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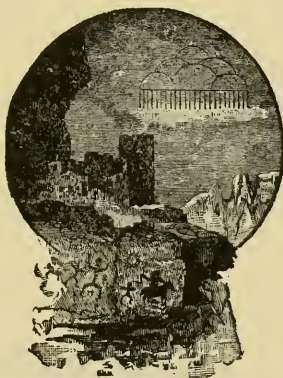
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THE TROPICAL FOREST TRIBES

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TRIBES OF THE RIGHT BANK OF THE GUAPORÉ RIVER

By CLAUDE LÉVI-STRAUSS

INTRODUCTION

The native culture of the region drained by the right tributaries of the Guaporé River is one of the least known in Brazil. Since the 18th century, explorers, travelers, and missionaries have used the Guaporé River as a thoroughfare, and in more recent times hundreds of rubber tappers have worked along its banks and along the lower course of its tributaries. It is likely, therefore, that a thorough study of the tribes of the Guaporé River will show them to have suffered severely from the effects of that continuous traffic, perhaps almost to the point of extinction.

Unlike most South American rivers, the Guaporé River is not the axis of a homogeneous culture area; it is a frontier rather than a link. The *Mojo-Chiquito* culture area extends from the left bank toward the Andes; the heterogeneous tribes on the right bank have a definitely Amazonian culture (map 1, *No. 2*; map 2; map 4). Geographic factors may partly account for this lack of symmetry. The flat landscape of the llanos merges into the marshy lands of the left bank; whereas the right bank, alternately marshy and steep, marks the farthest extension of the highlands of western Brazil. The highlands and the right bank of the Guaporé River define the limits of the culture area to which probably belong the tribes of the southern part of the upper Madeira River Basin, such as the *Kepikiriwat*, discovered in 1914 by the Rondón expedition (Missão Rondón, 1916).

TRIBAL DIVISIONS

Two areas must be distinguished. One is the right bank of the lower Guaporé River between the Rio Branco and the Mamoré River, which is occupied by the *Chapacuran* tribes (p. 397). The basins of the Rio Branco and of the Mequenes and Corumbiara Rivers comprise the second area, where some of the languages seem to be *Tupian*. The *Arua* (not to be confused with the *Arua* at the mouth of the Amazon) and *Macurap* live along the Rio Branco (lat. 13° S., long. 62° W.); the *Wayoro* on the Colorado River (lat. 12° 30' S., long. 62° W.); the

Anniapã, *Guaratãgaja* (Snethlage, 1937 a), and *Cabishinana* (Lévi-Strauss, ms.) on the Mequenes River (lat. 13° S., long. 62° W.); and the *Tupari* (lat. 12° S., long. 62° W.), and *Kepikiriwat* (lat. 11° S., long. 63° W.) on the headwaters of the southern tributaries of the Machado (Gi-Paraná) River. Linguistically distinct from both *Chapacuran* and *Tupian* are: (1) The *Yabuti* (*Japuti*) and *Aricapu*, on the headwaters of the Rio Branco (lat. 12° 30' S., long. 62° W.), whose language shows affinities with the *Ge* dialects (Snethlage, 1937 a) but who are strongly influenced culturally by their neighbors; (2) the *Huari* (*Massaca*) on the Corumbiara River, lat. 14° S., long. 61° W., (Nordenskiöld, 1924 a), who are linguistically linked to the *Puruborã* (*Burubora*) of the headwaters of the São Miguel River on the boundary between the two areas, but who, culturally, display strong similarities to their northern and northwestern neighbors, the *Kepikiriwat* (Lévi-Strauss, ms), *Anniapã*, *Guaratãgaja*, and *Tupari* (Snethlage, E. H., 1937 a); and (3) the *Palmella*, on the right bank of the Guaporé River between the mouths of the Rio Branco and the Mequenes River (lat. 13° S., long. 63° W.), who, until the late 19th century, were the southernmost representatives of the *Cariban* linguistic family in South America (Severiano da Fonseca, 1895). The unknown Indians who live on the right bank of the upper Guaporé River in the region of Villa Bella, probably belong to the *Southern Nambicuarã* (*Cabishi*).

