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OF  
SOUTH AMERICAN INDIANS**

**JULIAN H. STEWARD, *Editor***

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**Volume 3**

**THE TROPICAL FOREST TRIBES**

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## THE MAUE AND ARAPIUM

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By CURT NIMUENDAJÚ

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### THE MAUE

#### INTRODUCTION

**Territory.**—The *Maué* territory, a region of solid land, was bounded by the lower Tapajóz, the Amazon, the bayou of Uraria, the bayou of Ramos, lat. 5° S., and long. 58° W. (map 1, *No. 1*; map 4). On the banks of the Tapajóz River and the bayous, the tribe lived only temporarily under the influence of civilized people.

Bettendorf (1910) does not mention the name *Maué*, but writes of *Andirá* and *Maraguá* in the region where the *Maué* are mentioned a little later. These two groups are probably local *Maué* subdivisions. The *Andirá* undoubtedly inhabited the Andirá River, which up to the present time is a *Maué* region.

**History.**—The Jesuits came into contact with these tribes after the Mission to the *Tupinambarana* was founded in 1669. In 1698, the *Andirá* welcomed P. João Valladão as a missionary. It is impossible to locate the *Maraguá* accurately, but they were on a lake between the Andirá and the Abacaxy Rivers, probably on the lower Mauhés-assú, which widens out to form a sort of lake. They had three villages, near one another (Bettendorf, 1910, p. 36). In 1692, after they had killed some White men, the Government declared "just war" against them, which was unsuccessful, as the Indians were forewarned and scattered, only a few offering any resistance. In 1696, the Jesuits took up residence among the *Maraguá*, 100 of whom were transferred in 1698 to the village of Guamá, near Belém. The *Maraguá* are not mentioned in the 18th century.

The *Mabué* (*Maué*) appear for the first time on P. Samuel Fritz's map (1691) of the Amazon, which places them just west of the Tapajóz, at lat. 3° 30' S., the present habitat of the *Maué*. The *Maraguá* were south of the Amazon, opposite the Trombetas River, and the *Andirá* on a water course which might have been the Ramos Bayou.

According to Father João de São José (1847, p. 101), in 1762 the *Mague* lived below the falls of the Tapajóz River, 4 leagues (about 11 miles) inland. The São José (Pinhel) and Santo Ignacio (Boim) Missions on the Tapajóz were settled with *Mague*. In 1762, the Indians of the latter mission killed the director of the village. When they also murdered some merchants, the governor, Ataida Teive, in 1869 forbade any commerce with them hoping to starve them into submission (Nunes Pereira, 1939). After the Brazilians and *Mundurucú* made peace, some of the latter joined some *Maué* in settling a little below the present city of

Mauhés, where Martius (1867) saw them in 1819. In 1832, another bloody conflict took the lives of some civilized men (Souza, A., 1870, p. 86). In 1823, the village of Itaituba was founded on the Tapajóz River with *Maué*, and in 1828 there were 400 of them settled there.

The *Andirá* mission flourished from 1848 to 1855 under Father Pedro de Ciriana, despite conflicts between the missionary and the Parintins authorities. In 1849, it had 507 *Maué*; in 1851, 570; and in 1852, 665, not counting a large number of civilized people. In 1855, the missionary's place was taken by a parish priest (Tenreiro Aranha, 1852, p. 32; Correia de Miranda, 1852, p. 128; Coelho, 1849, p. 784; Wilkens de Mattos, 1856, p. 128).

In 1862 there were 4 villages in the Tapajóz region with 3,657 *Maué* (Souza, A., 1870, p. 25). At the beginning of the 20th century, all but one of these villages on the tributaries of the Tapajóz were destroyed by the rubber gatherers of Itaituba, who took possession of the land. As a result, the *Maué* took sides openly with the Amazon forces in the armed conflict of 1916 between this State and Pará.

In 1939, Nunes Pereira (1939) estimated that there were 2,000 to 3,000 *Maué* in the *Andirá* region, a figure which may have been a little high.

An adequate study has not been made of the *Maué*. Martius did not live with them very long.

Reports on *Maué* character, based on direct observation, are generally favorable. Bates (1863) called them "invariably friendly to the Whites"; Katzer (1901) found them always friendly, unusually intelligent, quick to understand, and capable of clear expression. The present author regarded them as suspicious and inclined to lie though not to thieving, and as peace-loving and gay. Nunes Pereira (1939) found them skillful and peace-loving.

