

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION
BUREAU OF AMERICAN ETHNOLOGY
BULLETIN 143

**HANDBOOK
OF
SOUTH AMERICAN INDIANS**

JULIAN H. STEWARD, *Editor*

Volume 3

THE TROPICAL FOREST TRIBES

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



UNITED STATES
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE
WASHINGTON : 1948

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U. S. Government Printing Office,
Washington 25, D. C.

Digitalizado pelo Internet Archive.
Capítulos extraídos pela Biblioteca Digital Curt Nimuendajú:
<http://www.etnolinguistica.org/nsai>

THE HUNTING AND GATHERING TRIBES OF THE RIO NEGRO BASIN

By ALFRED MÉTRAUX

THE SHIRIANA, WAICA, AND GUAHARIBO

TRIBAL DIVISIONS

On the upper reaches of the Orinoco and along the Uraricoerá River extend vast unexplored regions in which roam many groups of forest nomads (map 1, No. 5; map 7). These little-known bands are surrounded with mystery and legends. Judging from short vocabularies recorded by Koch-Grünberg, the *Shirianá* language is isolated. In many respects, the *Shirianá* and *Waica* have the same relation to the sedentary tribes of the Guianas as the *Macú* of the Rio Negro and Caiarí-Uaupés River, the *Sirionó* of eastern Bolivia, and the *Guayakí* of Paraguay. They represent a very ancient population which in some places has been destroyed or assimilated, but in other areas has succeeded in surviving.

Shirianá.—The *Shirianá* (*Shiliana*, *Shilianaidya*) are mentioned for the first time by Schomburgk (1847–48), who places them in the region of the Parima Mountains and identifies them with the *Guaharibo*. (Lat. 3° N., long. 64° W.) He calls them *Kirishana*, a term which has caused them often to be confused with the *Cariban Crichaná* of the *Jauaperí* River.

In 1911–12, Koch-Grünberg (1923 a) met two *Shirianá* groups, one from the upper Uraricapará River, a left tributary of the Uraricoerá River, and the other established on the right side of the Uraricoerá River, opposite the Marutani Mountains, on the Motomotó River. Though Koch-Grünberg was able to obtain a vocabulary only from the first group, he is convinced that it is closely related to the second.

The *Shirianá* of the Uraricapará River obtain European goods from *Cariban* tribes of the Paragua River by the intermediation of the *Auaké*, who are true peddlers. The *Shirianá* also maintain relations with the *Taulipáng*, *Macushí*, and *Wayumará*.

The *Shirianá* of the Motomotó River have been influenced in many respects by the *Macú* of the Auarí River who, among other things, taught them agriculture.

The *Shirianá* are very warlike people who succeeded in dominating several weaker tribes.

Waica.—The *Waica* (*Waiká, Oiaca, Uaica, Guaica*), who roam in the same region as the *Shirianá*, are regarded as fearsome savages. (Lat. 2° N., long. 65° W.) They are even less known than the *Shirianá*, to whom they seem to be linguistically and perhaps culturally related. According to Koch-Grünberg, the *Waica* formerly extended more to the east, for they are mentioned on the sources of the Parimé-Maruí River and on the upper reaches of the Rio Branco. Koch-Grünberg heard that they lived in the Marutani Mountains. There are also *Waica* at the headwaters of the Orinoco River, where they are mentioned together with the almost unknown *Guaharibo*.

Guaharibo.—The term *Guaharibo* (*Uariba, Iaribu, Uajaribe, Uaharibo*), like *Macú* and *Tapuya*, is a collective designation for any wild Indians and, therefore, it is very likely that *Waica* and *Guaharibo* are closely related and perhaps are the same tribe. *Carib* tribes call all these Indians *Shirishana*. On the Matacuni River, a tributary of the Padámo River, the *Yecuaná* succeeded in settling a group of these nomads. (Lat. 3° N., long. 65° W.)

Auaké.—On the upper Paragua River, there are still a few remnants of the once more numerous tribe of the *Auaké* (*Oewaku, Ukys, Aoaqui*), who lived on the Uraricapará River (lat. 5° N., long. 63°–64° W.). Today they are held in a state of vassalage by the *Shirianá*, who have occupied their former territory. Their simple culture has been greatly modified by influences from their *Cariban* neighbors.

