

**ANAIS**  
**DO**  
**XXXI CONGRESSO INTERNACIONAL**  
**DE**  
**AMERICANISTAS**  
**SÃO PAULO**

23 a 28 de agosto de 1954

organizados e publicados por  
**HERBERT BALDUS**

**VOLUME I**

**EDITORA ANHEMBI**

São Paulo

1955

## FIRST REPORT ON A FIELD TRIP TO THE GUAPORÉ REGION (PACAAS NOVOS)

by

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The Serra dos Pacaas Novos is the somewhat lower continuation of the Serra dos Parecis to the West its outskirts nearly reaching the Mamoré-River. The Rio Pacaas Novos and its confluent, the Rio Ouro Preto come from these hills and wind their way through the dense forest to the Mamoré. On the "terra firme" between these rivers live some Indians, commonly called "Pacaas Novos". About 20 or 25 years ago, the seringueiros report that these Indians came frequently out to the rivers to fish. Around 1930 the situation changed and now these Indians are not only shy but thoroughly hostile. It is reported, that some of the seringueiros shot at these Indians and from time to time there seem to have been so called "expeditions" to frighten them off. Today the situation is such, that the seringueiros are afraid of the Indians and shoot at them when they encounter them and the Indians occasionally raid a seringueiro house shooting at the inmates with bows and arrows.

But it seems to me that if these Indians are going out to rob — especially iron tools — they do not seem to kill without a good reason. They are said to mark down an enemy well and kill him later. Usually the seringueiro of this region is very good-natured and peaceful, but occasionally one may find people among them, who feel no responsibility towards the Indian and the present hostility of the Indians of the Pacaas Novos will

certainly have been the result of irresponsible activity on the part of such individuals.

I know now of about 5 villages of these Indians. The village I saw had 5 large houses. If we count about 12 persons for each house, including children, we may take it that one village has about 60 inmates; this would give us about 300 for the tribe. But it is possible that there are some more villages. Also we do not know if the Indians of the Rio Soterio, the next affluent of the Mamoré, belong to the same tribe or not.

Some people are of the opinion that the *Arara*, north of the serra, are the same tribe or at least intimately related to the Pacaas Novos. For several reasons, mainly linguistic ones, I do not share this opinion; but I shall have to get more material to be certain.

With two Indian materos and one caboclo I went up the Pacaas Novos and then up the Ouro Preto 4 hours journey above the confluence of the Igarapé Monte. This trip can be made in 2 to 3 days by canoe with an outboard motor. From there we followed the tracks of a group of 5 or 6 Indians who had about a week ago come out to the River Ouro Preto and broken into a seringueiro house. I was told that the village was 2 or 3 days away, perhaps four. Eventually we walked 9 days, mainly eastwards, always looking for the tracks of the Indians who had passed before us.

There was a line of hills which we crossed at a lower place. As soon as we reached the other side of these hills we encountered some older trails and the site of a village, with its houses already broken down. It must have been a large village, but deserted at least 2 or 3 years ago. Near to it was a large growth of Batoá-palms. Some partly broken down shacks or temporary houses showed that the Indians still came to harvest the fruits. There were trails, but it could be seen that they were used infrequently.

We had a difficult time finding the direction in which they now had gone. The trails were partly well marked

and visible, but used to vanish from time to time. Sometimes because a jungle tree with all its growth of cipós had fallen to the ground but mostly the Indians themselves had hidden their trails remarkably well. We now found frequently places where they had slept for the night, had had their fires, babracots and their little temporary huts, when it became too cold for them during the "frosts" in June and July. After 9 days we reached a village that must have been deserted only some months ago — probably before the last rainy season.

There were 5 large houses, two of them had broken down already, three others were still in good condition. They were not grouped around one open space: two houses faced each other, the distance between them about 12 m, one very large, the other the smallest of the five. Next to the small house, looking in the same direction was another large house and a little set back from it, looking in the opposite direction was another large house with an open space in front and one more house, that had broken down.

The houses resembled shelters, thatched with palm-leaves, strong and well made. The smallest house was 5 m long and 3 m wide, the roof extending to form a kind of verandah in front of the house, where the Indians had had their fires burning. The roof was tied on one side to a pole resting in strong forked sticks, embedded in the ground. Other poles and long forked sticks held up the roof in front. The smallest house was 2.28 m high. A larger house had a length of 8 m, another of 10 m, and the roof in front was no less than 5 m high. One house had a second shelter roof in the right hand corner attached to it.

