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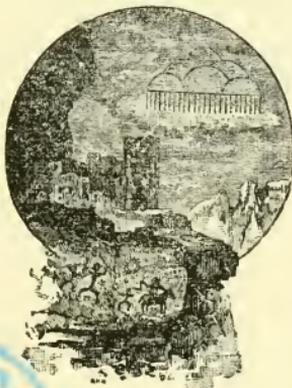
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OF
SOUTH AMERICAN INDIANS

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THE CAMACAN LINGUISTIC FAMILY

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The *Camacan*, *Cutashó* (*Cutaxó*), *Catathoy*, *Masacará*, and *Meniän* spoke related dialects which belong to an isolated linguistic family. Formerly, they were included in the *Ge* family, but Loukotka (1932) and Nimuendajú consider them to be a new and independent family. Since the *Camacan* is the best-known tribe of the subgroup, statements not otherwise qualified apply to it (map 1, *No. 17*; map 7).

TRIBAL DIVISIONS AND HISTORY

Camacan (*Camacã*, *Mongoyó*, *Monshoko*, *Ezeshio*).—The *Camacan* proper remained for many years hostile to the Portuguese and fought tenaciously against them until 1806. At the beginning of the last century, they lived in six or seven villages somewhat to the north of the Rio Pardo (Patipe River) (lat. 15° S., long. 41° W.) (Ayres de Casal, 1845, 2: 90).

In 1817 the *Camacan* who were settled at Jiboya, near Arrayal da Conquista in the State of Bahia, were visited by Maximilian Wied-Neuwied (1820-21, 2: 211-214). His short description of their culture is still one of our best sources on these Indians. At that time the *Camacan* lived in small "aldeas" under the rule of "directors" appointed by the government. They were mistreated and exploited by the colonists and their native culture was breaking down. According to Wied-Neuwied, their former territory was bounded on the west by longitude 40° W., on the north by the Rio das Contas, and on the northeast by the Gavião River, on the southwest by the towns of Ciboia and F. B. da Vareda, and on the south by the Rio Pardo; that is to say, it covered the whole basin of the Rio dos Ilheos up to its headwaters and up to the mountains of Itaraca. None of their groups reached the sea.

In 1819 Spix and Martius (1823-31, 2: pp. 690-699) spent a few days with a group of *Camacan* settled at Villa de S. Pedro de Alcantara, under the care of a Capuchin missionary. They were told the *Camacan* had six villages in the forests along the Gravatá River in the District of Minas Novas, but that the bulk of the tribe inhabited the region between the Rio da Cachoeira and the Grugunhy River, a tributary of the Rio das Contas. They heard of the group established near Arrayal da Conquista in the Serra do Mundo Novo, and of another near Ferradas.

The French traveler Douville saw these Indians in 1833-34 on the Itahipe River and on Rio dos Ilheos.

In 1938 Nimuendajú found 11 *Camacan* on a reservation shared with remnants of other tribes. The area allotted to the several groups was at about longitude 40° W., between the Rio da Cachoeira and the Rio Pardo.

Catathoy, *Cutashó*, *Masacara*, and *Meniän*.—The *Catathoy* lived on the north-western borders of the State of Porto Seguro; the *Cutashó* on the northern slopes of the Almorés range, south of the Rio dos Ilheos and north of Rio Pardo. The *Masacará* dwelt near the São Francisco River, at Joazeiro. The *Meniän* (*Menien*, *Menieng*) were a group of *Camacan* Indians who formerly lived on the upper Rio Grande de Belmonte. They were driven out of their territory by the Paulistas and sought refuge in the town of Villa de Belmonte, where they soon merged with the local population. In 1817, although they hardly remembered their native language, they still retained considerable skill in making mats, baskets, and nets. (See Wied-Neuwied, 1820–21, 1: 317–318.)

CULTURE

SUBSISTENCE ACTIVITIES

The *Camacan* usually opened clearings on hilltops, where they cultivated sweet potatoes, beans, sweet manioc, gourds, watermelons, yams, maize, cotton, cashews, papayas, bananas, oranges, and pineapples. They supplemented their diet by hunting, fishing, gathering considerable honey, and collecting wild fruits. A community in want would visit another village, where they helped exhaust the resources of the inhabitants. Crops belonged to the planters, but bananas, after a single harvest by the owner, could be plucked by anyone.