CULTURE

SUBSISTENCE AND FOOD PREPARATION

The tribes of the upper Guaporé River, especially those upstream, rely for food mainly upon maize and peanuts. Manioc is of secondary importance to the natives living between the Guaporé and Machado Rivers. Hualusa, peppers, papaws, gourds, urucú, cotton, and tobacco are widely cultivated. Black beans are grown by the *Guaratãgaja* and *Wayoro*. Gardens are tilled with digging sticks and weeded with chonta knives. An exceptional feature of the area is the raising of grubs in the dregs of maize beer, which is kept in long bamboo containers (Snethlage, 1937 a). On the Guaporé River, as on the Pimenta Bueno River, grubs are allowed to breed freely in the trunks of wild palm trees which are left standing for that purpose when forests are cleared for gardens (Lévi-Strauss, n.d. b). Clearing and tilling gardens are cooperative enterprises; helpers are entertained with beer, snuff, and dances. Crops are sometimes stored on large covered platforms. Certain tribes keep peanuts in large bamboo tubes.

Fish are shot with multipointed arrows or are drugged. The natives blow whistles to attract birds and then shoot them from small watchposts. Throughout the area, they either trap game in pitfalls or shoot

them with plain arrows. The *Amniapä*, *Kepikiriwat*, and *Pawumwa*, also use poisoned arrows and the *Pawumwa*, blowguns.

Flat cakes of maize and manioc are grilled on clay plates. Instead of grating manioc tubers, the *Guaratägaja* mash them with a small stone pounder. *Wayoro* mortars are pieces of bark. The *Amniapä* consider boiled mushrooms a special delicacy, a culinary dish noticed elsewhere only among the *Nambicuara*. Game is roasted in the skin on pyramidal babracots.

DOMESTICATED ANIMALS

The Guaporé River tribes keep dogs, hens, and ducks.

HOUSES

The beehive hut, built around a high central post, seems to be common to the area. Each house is divided by mats into several family compartments. *Tupari* houses shelter up to 35 families; those of the *Wayoro* may contain more than 100 occupants. Houses along the Pimenta Bueno River are smaller. In some villages, Snethlage (1937 a) saw a painted woven screen set up in the middle of the hut as a kind of altar. These tribes sleep in hammocks, those of the *Wayoro* and *Makurap* being unusually large. *Amniapä* and *Kepikiriwat* men use small, concave wooden benches.

DRESS AND ADORNMENT

Among the *Huari*, *Kepikiriwat*, and probably all the southeastern tribes, both men and women cut their hair high above the forehead and depilate the temples and eyebrows (pl. 38, *top*). They wear wooden or rosin labrets in the upper and lower lips and pins of various types in the nasal septum. Women go completely naked except for these and other ornaments—shell beads, cotton necklaces, belts, bracelets, and tight cotton armlets and anklets. *Kepikiriwat*, *Huari*, and *Guaratägaja* men use a small conical penis sheath of leaves. Men of other tribes, except the *Tupari*, wear a short skirt (pl. 38, *bottom, left*) of burití fiber. Ear ornaments of tucumã-nut rings strung together like a chain are used by the *Huari* and *Kepikiriwat*. Skin caps (*Wayoro*), feathered circlets (*Huari*), and strips of fiber (*Amniapä*) are worn on festive occasions. Shell disk necklaces (pl. 38) are used by all tribes except the *Tupari*.

Body painting with genipa juice is especially well developed among the *Amniapä*, who, by means of maize cobs, apply elaborate patterns, such as crosses, dots, circles, and hatchings.

TRANSPORTATION

Carrying nets of tucum fiber are used instead of baskets. All the tribes, except, perhaps, the *Huari*, have canoes.