Calianá and Maracaná.—Koch-Grünberg (1922, p. 227) was told of the existence of two small tribes speaking isolated languages: the *Calianá* (*Cariana, Sapä, Sahä*) of the upper Paragua River (lat. 4° N., long. 63° W.), and the *Maracaná* (*Maracaña*), who were driven away from the Uraricapará River (lat. 3° 30' N., long. 62°–63° W.) by the *Shirianá* and migrated to the south of the Uraricoerá River, where they constantly attack other Indians.

CULTURE

SUBSISTENCE ACTIVITIES

The *Shirianá*, *Waica*, and *Guaharibo* are forest nomads who subsist mainly on hunting, fishing, and collecting, but the two *Shirianá* groups seen by Koch-Grünberg (1923 a) raised manioc, *Dioscorea*, bananas, and sugarcane in large clearings. They admitted, however, that they had learned farming from their more advanced neighbors. Hunting was done mainly with the bow and arrow and, very rarely, with the blowgun. The only fishing method which could be ascertained was shooting with bow and arrow.

Every year at the season of the Pará, or Brazil, nuts the *Guaharibo* descended below Guaharibos Creek to collect them. This was the time chosen by the civilized Indians to attack these Indians and enslave them.

The *Shirianá* grated manioc on rough stones, and, instead of using the manioc press found among their *Cariban* neighbors, they squeezed it in a mat twisted with both hands. They prepared a beverage made of bacaba fruits, and ate a fat, whitish clay kneaded in the shape of balls.

HOUSES AND VILLAGES

An informant told Spruce that *Guaharibo* huts

were annular, the low roof sloping slightly outwards and being only 2 or 3 varas [yards] in width, while the whole of the center was open to the sky. The roof and outer wall were made of the long, broad, simple leaf of a palm, apparently like the Bussú of Pará. [Spruce, 1908, 1: 397.]

In an abandoned *Guaharibo* village, Chaffanjon (1889, p. 305) saw a few flimsy conical huts made of poles, about 8 to 10 feet (2.5 to 3 m.) high, stuck in the ground and fastened together on top. These dwellings were said to have been only 32 inches (80 cm.) in diameter.

The *Shirianá* village visited by Koch-Grünberg (1923 a, 3:300, pl. 43) consisted of nine open sheds built in a circle around a plaza. The huts, which perhaps were only temporary shelters, were simple lean-tos supported by four and sometimes by only three vertical posts (pl. 125, *bottom*). The *Shirianá* are said to have rectangular communal huts, which they might have copied from the *Taulipáng* sheds.

These Indians sleep in hammocks made of a bundle of fibers loosely joined by transverse twined cotton threads.

DRESS AND ORNAMENTS

Koch-Grünberg's *Shirianá* had partly adopted *Carib* costume, but among the Motomotó River *Shirianá*, men still wore a belt of threads under which they tucked the penis. In both *Shirianá* groups, women use a small fringed apron, which also seems to be a recent acquisition. Men tie cotton threads or woven bands around the upper arms and under the knees; the women wear the distinctive *Carib* bands around the ankles.

The Motomotó River *Shirianá* had their ear lobes, nasal septa, and lower lips perforated for the insertion of sticks. Women wore as many as three sticks through the nose, and they passed sticks through the corners of their mouth. In the same group, men wore a tonsure smeared with urucú, but this fashion was unknown to the *Waica* and the Uraricapará River *Shirianá*. Women cut their hair along the forehead and the nape. Both sexes painted themselves with urucú and genipa.

TRANSPORTATION

Originally, neither the *Shirianá* nor the *Waica* had boats. To cross streams, the *Guaharibo* built ingenious bridges, which have been carefully described by Chaffanjon (1889, p. 311). At short intervals they stuck

poles crossed in the form of an X in the river bed. On these, they laid poles on which to walk, while holding to a railing made of other poles. The bridge was supported by lianas attached to trees on both shores. Today the *Shirianá* of the Uraricoerá River have long dugout canoes (pl. 125, *top*) with raised and pointed ends, which they propel with paddles like those of the *Taulipáng* and *Macushi*.

MANUFACTURES

Shirianá baskets (carrying baskets and deep trays) are carefully made and are very strong, but, unlike most basketry work in the area, they are twined.