But the most remarkable things were their beds. One could call them a special kind of platform-bed, although it is more of a chair than a bed. They run nearly the full width of a house. For instance the bed of the 8 m house was 6 m wide. On two strong gabled poles, 60 cm high rested a strong beam; 87 cm apart and 83 cm high rested another somewhat thinner beam. The space be-

tween them was filled with Pashiuba boards tied with cipó and embira. The people sit on the lower beam leaning back, with the legs hanging down, the head resting on the upper stick. These beds are quite comfortable to sit on. Frequently they put palmleaf-mats on it. Bows and arrows are leaning against these beds even when they are resting. In front of the beds the fire is burning — if it is cold, the fire is placed nearly under the bed.

The backs of the houses are kept clean, the dirt being pushed with a broom to the rear. Some baskets, mats and gourds they had left behind. I could not find any pottery but one of my materos had brought a German missionary two years ago to a village of the same tribe — where the Padre unfortunately had been killed — and this matero was one of the very few people who had ever entered a village where these Indians lived. He had seen black pottery of different sizes and he specially mentioned that it was very thin and well made. The matero Adolfo told me that they had big pots and they seem occasionally to make Chicha ; but this is not certain.

There were remains of maize plants in the village and many empty cobs ; they often eat the corn roasted. In the village as well as in their hunting huts I found these cobs and I have saved some of them for examination. I also found a maize-cob, part of which had been ground off — obviously on some sharp stone rasp. But there was nowhere a trace of manioc nor of bananas.

I found some cotton trees in the village. They do not know weaving, but use cotton, partly for the preparation of their arrows and tools. As far as I could ascertain from the matero, they go entirely naked and do not even wear cotton or embira armlets nor waiststrings — at least not for every day. He has seen some feather headdresses, but could not tell me anything about their technique. Maybe they used cotton for this.

There were also *Lagenaria* plants and pieces of gourds.

They have mats made of palmleaves, “palha mansa”, which they pleat by turning one side of the leaf over

the middle rib and using the rib as one edge. They also make their more temporary baskets on their hunting trips out of the same material. Here they use the middle ribs on the corners to make them stronger; the baskets usually have three of them. But they also have twilled baskets and mats of different sizes. These baskets have a quadrangular bottom.

They use bow and arrow; the bow not being very large, with a notch for the string. The arrows are rather long and very carefully made. Up to now I saw tops of lanceolate bamboo and sharp round pointed ones of hard wood. The feathering is of the Arara type, very carefully tied and the feathers given a slight diagonal shift. The remarkable thing about them is that they have no notch at the end. They are of bamboo, tied sometimes with cotton, sometimes with the carefully waxed fibres of a palm, adorned with irregular black windings of embira and a small collar of ara feathers which stands out about two centimeters. With an instrument consisting of a bamboo stick with cotía-teeth fastened to it by cotton thread they sharpen their arrow heads and make the rough bamboo surface smooth.

Obviously their agriculture does not cover much of their daily needs and they depend very much on collecting wild fruits, hunting and fishing. In their village and their temporary huts I found remains of Jatobá and Brazil nut shells. There were also some wild cocoa trees in the serra and the Indians obviously knew them for there were old trails passing below them.

They roasted meat on a stick over the fire; maize cobs and fish were wrapped in leaves and roasted in the ashes. Near the water of a swamp there were also barbecots on four legs for smoking fish.

Besides their real village I found various temporary shelters. Usually two smaller trees were used and a stick tied to it with cipó. Palmleaves or banana brava leaves were placed against it from the outside to form the roof. Each person had two palmleaves to sleep on the ground; a stick was often used for a headrest. On

both sides of these shelters they made fires. My matero said that they make fire with flints and not with two sticks, but I am not yet sure of this.

Besides these shelters I found another type of house, that must have been temporary, probably used for weeks or even months. They were lower houses, shelter-type also. Once I saw two shelters leaning together at a right angle, forming a rather flat shack. It was so low, that not even these people, who are quite small, could stand up in it. Inside they had some pieces of logs to sit on and palmleaf-mats for sleeping. In this place there were several houses and shelters and a clearing begun. A bigger group must have stayed there for some time, perhaps intending to build a village and for some unknown reason they had moved on.

As far as I could make out, for there is one civilized Indian of this tribe, who was left behind in an attack, but who was then only about 8 years old, they are light-skinned with an oval face, but rather small, as can also be seen from their beds.

Because I had only three people with me and we had no more food — and one cannot do much hunting near a wild tribe like that — this time I had to return. I left them many presents in the deserted village, because trails and tracks showed that they passed there frequently. They were in fact around us. We sometimes heard their signals at night and found imprints of their feet just a day or two old. They did not come out, but they did not attack either. Once I saw two of them disappearing through the forest. But I shall return there now with more food and more people and hope to make friends with them next time.