**Language.**—The *Maué* language is known through six vocabularies. (Coudreau, H., 1897 a; Katzer, 1901; Anonymous, ms. b; Nimuendajú, 1929 a, 1929 b; Koch Grünberg, 1932.) Fundamentally, it is *Tupí*, but differs from the *Guarani-Tupinamba*. The pronouns agree perfectly with the *Curuaya-Mundurucú*, and the grammar, insofar as the material permits analysis, is *Tupí*. The *Maué* vocabulary, however, contains an element that is completely foreign to *Tupí* but which cannot be traced to any other linguistic family. Since the 18th century, the *Maué* language has incorporated numerous words from the *Lingua Geral*.

**Ethnographical sources.**—Barboza Rodrigues (1882 b) visited the *Maué* in 1872, but his information lacks confirmation in some particulars. The present author made a brief visit in 1923 to the more civilized *Maué* on the Mariacuã River. The most recent and detailed information is that of Nunes Pereira in 1939.

## CULTURE

### SUBSISTENCE ACTIVITIES

**Farming.**—The *Maué* have always had remarkable interest in agriculture, but lost much of it with the development of the rubber industry. They grow manioc, potatoes, cara (*Dioscorea*), beans, and lima beans:

nowadays, they also cultivate rice and coffee, which they prepare and drink in the Brazilian manner. They still plant their old fruit trees, and they grow kitchen and medicinal herbs on platforms. They also cultivate a few Old World fruit trees. To plant root crops, they use a clean turtle skull to pull the earth over the cuttings, believing that this will increase production. At planting and harvesting times, the owner of a field organizes a feast to reward his helpers.

**Hunting.**—The *Maué* are good hunters, though hunting is not an important activity. Today many of them use fire arms, but in Martius' time, they would refuse any game killed with guns or with dogs, leading one to believe that originally dogs were as foreign to them as fire arms. Martius was informed that the *Maué* acquired blowguns and poisoned blowgun darts from their neighbors to the west, but this was not confirmed by any other author. Nunes Pereira mentions some practices believed to influence hunting: They pluck the breast and neck feathers of hunted fowl, burn them, and rub them on their guns; they wash their guns and dogs with an infusion from a marsh plant called "jasmin de lontra"; a gun will be lucky if a cipó snake is allowed to decompose inside the barrel, and it will be unlucky if it comes into contact with a pregnant or menstruating woman. The *Maué* do not use game traps or lures of any kind.

**Fishing.**—They take fish with weirs, a special single-headed arrow, poisoning the water with a drug called timbó and, nowadays, fishhooks. That they do not eat the large river fish but utilize only the smaller fish of creeks and forest pools (Martius, 1867) supports the assumption that they have habitually avoided the large rivers.

**Wild-food gathering.**—Martius states that the *Maué* roamed the forest in search of palm fruits of various kinds, Brazil nuts, and piquí fruit. They eat winged female sauva ants, which they take at swarming time, roast, and pound with manioc flour. They also eat termites roasted in banana leaves. Spix and Martius (1823–31, 3:1,318) state that they introduced a slender stick into the anthill so that the insects took hold of it and were thus conveyed to the mouth. They also eat a species of batrachian.

#### VILLAGES AND HOUSES

According to Martius, the *Maué* lived in round single-family houses. Their recent settlements consist of one or more huts, which are usually rectangular with a gable roof and overhanging eaves but without walls. These are well thatched with leaves of the caranã palm. The kitchen is generally in a separate hut, where the manioc flour is made. Nunes Pereira mentions "rooms" in the *Maué* houses, and also a "dance house" and the "house of menstruating women."

The main pieces of furniture are wooden benches carved out of a solid block of wood. Cotton hammocks are twined, and the ends of the warp

are attached to special cords (sobrepunhos), which extend beyond them to form loops, by which the hammock is suspended (Nimuendajú, ms.).

#### CLOTHING AND ADORNMENT

Nothing is known regarding aboriginal *Maué* dress. These Indians quickly adopted their present clothing from the Brazilians, although many still are naked from the waist up. They did not disfigure or tattoo themselves. Martius was told, however, that some persons pierced the lower lip and inserted a small piece of wood in it. No authors mention body painting.

#### TRANSPORTATION AND TRAVEL

The aboriginal *Maué*, a sedentary and agricultural people, lived inland from the rivers, and were not a canoeing people. São José states that "they usually do not know how to swim." Cerqueira e Silva (1833, p. 273) says that they will not ford the Curauahy River, preferring to take a great deal of trouble to make swinging bridges of vines. This may be explained by their aversion to water. Martius stated that they used canoes, some of the "ubá" type hollowed out of guanani logs and others made of jutahy bark. They are poor canoeists even today, but they have a few canoes which are either acquired direct from the civilized population or else, like their paddles, are rough imitations of those used by the Whites. On the other hand, they make long treks on foot, with the heavy basket (jamaxim) on their backs, showing admirable endurance.

