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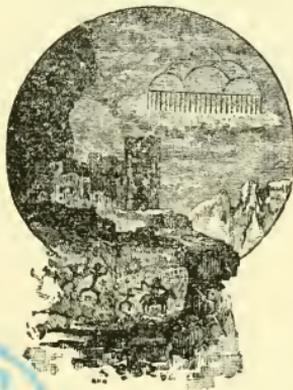
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# THE MASHACALÍ, PATASHÓ, AND MALALÍ LINGUISTIC FAMILIES

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## TRIBAL DIVISIONS AND HISTORY

The *Mashacalí* linguistic family includes the following tribes: *Mashacalí*, *Macuní*, *Cumanashó* (*Cumanachó*), *Caposhó*, *Pañame* (*Panyame*), and *Monoshó* (*Monoxó*). It was formerly considered part of the *Ge* family, but linguistic studies have proved the relationship illusory (map 1, No. 16; map 7).

Nimuendajú found his own *Mashacalí* and *Patashó* clearly related, whereas Wied-Neuwied's *Patashó* and Saint-Hilaire's *Mashacalí* word lists raise grave doubts of a relationship. Nimuendajú explains the difference between his and Wied-Neuwied's vocabulary as possibly due to local specialization—the groups visited being respectively 186 miles (300 km.) apart—and also to intermarriages with *Patashó*.

The *Macuní* (*Moaquanhi*, *Macuaní*, *Makuní*), who originally lived with the *Monoshó* in the mountains near the borders of the States of Minas Gerais, Porto Seguro, and Bahfa, were driven from their home country by the *Botocudo* and took refuge at Alto dos Bois, in the district of Minas Novas (State of Minas Gerais).

The *Mashacalí* (*Mashakalí*, *Mashacari*, *Maxacalí*, *Machaculí*) came originally from the eastern borders of the State of Minas Gerais (lat. 16° S., long. 40° W.), but were pushed by the *Botocudo* toward the coast. They first occupied the upper course of the Mucurí River, and later settled near Caravellas. In 1801 they returned to the Jequitinhonha River near Tocoyós; finally, they were established on the Jequitinhonha River near São Miguel. Wied-Neuwied saw a few above Villa Prado on the Rio Prado (Tucurussú River). In 1939, 120 *Mashacalí* were living in two neighboring settlements in the region of the headwaters of the Itanhaem River, State of Minas Gerais, near the Bahfa border.

The former habitat of the *Caposhó*, *Pañame*, and *Monoshó* was between the Jequitinhonha, Araguaí, and Mucurí Rivers. According to Ehrenreich (1896, p. 116), they were subgroups of the *Patashó*, but Martius' word lists for those tribes disprove this relationship. Loukotka (1931 c) and Nimuendajú regard them as tribes belonging to the *Mashacalí* linguistic family. The *Cumanashó*, also a *Mashacalí* tribe, lived south of the Jequitinhonha River.

According to Loukotka (1932 c, p. 22), the *Patashó* (*Patachó*, *Pataxó*) formed by themselves an isolated linguistic family. They were found on the headwaters of the Porto Seguro and the Jucurucú Rivers, and between the Rio Prado and Rio das Contas. Some groups of this tribe lived in the vicinity of Alcobaça, Prado, Comechatyba, and Trancozo. In 1938, 16 *Patashó* still remained in the Paraguaçu Reser-

vation, between the Cachoeira and Prado Rivers, southeast of the State of Bahía.

Loukotka, 1931 c, p. 24) classifies the *Malali* in the *Mashacali* linguistic family, but Nimuendajú considers their language as forming an isolated linguistic family. Formerly their territory was much larger than that in which they were found in the last century. Harassed by the *Botocudo*, they placed themselves under the protection of the Portuguese, who settled them in a little village, Porto de Santa Cruz, on the Sussuhy River, a northern tributary of the Rio Doce, and in the village of San Antonio, near Passanha. Previously, they lived between the Araçuahí and Mucurí Rivers. In 1787 the *Malali* numbered about 500; in 1862 there were only 30 left.

