch (2.5 cm.) thick. The ears were perforated at the age of 7 or 8, the lips a few years later.

Men's feather ornaments (pl. 105, *k*) consisted of tail feathers fixed to their heads with wax or a string of feathers attached by a cord around the arms, thighs, and legs. No feathers were worn by women.

Necklaces (pl. 105, *h*), bracelets, and anklets were made of seeds, animal teeth, or peccary hoofs.

The *Botocudo* plucked all hair from the body and even from the eyebrows and eye lids. Both sexes shaved their hair in a band above the ears so that the mass of hair formed a sort of skullcap. This style has now disappeared.

Tattooing was unknown. For a feast or the warpath the *Botocudo* painted their faces red with urucú and their bodies black with genipa, leaving only the lower limbs unpainted. On some occasions they blackened only one side of the body. The circles traced on their bodies were called "jaguar spots"; crescents, "fish scales"; and streaks, "bird steps."

They also smeared their entire bodies with urucú oil as a protection against mosquitoes.

TRANSPORTATION

Though the lack of canoes has been interpreted as a sign of primitiveness, it must be remembered that navigable streams are few in the *Botocudo* region. After European contact, the *Botocudo* soon learned to make dugouts and were even praised as good boatmen. Formerly, they crossed a river by balancing themselves on a creeper, sometimes using another creeper as a railing.

Goods were transported in large nets suspended on the back by a tumpine. Children were carried on the back in a large bark sling.

MANUFACTURES

Basketry.—Nets made basketry superfluous. Headdresses of palm leaves are the only kind of basketwork ever mentioned.

String and cord making.—For cordage the inner bast of the bottle-tree (*Chorisia ventricosa*) bark was thoroughly chewed by the women. The masticated fibers were dried in the sun and then immersed for 24 hours in the juice of the leaves of tinta capichaba to dye them violet, or in the juice of genipa fruit to turn them blackish. When put in contact with crushed bark of the urucú tree they took on a yellow tinge. The women twisted these fibers into two-ply strings on their thighs with the flat of the hand. They also drew fibers from pieces of tucum (*Astrocaryum* sp.) bark or caraguatá leaves which had been left to rot in water.

A net maker started with two loops fixed to her toes and from them built up other rows of simple loops ("point de tulle simple"). The finished bags (pl. 105, *l*), resembling the Chaco carrying nets, were similarly decorated with stripes of different colors.

Pottery.—The existence of pottery has been denied by several travelers, but it seems certain that, at least in recent times, the *Botocudo* made small globular pots of a grayish clay.

Tools.—Stone ax blades (pl. 105, *g*) were lashed between two sticks and coated with wax. Bamboo splinters were used as knives (pl. 105, *f*).

Weapons.—The Portuguese, describing the 16th-century *Aimoré*, stress the unusual length of their bows; modern specimens measured only 5 to 7 feet (1.5 to 2.1 m.). They were made of the blackish trunks of palm wood, generally *Astrocaryum ayri*, split into four sections and scraped until the shaft was rounded and tapered at both ends. The embira or caraguatá strings were made taut or lax by twisting. Some bows were decorated with yellow or black wrappings of guembé strips. Often bows were trimmed with rings or bunches of feathers.

Two kinds of reeds, cannachubas and ubá (*Gynerium parviflorum*), were used for the arrow shafts. The arrowheads were of the traditional three types: (1) Lanceolate bamboo blades; (2) cylindrical rods of airi or páo d'arco wood with lateral barbs; and (3) bird arrows tipped with wooden knobs. Two feathers with the barbs notched on one side were set tangentially against the shaft and fastened at both ends (eastern Brazilian or arched feathering). Fishing arrows had neither barbed heads nor feathering. The archer seized the butt of the arrow between the thumb and the second finger and pulled the cord with the other fingers. The range was about 100 feet. A guard protected the archer's wrist against the impact of the bowstring. The pellet bow is still used by present-day *Botocudo* to shoot small birds.

The heavy clubs ascribed to the ancient *Aimoré* have never been observed by modern travelers. Like many Indians of the forest, the *Botocudo* protect their retreat by setting sharp bamboo splinters on the paths which they follow.

Fire making.—The *Botocudo* produced fire by the drill method. The drill was either a stick 8 to 9 feet long (about 2.8 m.) or a short stick of *Ficus* or *Cecropia* wood inserted in an arrow shaft. When drilling fire, the *Botocudo* knelt and held the hearth under the left foot. Fire was produced in 30 to 40 seconds. Small torches were made of beeswax.