The dog was the only domesticated animal.

HOUSES

There were large communal houses accommodating as many as 20 families, each having its own sleeping platform, covered with fibers.

DRESS AND ORNAMENTS

Originally, the men wore only a penis sheath of leaves. After European contact, women, formerly completely naked, adopted first a bark belt, later a string with fringes in front and behind (pl. 112, *a*), and, finally, a woven loincloth. Men wore necklaces of monkey teeth and tapir hoofs. The only described specimens of feather ornaments were showy: a feather headdress built on a net with a crown of long tail feathers on the top. Men passed feathers through the perforated lobes of their ears.

The *Camacan* tied a cotton string under the knees and around the ankles of babies in order to give an elegant shape to their legs.

They carefully depilated the face and body. Chiefs wore a tonsure; most other men had their hair clipped around the neck or let it fall over the shoulders.

They painted themselves with urucú, genipa, and catua, a pigment extracted from the wood of *Broussonetia tinctoria* and combined with castor oil or grease. Men's favorite patterns were vertical and horizontal stripes on the body; women preferred half circles around their eyes and on their breasts. Both sexes also smeared themselves with urucú leaving only the head, hands, and feet unpainted. A favorite *Cutashó* motif was a circle with diverging rays like a "sun."

MANUFACTURES

Basketry.—There is no mention of basketry among the *Camacan*.

Weaving.—Women were expert at spinning 4-ply cotton strings, which they laced (meshed without knots) or netted (meshed with knots) into beautiful nets with alternating yellow or red stripes. The loom for the nets is described as an arched branch stuck into the ground and crossed by a horizontal stick corresponding to the lower edge of the fabric.

The *Camacan* wove on a vertical loom (pl. 112, *b*). The patterns on their cloth were obtained by dyeing the threads with genipa, urucú, and with a yellow wood (*Chlorophora tinctoria*).

Pottery.—Within the tribal territory, Nimuendajú found sherds of some 20 large spherical vessels without either a standing base or a special rim. At least the lower half had been built up of a lump of clay, the top being coiled, with rows of fingernail impressions. Painting and plastic decoration were lacking. The specimens depart from *Arawak* and *Tupí* norms, but approximate in technique samples from Pernambuco tribes.

Weapons.—The bow, made of paraüna wood, like that of the *Patashó*, was characterized by a longitudinal groove along the outer side; it measured from 7 to 8 feet (2.1 to 2.4 m.), but was shorter than that of the *Patashó* (pl. 112, *c*).

Arrowheads fell into three usual classes, being tipped with a bamboo knife, a sharpened brauna rod, or—for hunting birds—with a bulbous root. Feathering of the arched (eastern Brazilian) type, was placed at some distance from the butt. War arrows are said to have been poisoned with the sap of a creeper (Spix and Martius, 1823-31, 2: 694).

LIFE CYCLE

Birth and childhood.—At her first childbirth, a woman was helped by an old woman, who placed her in a hole in the ground. After the delivery, the husband kept to his bed and refrained from eating tapir, peccary, and monkey flesh, subsisting on bush yam and birds, while his wife carried on her usual work. Children were nursed until the age of 3 or 4.

Parents never ordered their offspring about, but consulted their wishes. As soon as possible children made themselves independent of their families, planting crops and cooking for themselves at an early age. After killing game, they shared it with their parents as well as with the other members of the community.

Marriage.—Polygyny was tolerated by the *Camacan*, but to avoid jealousy among the bachelors, men generally had only one wife. However, couples separated very easily.

A young man wishing to marry had to ask the permission of the head of his group, who, on consenting, would "buy" the girl if she belonged to another community. A chief had to take as his wife another chief's daughter. The marriage ceremony was celebrated by a banquet and a drinking bout, during which the guests made presents to the newly wedded pair.

In case of divorce the man had to provide food for his children even when his former wife remarried.