MANUFACTURES

Spinning and weaving.—Both rolled (“*Bororo*”) and drop (“*Andean*”) spindles are known. Fringed bands are woven on looms similar to those of the *Itene* (*Moré*) (p. 402). Hammocks, which seem to reach a record length among some of the upper Guaporé River tribes, are made by extending a single warp between two perpendicular posts and twining it with a double weft. Arm bands are knitted around a circular piece of wood with a bone or wooden needle (*Macurap* and *Aricapu*).

Pottery.—Pottery is generally crude and the clay used for its manufacture is not tempered. Calabash containers are especially common.

Weapons.—To make an ax, the *Wayoro* insert a stone blade into a wooden handle, lash the head, and smear it with wax; the *Huari* use a vine or split branch bent double over the butt and tightened with bast and wax (fig. 45).



FIGURE 45.—*Huari* ax. (Redrawn from Nordenskiöld, 1924 b, fig. 26.)

Arrow feathering is of the “*Xingú*” (flush) sewn type (*Tupari*, *Arua*) or of the “*Arara*” (arched) type (*Huari*, *Kepikiriwat*). Arrow points are made of plain or indented bamboo splinters, bone points, or spikes of sting rays. The *Tupari* paint arrow feathers. A tribe of the Pimenta Bueno region, known only through some implements found in the possession of the *Kepikiriwat*, paint red, black, and white earth between the feathering of the arrow shaft. The *Amniapä* use three-pointed arrows for birds; the *Kepikiriwat* use similar arrows with less feathering for fishing. Arrows poisoned with curare and the point protected with a bamboo sheath are attributed to the *Kepikiriwat*, *Amniapä*, and *Pawumwa*.

The *Pawumwa* use blowguns.

Clubs are used only as dance paraphernalia, except among the *Huari*, who fight with large, double-edged clubs, 4 to 5 feet (1.2 to 1.5 m.) long, decorated with a basketry casing around the handle.

SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS

Sibs which are named after animals but which have no corresponding food prohibitions are found among the *Macurap* and *Yabuti* (patrilineal

and exogamous) and the *Arua* (matrilineal). It is doubtful whether such clans exist among the *Kepikiriwat*, who have moieties that function at ceremonial ball games and probably on other occasions. Prisoners taken from another tribe are incorporated into the captor's clan, where they pay a small tribute but enjoy great freedom. Nothing is known about chieftainships, except that *Guaratägaja* chiefs distribute game among the men of the community. Intertribal commerce seems to be well developed.

A ceremony used by the *Amniapä* to receive a neighboring tribe includes a mock battle, the offer of benches, and a crouched salutation accompanied by ceremonial wailing.

LIFE CYCLE

The *couvade*, accompanied by abstention from fish, is attributed to the *Macurap*. They also require that a girl's parents consent to her marriage. Postmarital residence during the first weeks is matrilocal; later it is patrilocal. A widow remarries only with the permission of the clan's head.

The *Tupari* bury their dead outside the village in a prone position; the *Amniapä* bury their dead inside their huts in a crouched position. Burial among the *Macurap* is similar to that among the *Amniapä*, but a pottery vessel is placed on top of the grave. The *Wayoro* practice urn burial, at least for children, and paint their corpses red. The *Guaratägaja* burn the house of the deceased; the *Cabishiana* burn the possessions of the deceased.

CANNIBALISM

According to Snethlage (1937 a), the *Amniapä* and *Guaratägaja* admit cannibalism and eat not only the barbecued bodies of their enemies but even their own tribesmen and women who are put to death for a crime.

ESTHETIC AND RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Art.—Among many tribes, especially among the *Kepikiriwat* each family possesses many calabashes which are used as beer cups during feasts. Women decorate the calabashes with incised or pyrograved geometric designs.