#### MANUFACTURES

**Basketry.**—From palm leaves and creepers, the *Maué* make baskets with and without lids, sieves, strainers, fans, carrying baskets, hats, and brooms. Some baskets with lids are made of red and black strips. These articles are generally sold to civilized people.

**Pottery.**—The only earthenware objects made today are pans to dry out the manioc flour; no reference to other types occurs in the literature. Scattered about in old dwellings in the *Maué* territory may be found plain black sherds.

**Gourds and calabashes.**—Gourd containers lack ornamentation, but calabashes sometimes are fire engraved on the green exterior.

**Weapons.**—The bow, flat on the belly and convex on the outside, is made of a red wood and has specially made points to hold the ambauva (*Cecropia* sp.) cord. Martius says *Maué* bows were a useful article of trade. The arrows have arched feathering. The points are of: (1) bamboo, rather small and lance-shaped; (2) bone, forming a barb; (3) iron, for hunting tapir; (4) wood, bilaterally serrated; and (5) for fishing, an iron nail forming a barbed point. The *Maué* also have little

arrows for children, with a small crosspiece of sticks at the end. They have no arrows with wooden plugs and do not use pellet bows. There are no reports of clubs.

#### SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

According to Martius, the *Maué* were divided into "hordes"; he cites 12 of these, giving their names in the *Lingua Geral*. Some of them, however, may not belong to the *Maué* tribe.

According to Nunes Pereira, the *Maué* believe themselves to be descended from the animals or plants that lend their name to each "nation" (i.e., Martius' "hordes"). We have no details or confirmation on this score.

Families are patrilocal.

*Maué* chiefs enjoy remarkable authority even today, and there seems to be a hierarchy of officials. Succession is patrilinear. There used to be a special burial ceremony for chiefs.

Carefully preserved in the choir of the chapel of the Indian village of Terra Preta, Nunes Pereira found an article which resembles a club, but which the author calls a "magic paddle." It is made of dark wood, 45 inches (1.1 m.) long, 4 inches (11 cm.) greatest width, and 18 inches (45 cm.) thick, narrowing toward the end, which resembles a top. The larger half is ornamented on both sides with carved rhombs, points, and bands, one of which bears an ornament derived from a basketry motive. It was made by the third predecessor of the present chief and has been transmitted to each. The designs allegedly refer to the tradition of the tribe, but no explanation of them is given. The *Maué* call the object "porantin."

#### LIFE CYCLE

**Pregnancy and childbirth.**—During pregnancy, both parents are obliged to observe a strict diet of ants, fungi, and guaraná dissolved in water. To let their blood at this time, many cut their arms and legs with a rodent's tooth or a toucan's bill set into a handle, starting profuse hemorrhages. Into these wounds they rub the ashes of burned genipa fruit (Martius, 1867). To facilitate childbirth, the woman's hips are bathed beforehand in the ashes of paca skulls or of birds' eggshells mixed with water. After the birth, the parents' first food consists of fungi and two kinds of ants (*sauva* and *maniuara*). The mother has a postpartum rest period of a month, and the father goes on a diet of porridge (*mingau*) and guaraná. The first food taken after this period is *inambú Tinamus* sp.) flesh (Nunes Pereira, 1939).

Children are carried in a sling hung around the neck. It is made of raw fibers, the ends being tied with a black string. São José (1847)

states that the *Maué* practiced infanticide and abortion. Before puberty, girls wear colored bands on their arms and below their knees.

**Puberty.**—At their first menstruation, girls retire to a hammock hung to the roof-tree. They maintain a rigorous diet until the end of the second menstruation, taking only manioc cakes (*beijú*), fish, and water (Martius, 1867). Nunes Pereira states that they are fed fungi, which their parents bring them, and that, at the end of this period, they eat inambú and toucan flesh. The author fails to explain whether the "house of menstruating women" which he saw was used only for the first menstruation, or for all. In some Indian villages, the same author says, women retire to the "room of unmarried women" during menstruation.