The pots collected by Koch-Grünberg were plain and had perhaps been traded from some *Carib* tribe. On the other hand, the *Yecuaná* and *Guináu* told the German explorer that they obtained their best pots from the *Shirianá* of Parimá Mountain.

Shirianá bows are 1.9 to 2.3 m. (about 6 to 8 feet) long. They are flat on the back and somewhat convex on the belly, with shoulders cut at both ends for a *Bromelia* string.

Arrows are of three main types: war and hunting arrows, with a large lanceolate bamboo head; hunting and fishing arrows, tipped with a simple barbed rod or with a bone spur; and arrows with a poisoned wooden head. The poison used is curare. There are no blowguns, except those obtained in trade from the *Yecuaná* and *Taulipáng*.

Musical instruments are transverse flutes with three stops and a whistle with three stops made of a fruit.

DISPOSAL OF THE DEAD

From an Indian who had visited a *Guaharibo* village, Spruce learned that,

they burn the bodies of their dead, collect the calcinated bones, and pound them in a mortar, and keep them in their houses in globular baskets of closely woven mamuri. When they move their residence or travel, they carry with them the bones of their ancestors. [Spruce, 1908, 1:398.]

THE MACU

The name *Macú* is given to three different tribes of Indians who linguistically are completely unrelated: (1) A group, by far the most numerous, which includes a large number of bands which roam between the Rio Negro and the Japurá River (lat. 1°–3° S., long. 64°–69° W.); (2) a little-known tribe of the Uraricoerá region (lat. 3°–4° N., long. 64°–65° W.); and (3) a subdivision of the *Piaroa* tribe of the Orinoco River (lat. 4° N., long. 67° 30' W.). Each group will be treated here separately.

THE MACU OF THE RIO NEGRO AND CAIARÍ-UAUPÉS RIVER

Tribal divisions and history.—The name *Macú* is given by the *Tariana* and other *Arawakan* tribes of the Rio Negro and the Caiarí-Uaupés River basin to various groups of forest nomads whose culture is practically unknown. The Brazilians call them "Índios do matto." It is yet uncertain whether all these *Macú* are linguistically related or not, but the vocabularies recorded by Koch-Grünberg (1906 b, 1922) and Fathers Tastevin and Kok (see Rivet and Tastevin, 1920; Rivet, Kok, and Tastevin, 1924–25) from *Macú* of the Curicuriarí, Tiquié, Papury, and Jurubaxy Rivers, show, despite considerable dialectal differences, affinities which justify their inclusion into a linguistic group related to *Puinave*. (See Rivet and Tastevin, 1920.) The differences between the Jurubaxy and Papury dialects are particularly great. The isolation of the *Macú* and the strong influences to which they are subject explain the disintegration of their dialects, which are being replaced by the language of their *Tucanoan* and *Arawakan* neighbors.

The *Macú* of the area defined above are divided into several groups named according to the specific region where they have been seen or mentioned by travelers or by other Indians. One large group occupies a vast territory between the Japurá River, the middle and lower Rio Negro, and its tributary, the Curicuriarí River. These *Macú* are generally designated as *Guariba*, a *Guarani* word meaning "the howling monkeys." Undoubtedly, they are closely allied to another group of acculturated *Macú Mansos* ("tame" *Macú*), who live between the sources of the Cumapi, a tributary of the Japurá River, and the headwaters of the Alegria (Arirahá) River, an affluent of the Rio Negro. Most of these "tame" *Macú* are settled on the left banks of the Jurubaxy River, which is also a tributary of the Rio Negro. The "tame" *Macú* call the *Guariba*, *Nadöb*, and themselves, *Nadöpa*, a word meaning "people."

Another group of *Macú* is found between the upper Caiarí-Uaupés River and its tributaries, the Papury and Querarí Rivers. These Indians must probably be identified with the so-called *Yapöoa*.

Koch-Grünberg (1922, p. 261) considers the *Bahúna*, *Balöatúa*, and other groups who today speak *Cubeo* to be former *Macú* who had been assimilated by the *Cubeo*. He also assigns the same origin to the *Huhúteni* of the lower Aiari River and to the *Catapólitani* of the middle Içana River, who now belong to the *Arawakan* linguistic family.

At the beginning of the present century, there were on the Tiquié River many *Macú* who were bondsmen of the *Tucano* and the *Tuyuca*.