Games.—Games, in which a ball is propelled with the head, are played between moieties (*Kepikiriwat*) and between villages or tribes (*Amniapä*). The *Amniapä* keep score with maize grains; the *Kepikiriwat* play to win arrows.

Dances and masks.—Dancing and singing are generally practiced by both men and women, sometimes, as for instance among the *Arua*, in the form of patterned amorous challenges. The *Macurap* and the *Amniapä* dance in front of an altar, or round an especially erected ceremonial tree. The *Amniapä* use calabash masks with features attached or painted on.

Masks are kept in the dome of the hut, but they do not seem to be the object of worship or prohibition. Masked dancers costume themselves with a drapery of fibers and hold a stick topped with the wax image of a bird.

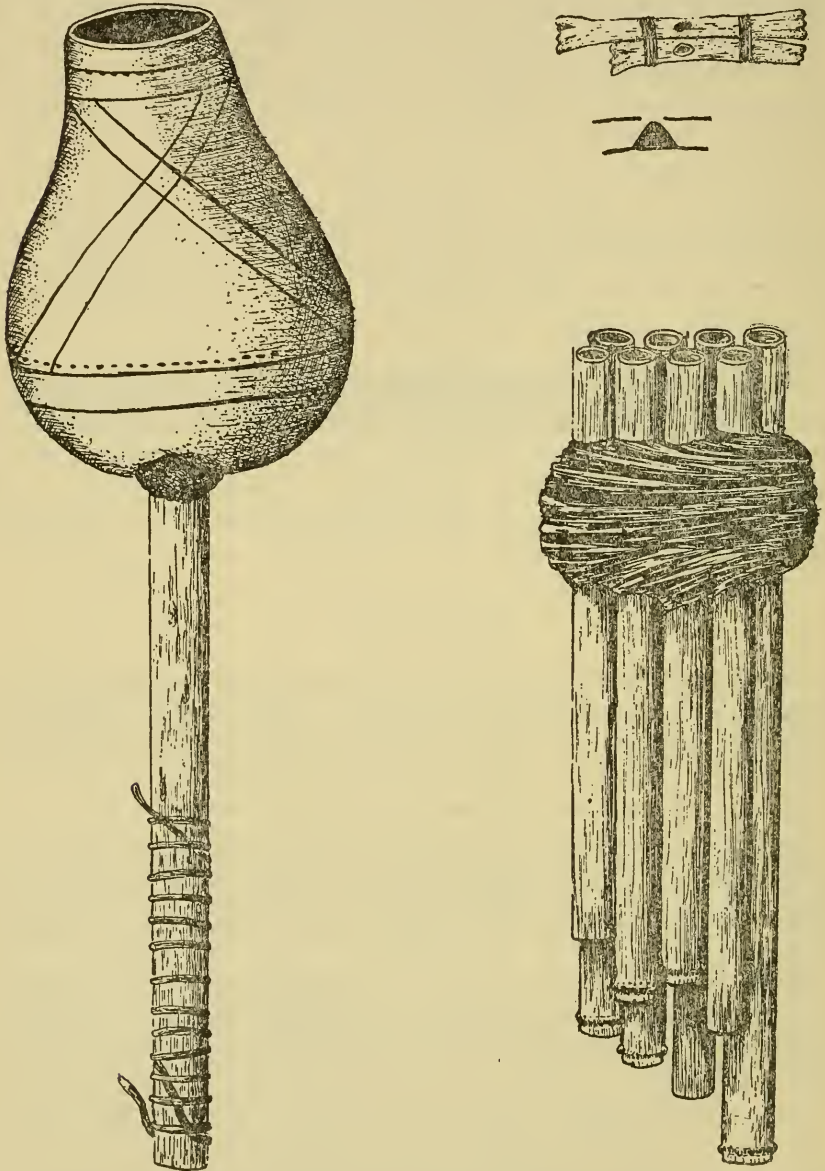


FIGURE 46.—Guaporé musical instruments. *Left: Amniapä trumpet. Top, right: Guaratägaja bird imitator's whistle. Bottom, right: Arua double panpies.* (All $\frac{1}{4}$ actual size.) (Redrawn from Sneath, 1939.)