## CULTURE

### SUBSISTENCE ACTIVITIES

**Farming.**—All these tribes except the *Patashó* seem to have practiced agriculture before they established permanent contact with the Whites. When they were described for the first time in the beginning of the 19th century, they all raised maize, beans, sweet potatoes, and manioc. Not all the *Mashacali* groups, however, planted manioc; those who lived near São Miguel grew mainly sweet potatoes and paid little attention to their fields. Even in recent years the *Mashacali* planted mostly maize and sweet potatoes, but, significantly, neither manioc nor tobacco nor cotton. On the other hand, manioc and cotton are listed by Wied-Neuwied (1820–21, 1:376) among the plants cultivated by the *Mashacali* of the Rio Prado.<sup>1</sup>

Among the *Macuní*, men sowed the maize, while women planted the sweet potatoes, which they dug out with a digging stick. Like many incipient farmers, the *Macuní* rarely waited for the maize to ripen before harvesting it.

**Fishing.**—The acculturated *Mashacali* of São Miguel caught fish in rectangular enclosures with sliding doors into which the fish were lured by wasp larvae or other bait. As a rule, fishing played a small part in the economy of all these tribes. Hunting and collecting, however, were important.

**Food preparation.**—The *Patashó* smoked the game on a rectangular babracot. The *Macuní* boiled meat with manioc flour.

### HOUSES

The original hut of the *Patashó*, *Mashacali*, and *Macuní* consisted of a dome-shaped framework made of branches stuck in the ground and

<sup>1</sup> The *Malali* planted jacatupe (Papilionaceae), the starchy tubers of which were eaten roasted or boiled (Saint-Hilaire, 1830–51, 1:423).

bent inward. It was thatched with palm fronds (Wied-Neuwied, 1820-21, p. 286). The *Monoshó* may have had large communal houses, covered with palm leaves and pieces of bark (Saint-Hilaire, 1930-51).

The *Macuní*, *Monoshó*, *Pañame*, and *Mashacalí* slept on bedsteads—probably a late acquisition from Brazilian Mestizos. The *Mashacalí*, however, knew how to make hammocks.

#### DRESS AND ORNAMENTS

Among the *Mashacalí*, *Patashó*, and *Malalí*, and probably among all the other groups, both sexes went naked. The men tied the fore-skin of the penis with a creeper. The *Mashacalí*, *Patashó*, and *Macuní* wore thin sticks or reeds in the perforated lower lip and in their ear lobes, but these ornaments were discarded soon after their contact with the Neo-Brazilians. The *Macuní* wore arm bands made of the tubular cocoons of a larva (Saint-Hilaire, 1830-51, 2:62). The literature on these Indians makes no reference to other ornaments.

Most of these Indians cropped their hair above the eyebrows and along the nape of the neck. Some *Mashacalí* and *Patashó* shaved their head, leaving only one tuft of hair in front and another behind. The *Macuní* combed their long hair with a stick sharpened at one end and somewhat flattened at the other (Saint-Hilaire, 1930-51, 2:55).

#### MANUFACTURES

**Strings and nets.**—The *Macuní* made strings and threads of fibers obtained by scratching the inner bark of the embauba tree (*Cecropia* sp.) with a shell. They twisted the fibers on the thigh and with the threads made carrying nets. The *Mashacalí* and *Patashó* stored most of their property in netted bags, probably of the same type as those used by the *Botocudo* and other tribes of the area.<sup>2</sup> The *Mashacalí* women seen by Saint-Hilaire (1830-51, 1:212) spun cotton to make hammocks and bags.

**Pottery.**—The *Mashacalí* and *Macuní* women made plain small globular pots using a black clay.

**Weapons.**—The ancient *Mashacalí* bow (pl. 105, c), like that of the *Camacan*, was characterized by a longitudinal groove along the outer side in which the archer placed a spare arrow when shooting. Both ends of the bow were notched to hold the string. *Patashó* bows, made of ayri (*Astrocaryum ayri*) or páo d'arco (*Tabebuia impetigianosa*), were very long, some measuring more than 8 feet 9 inches (2.55 m.).

<sup>2</sup> "Quand les femmes [*Macuní*] veulent faire le filet, elles attachment leur ouvrage sur leur cuisse par le moyen d'un cordon et la ficelle qu'elles emploient, mise en écheveau leur tient lieu de navette" (Saint-Hilaire, 1830-51, 2:53).

The arrows (pl. 105, *d*) of these various tribes were of the usual eastern Brazilian type ("arched feathering"), except that on *Mashacalí* arrows, the feathering was at some distance from the butt.

#### SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ORGANIZATION

During Nimuendajú's brief visit to the *Mashacalí* in 1938-39 he found no indications of moieties. At that time most families had individual huts, and residence was predominantly patrilocal. Parallel cousins are classed as siblings and may not marry; whereas cross-cousin marriages are allowed and possibly preferred. There was evidence of the levirate, as well as of sororal polygyny—the only form of plural marriage.

The *Malalí* had a council composed of the most prominent warriors, who met in a special house to discuss any collective undertaking (Saint-Hilaire, 1830-51, 1: 430).

#### LIFE CYCLE

**Childbirth.**—*Macuní* women bore children in the forest attended by old women. They are said to have wound around the waist a creeper which they tied to two tree branches in the hope of facilitating delivery. Mothers suspended the navel cord around the neck of the baby until it was entirely dry.

**Puberty.**—Some distance from each *Mashacalí* settlement there is a men's house; it is strictly tabooed to women and is open to uninitiated boys only before nightfall. Here centers the spirit cult. Souls of the dead, who reside in the sky, appear to male sleepers in their dreams. Boys undergo a lengthy graduated initiation. Every night during this period boys receive singing lessons in the men's house. Piercing sounds on a whistle summon the dead. Sometimes the inmates disguise their voices to make the uninitiated believe in the presence of spirits.

The *Macuní* celebrated the coming of age of girls with dances. The marriage ceremony consisted only in the formal acceptance by the bride's father of some game presented by the bridegroom.

**Death observances.**—The *Macuní* buried children in the huts, adults in the bush. They made a fire on the grave, on which they also deposited food. Sometimes they erected a post on the grave or built a miniature hut.

The *Mashacalí* interred corpses in a squatting position. There is no evidence of secondary burial. Dead people sometimes were believed to turn into jaguars.

## ESTHETIC AND RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

**Musical instruments.**—The only musical instruments known to have been used by the Indians of this group are gourd rattles, bamboo stamping tubes, and whistles.

*Macuní* songs recounted long enumerations of game animals or trifling incidents of daily life.

**Amusements.**—*Mashacalí* amusements included a game with shuttlecocks of maize-husk balls. Some boys made cat's cradles, which were produced with the help of the teeth.

**Intoxicants.**—The *Malalí* provoked an ecstatic sleep with pleasant visions by swallowing dry bixo da taquara (*Cossus* or *Hepiale*). The fat of this grub, which bores into the bamboo, is a substantial food and a delicacy, but the digestive tract has the singular property of inducing a trance, and the head is a deadly poison. Powdered bixo da taquara was put on wounds (Saint-Hilaire, 1830-51, 1: 432-433).

## RELIGION

The only data on religion for the tribes of this stock are those obtained by Nimuendajú in 1938-39 among the last surviving *Mashacalí*.

Two types of sacred objects—masquerade costumes and bull-roarers—were linked with the initiation rites. The disguise consisted of a coarse bast fringe suspended from a rope on the wearer's head, the fringe completely hiding the masquerader, who carried a 6-foot switch. All the costumes were stored in the men's house and were taboo to the uninitiated, who were told that the dead appear in this apparel.

The use of these disguises is restricted to a special season, during which bull-roarers—dubbed "men," "women," and "boys," according to their size—are wielded by those privileged to do so. The sound is interpreted to outsiders as emanating from the spirits, and newly initiated boys are forbidden on pain of corporal punishment to divulge the secret.

Long after the close of the mummers' season, a sacred post<sup>3</sup> about 18 feet (5.5 m.) high is erected in front of the men's house in the dance plaza, which is not taboo to women. Men dance around it while the souls of the dead supposedly descend from the sky via the post.

Though there are some suggestions of a Sun and Moon myth, a solar or lunar cult is not evident.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Douville, 1929-30; Ehrenreich, 1891; Loukotka, 1931 c; Martius, 1867; Métraux, 1929-30; Ploetz and Métraux, 1930; Pohl, 1832-37; Saint-Hilaire, 1830-51; Spix and Martius, 1823-31; Wied-Neuwied, 1820-21.

<sup>3</sup> This post is described by Pohl (1832-37, 2: 447). It was decorated with figures painted with red earth.