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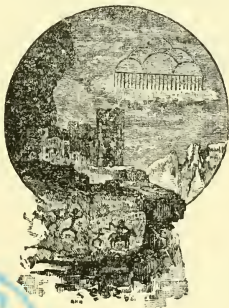
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THE "TAPUYA"

By ROBERT H. LOWIE

Tapuya (*Tapuyo*, *Tapuia*, *Tapüja*, *Tapüia*, *Tapoyer*) (map 1, No. 18; map 7) is a *Tupí* term requiring close scrutiny. The earlier writers on eastern Brazil frequently applied it to any Indians obviously unrelated to the *Tupí*. Soares de Souza (1851) even extends it to people between the Rio Grande do Sul and the Río de la Plata, who were probably southern *Tupí* and certainly not identical with the tribes the same author describes as natives of Bahía (Schuller, 1912). According to Magalhães de Gandavo (1922), the *Tapuya* on the Maranhão River claimed affinity with the *Aimoré*; and Saint-Hilaire (1830-51, 1: 149) heard the *Botocudo* referred to as "*Tapuyo*."

In his basic classification, Martius (1867, 1: 283, 345, 778) interprets the word to mean either "enemies" or "Westerners." He wavers in his identification, virtually identifying the "*Tapuya*" with the *Ge* family, then treating them as at least mainly *Ge*, and again regarding them as distinct, but mixed with *Ge*. Our earliest authority, Fernão Cardim (1939), writing in 1584, gives a roster of 76 "*Tapuia*" tribes, but indicates great diversity of speech and custom among them. In 1587 Soares de Souza (1851) distinguishes among non-*Tupí* the *Ubirajara* in the sertão of Bahía beyond the São Francisco River; the *Tapuia* of the *Maracá* tribe (whom Pompeu Sobrinho, 1939, considers *Cariri*); and other *Tapuia* hostile to the *Maracá*. Vasconcellos (1865) recognizes nearly a hundred diverse *Tapuya* tongues; and though this need not be taken literally and, in any case, would not necessarily imply many unrelated families, the reader of the early writers gets a cumulative impression of differentiation within northeastern Brazil, the area in which the overwhelming majority of *Tapuya* are localized. The older sources commonly include *Cariri* under the head of *Tapuya*. Apart from the *Ge*, there are demonstrably six unrelated linguistic families within the area; viz, the *Fulnio* (Pompeu Sobrinho, 1935 b), *Shucurú*, *Pancararú*, Indians of Serra Negra, Pernambuco, *Natú*, *Shocó*, and *Tushá*. It thus seems hopeless to assign a definite linguistic meaning to the term "*Tapuya*."

It certainly can lead to nothing but confusion if ethnographic and linguistic considerations are mixed. Thus, the *Tremembé* (*Tere-*

membé), who lived in the country of the Acarahú River, extending as far as the Serra Grande, were excellent runners and swimmers, made anchor-axes, and deposited them on the corpse of a slain enemy.



FIGURE 69.—*Tapuya* man and spear thrower. (Redrawn from Bahnson, 1889, pl. 13.)

These features ally them with various *Ge* tribes, but until the *Tremembé* speech is proved akin to *Ge*, such homologues prove nothing but cultural connection.

But, ethnographically, there is hardly more warrant for considering all *Tapuya* in one category. Of Cardim's (1939) tribes, the

Napara, were farmers, the *Guamure* lacked any form of agriculture, the *Camucuyara* were cannibals, the *Curupehe* merely took heads for trophies, the *Guayatún* "dwell in houses," and the *Curupehe* "have no houses and are like gypsies." Specifically, there is no warrant for lumping the *Tapuya* together as representatives of a particularly rude stage, as has been customary. Pompeu Sobrinho (1939) has rightly pointed out that, archeologically, their habitat in northeastern Brazil is characterized by abundant pottery and polished stone implements and that a good many of them were incipient farmers. Indeed, when such authors as Soares de Souza (1851) declare that a tribe like the *Maracá* fails to cultivate the soil, the statement is at once qualified: they neither plant manioc nor eat vegetables except those their women plant. Still more definitely it is stated that a hostile fellow-*Tapuya* group plants no manioc nor tills the soil except to raise maize and other "legumes."

Não costuma este gentio plantar mandioca, nem fazer lavouras senão de milho e outros legumes; porque não tem ferramentas com que roçar o mato e cavar a terra, e por falta d'ella quebram o mato pequeno as mãos, e ás arvores grandes põem fogo ao pé d'onde está lavrando até que as derruba, e cavam a terra com páos agudos, para plantarem suas sementeiras, e o mais do tempo se mantém com frutas silvestres e com caça, a que são muito afeiçoados. [Soares de Souza, 1851, p. 352.] .

That these maize-growing *Tapuya* were relatively advanced appears from the further statement that they lived in well-walled, strongly stockaded settlements and, like the *Tupinamba*, slept in hammocks. Their procuring salt by burning saltpeter and extracting the ashes may be taken as further evidence of sophistication. In any case, Soares de Souza (1851) is keenly aware of the differences among the *Tapuya* in setting off those nearer the São Francisco River as more rustic (*agrestes*) and using caves (*furnas*) for houses.

A plausible interpretation of early wholesale denials of *Tapuya* agriculture is that the writers were merely contrasting the comparatively intensive farming of the *Tupí*, centering in manioc, with the cruder cultivation of other peoples who grew no manioc, but did plant other species, though remaining largely dependent on wild vegetable fare and on the chase. Only in some such way can we reconcile the evidence in Barlaeus, who in one passage describes his *Tapuya* as rovers subsisting on wild fruits, game, fish, and honey, and subsequently states that nothing is sown without priestly consecration, and that a prophet will predict a good maize crop (Barlaeus, 1659, pp. 697, 706 ff.)

That the "*Tapuya*" of northeastern Brazil, at all events were far more stable than might be assumed from certain accounts seems further indicated by the abundant remains of pottery all over their territory (Pompeu Sobrinho, 1939, p. 233). Finally, the supposed lack of hammocks among the *Tapuya*, which was still assumed as general by

Ehrenreich (1894, pp. 81-90) and others, is not borne out by early sources, as Schuller (1912, 21: 78-98) correctly indicates. Soares de Souza (1851, p. 352) and Herckman (*in* Wätjen, 1921, pp. 254-260; *in* Pompeu Sobrinho, 1934, p. 22) are quite definite on this point.

The inevitable conclusion is that "*Tapuya*" is a blanket term like "Digger Indian" or "Siwash" in North America. No good purpose is served by considering them as a linguistic or ethnic unit. Ethnographically, there were undoubtedly "*Tapuya*" tribes with striking parallels to *Ge* traits, such as the sportive manipulation of heavy logs and the caplike haircut. But the *Ge* themselves are now known to be anything but uniform; and of the specific features found among the *Tarairiu*, the best known *Tapuya* group, some point in quite different directions. Thus, the endocannibalistic disposal of corpses reminds us of the extinct *Tapajó*, and the ritual with the chief's rock-container has a decidedly *Tupinamba* flavor. Analysis thus shows features of wide tropical distribution; some apparently restricted to the *Tarairiu*; still others suggest influences of diverse origin. There is no "*Tapuya*" culture: except in quoting old writers on otherwise undefined groups so designated, the term should be eliminated from scientific usage. (See *The Tarairiu*, p. 563.)

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