Musical instruments.—Sacred gourd rattles are used only by *Arua*, *Yabuti*, and *Aricapu* shamans, and are unknown among the *Tupari* and *Guaratägaja*, who use jingling belts garnished with fruit shells. The *Yabuti*, *Amniapä*, and *Guaratägaja* use rhythm trumpets with a gourd or bamboo resonator (fig. 46, left). The *Amniapä*, and *Guaratägaja* call the trumpets and also their masks, "gods." Clarinets are played in pairs by a single musician (*Macurap*, *Arua*). True panpipes are made of four closed and four open tubes placed in two rows (*Arua*) (fig. 46, bottom, right). A unique type of pseudo-panpipe consisting of a series of two to eight whistles (the latter in two rows), each with a sound orifice and a wax deflector, is used ceremonially among the other tribes (fig. 47);

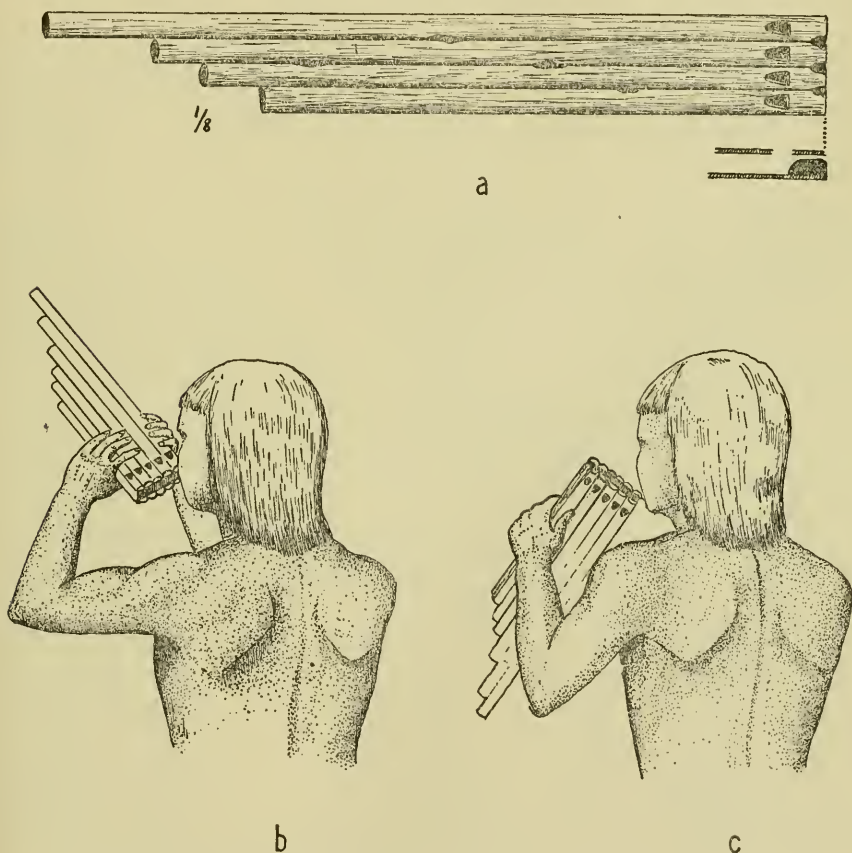


FIGURE 47.—*Macurap* pseudo-panpipes. (Redrawn from Snethlage, 1939.)

two notes may be played at the same time on these instruments. End flutes (fig. 48) of the *Mataco* type with four stops and whistles are used by the *Tupari*, *Guaratägaja*, and *Amniapä*. Snethlage (1939) mentions instrument playing of "disciplined orchestras."

