

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION
BUREAU OF AMERICAN ETHNOLOGY
BULLETIN 143

**HANDBOOK
OF
SOUTH AMERICAN INDIANS**

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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

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

THE GUAJA

By CURT NIMUENDAJÚ

HISTORY

The *Guajá* are called *Wazaizara* (wazái, an ornament of small tufts of feathers stuck with wax in the hair, plus zara, "owner") by the *Guajajara* and *Tembé*, and *Aiayé* by the *Amanayé*. *Guajá* is the Neo-Brazilian form of gwazá.

The tribe is rarely mentioned in literature. In 1774, Ribeiro de Sampaio (1825, p. 8) mentions the *Uaya* among the tribes of the lower Tocantins. A list of the tribes existing in 1861 in the region along the road from Imperatriz to Belém mentions the *Ayaya* as "wild; very few of them are tame, but are timorous and therefore are pursued and killed by the others" (Marques, C. A., 1864). According to the report of F. C. de Araujo Brusque (1862, p. 12), the *Uaiara* (*Guajará*) at times appeared on the upper Gurupí River but did not have a fixed residence.

The author obtained the following information among the *Tembé* of the Gurupí in 1913-14 and among the *Guajajara* in 1929:

The *Guajá* wandered without fixed living places through the jungles between the Capim and upper Gurupí Rivers and between the latter and the Pindaré River, northward to about lat. 3° 40' S. (map 1, No. 1; see Volume 1, map 7). In 1910 or 1911 a small group of them committed small thefts in the fields at the mouth of the Gurupí Mirim River. The *Tembé* tracked them to the headwaters of the Gurupí Mirim. Although armed with powerful bows and arrows, the *Guajá* there surrendered meekly to their pursuers, who took them to the village. Here the captives soon died of intestinal ills attributed to the *Tembé's* cooked and seasoned food. The language of the two tribes was so similar that they understood each other with ease. In 1943, the botanist Ricardo Fróes met a group of them on the upper Carú, a left tributary of the Pindaré River.

CULTURE

The *Guajá* did not have any agriculture whatever, but at times stole from the plantations of the *Tembé*, *Guajajara*, and *Urubú*. When caught, they were killed or at least beaten and imprisoned.

The *Guajá* built only temporary shelters, or merely camped under trees, sleeping on leaf beds on the ground.

Some *Guajá* bows and arrows were procured in 1913 by a punitive expedition against the then hostile *Urubú* Indians, who had massacred a *Guajá* camp. The weapons were carelessly made but were very large, the bamboo arrowheads being perhaps the largest known.

In 1913, the *Guaja* still used stone axes.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Brusque, 1862; Marques, C. A., 1864; Ribeiro de Sampaio, 1825.