All authors establish some relation between boys' puberty and the Celebration of Tucandira. The *Maué* told the present author that the application of tucanderas (stinging ants), though highly recommended at any time of life, is necessary in boyhood, especially if a youth were somewhat retarded in his physical development, and in old age, when strength began to fail, and in cases of weakness. Nunes Pereira was informed that boys of 6 and young men of 20 (?) were stung. The ceremony, however, has not been witnessed, except by Barboza Rodrigues, who was present for 2 days. His description lacks confirmation on some points. He states that it was celebrated annually in the main hut by convocation of the chief. Everybody brought drinks and barbecued meat. The ants, benumbed by having been left in water overnight, were caught in the mesh of a textile which was used to line a flattened or cylindrical "glove," artistically woven from strips of fibers and adorned with macaw and royal hawk feathers. Everybody gathered in the chief's yard, the women seated in a circle within the circle of men. The chief in the center held the "gloves." The singing began, and the chief shook his rattle (*maracá*) while the others played bambu flutes and drums. After blowing tobacco smoke on the ants, the chief put the glove on one of the young men, who danced, yelling and howling, inside the circle, amidst the applause of the crowd, until a woman or the chief took the glove off him. After this, everyone moved on to the nearest house and repeated the ceremony. According to Barboza Rodrigues (1882 b), a boy had to endure seven applications of ants, but their sequence, and the relation between them and marriage was not explained.

Martius reports that a cotton sleeve containing ants was first applied to boys between 8 and 10. When they began to cry and scream, the spectators drew them into a noisy dance, until they fell exhausted. Then their stings were treated by older women with the juice of the manioc leaf, and, as soon as they felt better, they had to try to draw their bows. This ceremony was repeated until the age of 14, when a boy could bear it without flinching and was considered ready to marry. According to

Martius (1867), the *Maué* counted their age by the number of applications, but the words, in the *Lingua Geral*, which he gives in this connection—*jübir jepe*, *jübir mocoim*, etc.—only mean “one turn, two turns,” etc. (*jebyr*, “turn”).

**Marriage.**—Today the *Maué* are monogamous, but formerly polygamy was permitted. There is no special marriage ceremony (Nunes Pereira, 1939). The candidate asks the girl's parents for their consent and it is given after long deliberation, even if she has not yet reached puberty. The couple settle in their own hut.

Married women are excluded from dances. All women are forbidden to have any contact with persons outside the tribe and to use the Portuguese language, a prohibition which is not always observed nowadays.

**Death and burial.**—Today the *Maué* bury in cemeteries, more or less in Christian fashion, but they still place the deceased's personal belongings in the grave. The family observes a fast (Nunes Pereira). Formerly, the dead were buried inside their house, in a sitting position. Martius states that at the death of a chief, the tribe was obliged to go on a diet of ants and *guaraná* for a month. During the first 2 weeks of this time, the chief's dead body, stretched out and tied to laths, was dried between fires; then it was buried, in a sitting position propped up with stones and sticks in a round hole. The hole was not filled with earth, and at the end of the month the body was taken out and exposed for a day. The whole tribe danced around the body, weeping so that their tears ran into their mouths and were swallowed. In the evening the body was buried in the same place and position, and the celebration continued all night with dancing and drinking. In one instance, when a chief died during a trip, his companions severed his body in two below the ribs, dried the halves, and brought them back to the village.

#### WARFARE

The *Maué*, though brave, were less warlike than the *Mundurucú*, with whom they warred until the second half of the 18th century. According to Barboza Rodriguez (1882 b), the *Maué* who took part in the last fight between the two tribes had lines of black tattooing on the thorax, similar to that of the *Mundurucú*. They sometimes took prisoners of war. They used the skulls of slain enemies as drinking vessels, and their long bones as flutes. Before fighting, they took *guaraná* (Martius, 1867).

#### ESTHETIC AND RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

**Ornaments.**—The *Maué* were formerly famous for articles made of feathers, which were important commodities in their trade. Martius mentions scepters and head and neck ornaments. The feather art has disappeared, with the exception of some feather ornaments on the instru-

ment used during the Celebration of Tucandira. The *Maué* still wear necklaces of small figures carved out of the hard nut of certain palms

**Musical instruments.**—Drums are heavy cylinders of wood, with one end covered with leather. They are laid horizontally and played with the hands. The *Maué* also use violins and caracachas, which are serrated bambú cylinders scraped with a small stick.

**Drinks and narcotics.**—The *Maué* are very fond of a drink made from dried cakes of manioc flour (the arobá or paiauarú of Neo-Brazilians).

Since the *Maué* were first mentioned by Bettendorf (1910, p. 36), they have been famous for their cultivation and preparation of guaraná (*Paulinia sorbilis*), of which they enjoyed the monopoly. The fruit is roasted in an oven, pounded in a mortar, and made into hard, cylindrical rolls. A little is grated off by means of a stone, and the powder is dissolved in water in a gourd. This drink is called capó. People in groups take it many times a day. The head of the house drinks it first and then it is passed from right to left among the others. The *Maué* believe that guaraná brings them luck in any transactions, that it gives joy, and that it is a stimulus to work, preventing fatigue and hunger.