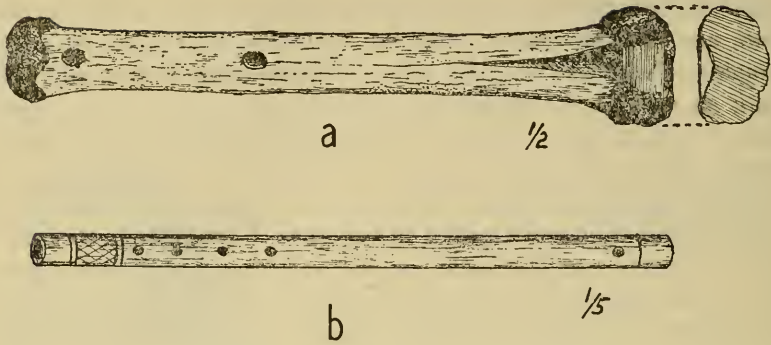


FIGURE 48.—*Huari* bone flutes. (Redrawn from Nordenskiöld, 1924 b. fig. 43.)

Narcotics and beverages.—A narcotic snuff of crushed angico, tobacco leaves, and the ashes of a certain bark is blown by the shaman during feasts. For healing purposes he blows it into the nose of the patient, through one or two tubes that terminate in a hollow nut, often shaped like a bird's head. Snuff is carefully prepared with small mortars, pestles, and mixing brushes, and is kept in bamboo tubes.

Beer is made from manioc, maize, and sweet potatoes. The *Guaratägaja* use a special leaf to cause fermentation.

RELIGION, FOLKLORE, AND MYTHOLOGY

Indians of the Guaporé River region seem to believe in the existence of an invisible fluid which may be good or evil. By appropriate gesticulations the shaman captures, manipulates, and incorporates it into food, into the sick, or into the bodies of enemies. On the Rio Branco, the shaman's outfit includes a snuffing tube, a magic board with a handle, and a feathered stick. The board is used as a tablet upon which to mix the snuff; the feathered stick seems to acquire a mystic weight when filled with the magic fluid, which makes it difficult to carry toward the altar. The shaman kneels in front of a plaited screen which forms the altar and is the center of most ceremonies; he speaks to the screen and leaves food and beer near by. The *Wayoro* ceremonies are forbidden to women and children.

Shamanistic cures follow the widespread pattern of sucking, blowing, and spitting on the patient.

Ghosts play a considerable role in the beliefs of the Guaporé River Indians. According to the *Arua*, ghosts are the souls of the dead returning from the Kingdom of Minoiri to harm their enemies and to protect their friends, chiefly shamans. Sneathlague (1937 a, p. 141) stated that he distinctly heard the noise which the ghosts are supposed to produce.

The *Amniapä* and *Guaratägaja* attribute the creation of the world to Arikuañon, who married Pananmäkoza and was the father of the cul-



PLATE 38.—Indians of the Pimenta Bueno River. (Courtesy Claude Lévi-Strauss.)

ture hero, Arikapua. Another culture hero was Konanopo, the teacher of agriculture. The mythical being, Bäräbassa, is held responsible for the great flood from which only one couple survived to repopulate the world. Other mythical beings are Ssuawakwak, Lord of the Winds that cause thunder, and Kipapua, Master of the Spirits who play supernatural musical instruments. Sun and Moon were the first men; together they tilled a garden; Sun burnt his brother and as a punishment was sent to the sky by his father, Sahi. Two mythical brothers were regarded by the *Arua* as creators of the world and bringers of darkness and of fire. Disguised as birds, they stole fire from the old man who was its keeper. When the brothers were old, a flood threatened to destroy mankind, but their sister saved two pairs of children from the best families by putting the children afloat in wooden troughs.

In three tales from the *Arua*, recorded by Snethlage (1937 a), a mother-in-law falls in love with her daughter's husband, a married couple live alternately as toads and as human beings, and a deer brings agriculture (also from the *Bacãiri* of the upper Xingú River).

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