The Rio Negro *Macú* are generally considered to be the last representatives of an ancient people who occupied vast areas of the Amazon Basin before they were exterminated or assimilated by the *Carib*, *Arawak*, and *Tucano*, the carriers of a more advanced culture based on farming. Even

today the territory assigned to the *Macú* is still considerable and their number seems to be high.

The recent history of the Japurá and Rio Negro *Macú-Guariba* has been told in great detail by Father Tastevin (1923 b). It consists of a series of stealthy attacks on the rubber stations, each followed by a punitive expedition. The "tame" *Macú*, though not actually a group distinct from the *Macú-Guariba*, have remained at peace with the Whites, and, for their own security, disclaim any connection with their warlike brothers.

The *Arawakan* and *Tucanoan* tribes of the upper Rio Negro, Caiarí-Uaupés, and Tiquié Rivers have since time immemorial waged merciless war against the *Macú*, whom they enslave or reduce to serfdom. Some small groups of *Macú* come to work for the sedentary *Uanana* and *Desana* and, after a few months, disappear again into the bush. The *Tucano* of the Tiquié River subjected a large group of *Macú* to their rule, but on the slightest suspicion of sorcery, they were prompt to attack them and to sell their captives to the Whites.

Culture.—Anthropological data on the Rio Negro *Macú* are meager. Those of the Caiarí-Uaupés River are described by Koch-Grünberg as forest nomads subsisting on hunting, fishing, and collecting. Some of their abandoned huts were flimsy pyramidal structures covered with branches and leaves.

The *Macú-Guariba* of the regions between the Rio Negro and the Japurá River seem to differ from the Caiarí-Uaupés *Macú* in a very important respect: they are good agriculturists who live in large, permanent communal houses (pl. 126). A *Macú* settlement found on the Igarapé Preto de San José by a punitive expedition, consisted of two large huts surrounded by 15 small cabins. In the huts were numerous hammocks slung at different heights. The village was surrounded by large plantations of manioc, bananas, pineapples, and pupunha palms.

The "tame" *Macú* are in many respects culturally inferior to the wild *Macú-Guariba*, but their miserable dwellings and their small, ill-kept fields may be the result of decadence following their contact with the Whites. The "tame" *Macú* are, however, skillful basket makers. They weave mats for roofing their huts and fine baskets in which alternate yellow and black *arumã* strips produce geometrical patterns.

Their blowguns, about 6 feet (2 m.) long, are made of two palm tubes, one inserted into the other and firmly glued together with rosin. The inner tube projects a centimeter at the opening. The blowgun has no sight. The darts are splinters of palm wood smeared with curare (Tastevin, 1923 b).

The *Macú* of the Curicuriarí River have long bows and several kinds of arrows, some of which are tipped with rods of palm wood and are poisoned. They also have blowguns and clubs. The tribes of the interior still use stone axes. They make pots and bowls. They sleep on leaves



PLATE 125.—Shirianá Indians. *Top:* Shirianá in a dug-out, Uraricoera River.
Bottom: Shirianá screen for protection against weather. (After Koch-Grünberg, 1923 b.)