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

There were bands of about 50 to 200 individuals grouped into extended families. The head of a band was its strong man, strength being defined in terms of "supernatural power," a prerequisite of the chieftaincy (*Nimuendajú*, mss.). His main function was to prevent internal quarrels, distribute game among the several families, and lead war parties. Generally undistinguishable from his followers by any particular mark, he was painted somewhat differently in war, and may have worn a special basketry headdress. In camp the family groups observed a set order, the oldest man always staying at the end of a line of huts.

There were constant conflicts between bands, typically settled by duels between pairs of opponents who alternately struck each other with long sticks (pl. 109). Women took part in the fights, wrestling and boxing women of the opposite group. Revenge and sexual jealousy were the chief motives for feuds; there is no evidence of fights because of suspected sorcery.

Manizer's and *Nimuendajú*'s imperfect data on kinship terms suggest a generation system without distinction of maternal and paternal uncles and aunts.

CANNIBALISM

The *Botocudo* have repeatedly been branded as ferocious cannibals, but the evidence is dubious, generally derived from hearsay stories.

LIFE CYCLE

Childbirth.—Women gave birth in the bush unaided and returned to the camp after a bath.

Obstreperous children were seldom beaten; instead, their mothers threatened them with ghosts, jaguars, and White people.

Marriage.—Girls married at puberty, but during youth the conjugal ties seem to have been very weak. Often a man would rear an orphan or a captive girl until she was old enough to be taken as a wife. Groups seem to have been exogamous. For a marriage within the band, the parents had to give their consent and expected some small gifts. Polygyny was the privilege of energetic, skillful hunters who could support several wives, and was especially common among chiefs. Some *Botocudo* had up to 12 mates, but one or two was the usual number. Spouses were jealous and thrashed each other if they discovered their mate "in flagranti."

Nimuendajú recorded five cases of sororal polygyny, one of non-sororal polygyny, and two of the levirate. The latter was certainly not compulsory.

There is no indication of a parent-in-law taboo.

Funerary rites.—On this point our sources disagree. Wied-Neuwied's *Botocudo* (1820-21, 2:56) tied the hands of the deceased and buried him in an extended position. After the grave had been filled, it was covered with sticks and a fire was built on both sides to keep the bad spirits at bay. For a prominent person, a small cabin was erected above the sepulcher. On the other hand, Saint-Hilaire (1830-51, 2:161) reports interment in a flexed position in a shallow hole, over which a square and flimsy shed was built. The surroundings were cleared and feathers and animal hair attached to the shed. Again, according to Manizer (1919, p. 264), the *Botocudo* abandoned the corpse in the dwelling or left it in the forest with a few belongings.

MEDICINE

According to Ehrenreich (1887, p. 35), the *Botocudo* knew many medicinal plants. They used ipecacuanha, several purges, such as andaussu (*Joannesia princeps*), and diaphoretics, such as the jaborandi. Wounds were covered with crushed plants or smeared with the stringent juice of the cotton tree, rich in tannin. Chest diseases

were treated with infusions of a creeper or by smoking or snuffing powder made from the same plant. Skin diseases, e. g., smallpox, were treated by rubbing the body with a plant, the *jaborandi do matto*. For itching, the skin was scratched with thorns. Feverish persons sat by a fire or took baths in the river. Sick people were also exposed to the steam produced by pouring water on glowing stones.

The *Botocudo*, like the *Puri-Coroado*, practiced bloodletting with a small bow and arrow or simply with a bamboo splinter. They generally cut a vein on the temples.

Medicine men are not reported among the *Botocudo*, except as mentioned under Religion.

ESTHETIC AND RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Musical instruments.—The nose flute is the most characteristic music instrument of the *Botocuda*. The blowhole is perforated through a septum at the proximal end of the reed, which has two stops, one for the forefinger and the other for the little finger. The Indians also produced shrill sounds by blowing into a funnel made of a twisted blade of grass with a transverse blade of grass across the small aperture. They signaled with whistles made of the giant armadillo's tail. Dancers marked time by stamping tubes of bamboo sections.

Songs.—*Botocudo* men manifested extreme emotion by breaking into short songs in the course of ordinary speech. Some songs continued a spoken lament; others expressed joy in varying pitches. Wied-Neuwied describes male singers as putting the left hand over the head or a finger into the ear. Dance songs were improvisations on some event of the day but with traditional refrains repeated by everyone.

Dances.—Men and women formed a circle, each resting his arms on his neighbors' shoulders, then, stamping the ground with a foot, turned in a circle singing under a precentress who sat in a hut. In some dances the individual at each end of a half circle hopped on one foot, pressing the other against his neighbor's waist. Certain ceremonial dances dramatized hunting, others represented the road to the sky by a line of individuals.