In planting, the seeds are carefully chosen, as are later the young plants. A medicine man goes through a ceremony over the ground when it is ready for planting, and there are celebrations with dancing and drinking. Formerly, the *Maué*, enjoyed a considerable trade in guaraná, but by the end of the last century, it had decreased with the rise of the rubber industry, and today the greater part of the guaraná for commercial purposes is produced by Neo-Brazilians of the region.

The *Maué* explained to Nunes Pereira that guaraná constitutes a protection or charm for them: That it brings rain, protects their farms, cures certain diseases and prevents others, and brings success in war and in love, especially when there are two rivals for the affections of one woman. To the present author, they recommended it as well as parica for its magic effects against storms.

Parica, made from the seeds of *Mimosa acacioides*, is now little used. The seeds are roasted and finely pulverized in a carefully made, shallow basin of a red wood, and the powder is dried on a flat piece of wood "or of porcelain" (Spix und Martius, 1823-31, 3:1,318). The Indians use two long tubular bones to sniff the powder up into both nostrils simultaneously, or they rolled a piece of banana leaf into a tube (Ratzel, 1894, 1:509). There is a statement by Martius (1867, p. 411) which could be interpreted as meaning that the *Maué* also used parica as a clyster.

#### RELIGION

Today all *Maué* are baptized and have chapels in their villages with images of the saints, which they worship on their own account with

litanies, imitating the Christian service in Latin. These services end in dancing and drinking. In these celebrations, they use musical instruments.

Regarding their former religion, Martius (Spix and Martius, 1823-31, 3:1,331) was informed that there were vestiges of a belief in a god and in the power of evil demons.

#### SHAMANISM

Nunes Pereira (1939) speaks of shamans of great reputation who carry out ceremonies designed to bring about an excellent harvest of guaraná. All guaraná plantations must be "blessed" by the shaman. Some shamans cure diseases; others are evil magicians who cause them. The *Maué* greatly fear sorcery, and attribute all deaths to witchcraft, even if the supposed spell was cast over a year previously. Their reluctance to take medicine furnished by civilized people is prompted by their fear of spells. All shamans work with an assistant. Today they take a strong manioc drink (*tarobá*) to stimulate them to action. Magic is exercised by the shaman, but everybody knows something about medicinal plants and animal products. Uaciri-pot, the chieftain and shaman, who probably lived in the first half of the last century, had the power of capturing the "mother of sickness" in the plaza by means of conjurations, magic gestures, and lines drawn upon the ground.

#### MYTHOLOGY

Two legends are recorded (Nunes Pereira, 1939). In the first, the true *timbó* (a fish drug) and the false *timbó* originated from the legs of a buried child who had been killed by a spell cast by the fish; water was invented by these same fish. In the second, guaraná originated from the eyes of a boy who was born of the contact of a girl with a little snake, and who was killed by his uncles. From the buried body, several animals were born. The boy was finally resurrected and became the first *Maué*.

#### THE ARAPIUM

In the 17th and 18th centuries there lived to the west of the lower Tapajóz, a tribe of Indians called *Arapium* (Fritz, 1691, (see Volume 1, map 7) *Arapiyú*), lat. 2° 30' S., long. 55° 30' W., which the Jesuits gathered at the beginning of the 18th century in the Cumarú Mission (Villa Franca) at the mouth of the Arapiuns River. Both Martius (1867) and Métraux (1928 a) considered them to be the same as the *Maué*. The only ethnological data regarding them are the following, from João Daniel (1841, pp. 168-71, 478), who saw them:

Girls undergoing their first menstrual period were secluded and made to fast. After the fast, the girl was bled from head to foot with a cutia tooth. She then negotiated a marriage with the first young man she saw.

Before marrying, a young man had to place his arms in long gourds full of sauva ants (*Atta* sp.) to show his courage. A drinking feast concluded the ceremonies.

A dead man's flesh was eaten by his relatives. Old women pulverized his bones and mixed them in drinks.

The *Arapium* held celebrations in honor of the new moon. They went out when it first appeared and stretched out their arms, hands, and fingers, as if asking for health and strength.

Of these cultural features, only the girls' menstrual seclusion and fasting and the young man's ant ordeal are found also among the *Maué*. The others differ from *Maué* customs, proving that the *Arapium* were most likely an offshoot of the *Tapajó* tribe. The present author, exploring the Arapiuns River in 1924, found many old Indian dwelling places where the pottery, with its plastic ornamentation, was very different from that found in the region of the *Maué*, being much more similar to that of the *Tapajó*. After 1762, when the *Arapium* were last mentioned as living in Obidos and on the Arapiuns River, there is no further information regarding them.

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