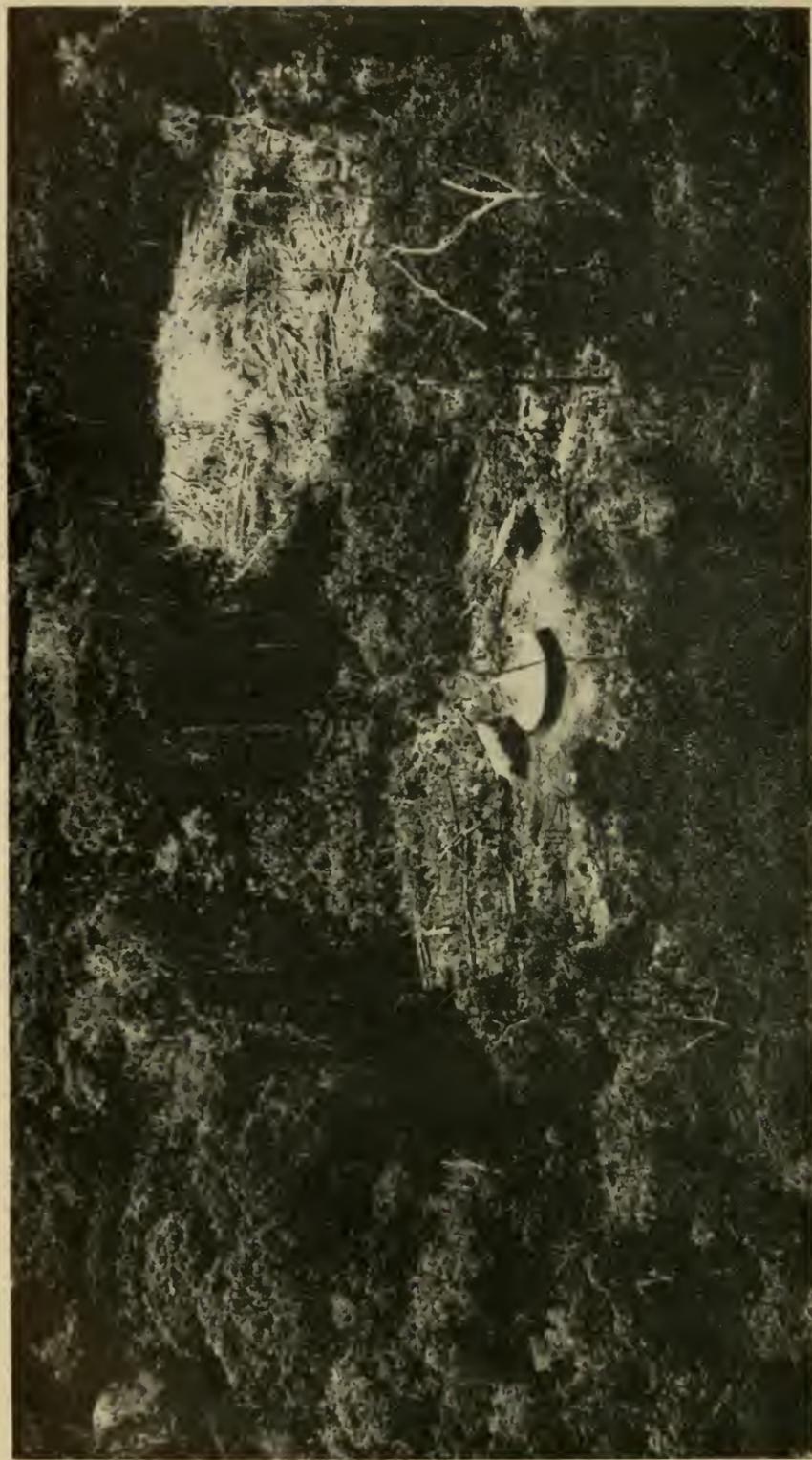


PLATE 126.—Macú malloca and plantation. (After Rice, 1928.)

on the ground. They lack canoes and cross rivers by swimming or wading (Koch-Grünberg, 1906 b, p. 879).

THE MACU OF THE URARICOERA BASIN

In 1912, Koch-Grünberg (1922, p. 227) collected a short vocabulary from a *Macú* tribe on the middle Auarí River, a left tributary of the Uraricoerá River, in Brazilian Guiana. Their language is entirely isolated. These Guiana *Macú* (*Maca*, *Mahacu*), who were first mentioned in the 18th century, are famous traders. Every summer they descend the Uraricoerá River to reach the villages of the *Taulipáng* and *Macushí*, where they barter their products for European goods. They are on friendly terms with the *Shirianá* of the Motomotó River, whom they have greatly influenced (Barboza Rodríguez, 1885, pp. 139, 145).

THE MACU-PIAROA

The Uraricoerá *Macú* must be carefully distinguished from other *Macú* (*Maco*) who are a subgroup of the *Piaroa*. The latter, mentioned by Humboldt on the headwaters of the Cataniapo River, live today in the savannas between the lower course of the Ventuari and the Orinoco Rivers. They may be found on the upper Camani and Mariéte Rivers.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Barboza Rodriguez, 885; Chaffanjon, 1889; Koch-Grünberg, 1906 b, 1922, 1923 a; Rivet and Tastevin, 1920; Rivet, Kok, and Tastevin, 1924-25; Schomburgk, M. R., 1847-48; Spruce, 1908; Tastevin, 1923 b.