RELIGION

Souls and ghosts.—Every adult has a series of souls (*nakandyúng*), some people as many as six. Of these, however, only one resides within the body, the rest remaining nearby. A child gets his first soul when about 4 years old, gradually acquiring others. In sleep the primary soul may leave the body and have experiences of its own—the sleeper's dreams; its loss causes illness. Before a person dies this soul

dies within him; the others accompany the corpse to the grave and soar above it, weeping unseen. These souls no longer eat and would perish unless pitying sky spirits, the marét, carried them off to their land, whence the souls never return and henceforth lose all significance for mortals. Unlike the *Camacan* and *Mashacalí*, the *Botocudo* do not believe in the transformation of souls into man-eating jaguars.

From the bones of the corpse rise ghosts (nandýong or nanitiong), which reside in an underworld where the sun shines during the terrestrial night. Although the marét chase returning spooks away on sight, a nandyóng occasionally appears to human beings, whose safety lies in bodily thrashing the apparition. Women are thus the principal sufferers from ghosts' attacks.

Sky spirits.—In the sky dwells a race of spirits known to ordinary mortals as tokón, but to their protégés (yikégn) as marét. With these favored few the spirits communicate, and to them they grant extraordinary powers. The marét are of both sexes and all ages, live in abundance without having to work, suffer neither sickness nor death, and through their favorites bestow boons on mankind.

The yikégn, essentially shamans, supplicate the marét for remedies against sickness and may even acquire the power of reviving the dead. When people lack anything they appeal to the yikégn, who sing to the marét and get all manner of victuals or other objects for the petitioners. The shamans further can turn themselves and others into animal shapes.

All chiefs are yikégn, but not all yikégn are chiefs. Characteristically, a man acquires power in the woods by meeting a group of marét who begin playing shuttlecock using him as the ball, and end by conferring supernatural powers on him.

Within the village a post about 10 feet (3 m.) high is sacred to the marét. It is of *Myroxylon balsamum* wood; its upper third is carved into a human image with the face turned east, the body being formed of the red heartwood, the head and the limb stumps of the white sapwood. When a shaman sang to the spirits, all the villagers would paint themselves with red paint and assemble in a circle round him, but the 6 to 12 marét who came would not be visible except to the yikégn. His chants could induce them to descend by the pillar, stand near it, and watch lest harm come to the village; after the ceremony, the marét would return to the sky.

The spirits are ruled by the oldest of all, whom Manizer calls Maret-khmakniam and Nimuendajú terms Yekán kren-yirugn, "Father White-Head." He, too, lives in the sky, but somewhat apart from other marét, and never comes down to the earth. Manizer's informants described him as a giant with white hair on his head and red hair on his face, and as killing women with his huge penis. He sends rain

and storms, kills enemies with invisible arrows, and causes the phases of the moon by covering it with a blanket. He instituted the use of labrets and earplugs, and certain songs belong to him. Nimuendajú was unable to corroborate most of these details.

MYTHOLOGY

Botocudo mythology is imperfectly known, but some details are suggestive. It was believed that the moon might fall on the earth and kill everyone. The rainbow is the shadow of the sun. Eclipses are due to quarrels between Sun and Moon, who turn black with rage and shame at each others' vituperation. The sky was once close to the earth, but later separated. A great snake is lord of the water, signals to the rain, and makes it fall; the rainbow is called "the urine of the great snake." Hummingbird at one time hoarded all the water in the world, but was trailed by one of his fellow beings while bathing, and this creature splashed the water in all directions, thus creating the rivers and brooks. Similarly, Carrion Vulture alone originally possessed fire; Mutum played dead and was about to be roasted by Vulture, but seized a firebrand and, when pursued, passed it on to Heron, who hurled the fire in all directions. Unlike the *Camacan* and *Mashacali*, the *Botocudo* do not stand in superstitious awe of the jaguar, relevant tales being merely hunting stories.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Cardim, 1939; Ehrenreich, 1887; Fróes de Abreu, 1929; Hartt, 1870; Ihering, 1911; Keane, 1884; Knoche, 1913; Lacerda and Peixoto, 1876; Magalhães de Gandavo, 1922; Manizer, 1919, 1934; Ploetz and Métraux, 1930; Rudolph, 1909; Saint-Hilaire, 1830-51; Simoens da Silva, 1924; Spix and Martius, 1823-31; Tschudi, 1866; Wied-Neuwied, 1820-21, 1822.