Death observances.—A dead man, duly painted and with all his feather ornaments on, was put, in a flexed position, in a grave 4 to 5 feet (1.2 to 1.5 m.) deep. His weapons and a jar full of beer were placed with him. When the grave was filled with earth, a fire was built on top of it, and the site then was covered with palm leaves and branches. A pot, the size of which indicated the age and sex of the deceased, was also placed on the grave. The relatives came now and then to leave an offering of meat. They interpreted the disappearance of the meat as a sign that the offering had been well received by the dead and henceforth tabooed the animal whose meat had been accepted by the soul (Spix and Martius, 1823-31, 2: 695). The sepulcher was later opened, and the bones were taken home and spread on a platform, painted, and placed in a funeral urn, which was buried in a shallow pit. The transfer of bones was celebrated by a great festival.

The bodies of sorcerers were burned.

Funeral laments were uttered three times a day. A widower could remarry soon after the funeral, but a widow had to wait for a longer period. The dead were worshiped at the beginning of the rainy season during a feast in their honor. According to a second-hand account of Nimuendajú's *Camacan* informant, the souls of the dead, visible only to old men, would enter the house to dance and join in a carousal at night.

A dead man who had a grudge against the living, would return in the guise of a jaguar to take revenge. At a mother's request, the souls of good people were reincarnated in newly born babies. Otherwise they went to a big hut in the sky, where they were assured of an

abundant supply of food. The evil ones also flew to the sky, where their main pleasure was to cause storms.

The *Cutashó* buried the dead, together with their property, in their dwellings. The relatives celebrated a funeral meal and set fire to the house. The souls were supposed to go into the earth.

ESTHETIC AND RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Musical instruments.—Dancers shook strings of deer, peccary, and tapir hoofs on a cord. They also marked the rhythm of their dances with a gourd rattle. They played the musical bow and scraped a grooved piece of gourd with a stick.

Dances.—Men danced in circles to the accompaniment of songs and gourd rattles. They were followed by pairs of women who held each other by the waist (pl. 111).

Alcoholic beverages and intoxicants.—A drink was brewed of maize or of sweet potatoes, or, occasionally, of papayas or honey. The maize or sweet potatoes were partly chewed and then sprinkled with hot water. The mass then was poured into a large trough dug into the bulky trunk of the bottle-tree (*barrigudo*), which was half buried in the ground so that the liquid could be warmed without burning the bark.

Drinking bouts and log racing.—Drinking sprees were sometimes combined with communal hunts to provide an ample supply of meat. On such occasions there might also be log races,¹ run by two teams, *wadyé* and *waná*, distinguished by their decorative paint. As a child grew up, its mother would assign it to one or the other team, every *Camacan* individual thus acquiring membership. These "moiety" were not exogamous since Nimuendajú's female informant's parents were both *wadyé*; and membership was not fixed by heredity since she and her brother were both *waná*.

MYTHOLOGY AND FOLKLORE

One of the principal myths revolves about Sun and Moon, the latter figuring as the foolish, mischief-making brother, whom Sun several times restores to life. In one episode Sun assumes the shape of a *capybara*, thus getting the villagers to shoot at him, whereby he

¹ "Often on these solemn occasions, when the night has been spent dancing, another game takes place. In order to display their strength young people run to the forest, cut a large cylindrical limb of a *barrigudo* (*Bombax* sp.) tree which is very heavy when full of sap. They plant a stick in each end in order to carry it more easily. The strongest of the group takes this piece of wood, places it on his shoulder and with this load races home. The others follow him and try to take the log away from him. The struggle lasts until they arrive at the place where the girls are gathered to compliment them. Sometimes the log is so heavy that one of the champions gets ill." (Wied-Neuwied, 1820-21, 2: 221.)

replenishes his depleted stock of arrows. Cataclysmological ideas include a deluge, a conflagration, and a jaguar's attack on the moon during a lunar eclipse. The Star Wife story culminates in the husband's being carried back to earth by vultures. A remarkable parallel to the North American Bloodclot myth is the story of the overpowering of a wrestling ogre by a hero who throws his opponent on the blade prepared for unsuspecting wayfarers; the conqueror destroys other fiends but anticlimactically dies at the hands of a brother of one of his adversaries. The folklore abounds in other fantastic elements, such as tribes of strong dwarfs, and lice-eaters. Animal characters are frequent, among them are the jaguar, the tapir, and various birds.

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