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P. J. J. Knabbe

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The Baniva Indians and their Reaction Against Integration

By FRANCIS A. KNOBLOCH

THE COUNTRY

The homelands of these Indians are the Iñali river, better known as the Rio Içana, together with its tributaries—the Aiari, Pirauavara and Cubate on the right bank, and the Cuiari on the left bank. The headwaters of the Iñali are in Colombia but most of its course is in Brazil. The Iñali is one of the two Brazilian tributaries of the upper Rio Negro and is situated between latitudes 00°25' and 01°45' North and longitudes 67°30' and 80°00' West. The whole country is densely wooded with tropical rain forests, mostly flat and containing "island mountains" (hills without valleys), among them Serrinha, the Serra de Sant' Ana, the Serra do Carmo, the Serra do Equari, and the most important, Serra de Tunui. In these regions the river breaks through a rock wall, forming a rock-gate and producing dangerous rapids. The tributaries Cubate and Pirauavara traverse the lowlands and during the rainy season they are inundated, forming so-called *caatingas* with a bush vegetation of almost no value. Only the upper course of the river contains Indian settlements. The range of animals and plants is identical with those of the Rio Negro.

LANGUAGE FAMILY AND SUBGROUPS

The Baniva of the Içana, perhaps 4,000 people, belong to the great Aruakian (Arawak) language family, whose northernmost outposts are found in Florida in the United States, the southernmost in the Mato Grosso, Paraguay, and in northern Argentina. The Baniva of the Rio Içana, or "Western Baniva," should be distinguished from their distant relatives, the Baniva of the Orinoco or "Eastern Baniva."¹

The Baniva are not a tribe. The name comprises three dialect groups, each subdivided into a number of sibs or clans.

(a) Karu or Karom: Yauareté, Yurupari, Marakaya, Inambú, Dyiboia, Urubú.

¹ Cestmir Loukotka, *Classification of South American Indian Languages*, University of California Press, Los Angeles, 1968, pp. 130 and 133.

(b) Un-Hun: Siusi, Sukuriyú, Acuti, Tapiira, Tatú, Cáua, Kadapuritana, Hohódene.

(c) Kuripaka: Ipeka ("Duks"), Pakú, Koati, Ira, Iebarú, Wirari, Pirapukú (many of them on the Rio Guainia in Colombia).²

Visiting the Içana in May 1970, from the mouth of the river to Tunui I discovered the following distribution of groups:—

On the Cubate river: Guadanape (Ipeka), Acará (Hohódene).

On the Içana: Bom Jardim and Auxiliadora (Ipeka), Yauakaná (Siusi), Thin, Takana-ponta, Marakaya, Teyú (Arara), Kabeçudo (Ipeka), Sao Pedro (Tatú), Pirauavara (Sucuriyú), Buia-Igarapé (Tatú), Boca do Buia (Ipeka), Ai-ponta (Sucuriyú), Mituca-ponta (Yurupari and Ipeka), Yuruti (Tatú), Carmo (Yurupari), Saúba (Arara), Yavaneri (Siusi), Armando (Yurupari), Boca do Equari (Yauareté), Masariko, Nazaré, Mangeira, Ambaúba (all Siusi), "Sitio" (Yauareté), Florida (Yauareté), Belem, Tayassu-cavera, Auxiliadora (all Siusi), Koro-Koro (Sucuriyú), Tunui (Kadapuritana). The once great settlement of Sant' Ana is now abandoned.

Of special interest is the sib Arara. We are informed by Arara Arsenio that the Arara was a group, originally a clan of the Aruakian Tariana tribe who, perhaps in the seventeenth century, migrated from the Aiari river, a tributary of the Içana, southward to the Caiari or Uaupés river. The Arara clashed with other clans of their own tribe and migrated downstream. Reaching the Rio Negro, they divided, a small group going down the Rio Negro. They still live in a small settlement on the Inixi river near Santa Isabel. The main group travelled up the Rio Negro, reached the Içana and entered it. Speaking a language very close to Baniva, this group was accepted as friends and formed a sib of the Baniva.³

FAMILY ORGANISATION

Until the beginning of this century the Baniva lived in large common-houses (*malocas*), which were observed by the ethnologists Theodor Koch-Grünberg (1906) and Kurt Nimuendajú (1927).⁴

² Eduardo Galvao, *Aculturação Indígena no Rio Negro*, Belem, 1959, pp. 40-41; Cestmir Loukotka, *op. cit.*, pp. 132-134; Wilhelm Saake, *Erziehungsformen bei den Baniwa*, Hanover, 1964, p. 272; Alcínio Brüzzi Alves da Silva, in P. Massa, *De Tupao a Cristo*, Rio de Janeiro, 1965, pp. 53-63. All these authors are not in complete agreement in enumerating the various groups.

³ Own information.

⁴ Theodor Koch-Grünberg, *Die Indianerstämme am oberen Rio Negro und Yapura*, Berlin, 1906; Kurt Nimuendajú, *Relatório de viagem aos rios Içana e Uaupés*, Paris, 1927.

Today, however, the Baniva inhabit small settlements on the Içana, tending towards an existence based upon one house for each family. Some large families, however, remain united, like those of the Yauareté chief Benedict, who form a group of about 30 people. In these large families there exists a patriarchal way of life. I was able to observe the devotion and reverence with which members of the family treated Chief Benedict and his wife, Maria.

Various Baniva sibs are exogamic; for instance, the wife of Chief Benedict is of the Cubeo, or better Bahuna, a cubeosised tribe of Aruakian stock on the upper Aiari. His son, Valentin, is married to a Katapuritana girl from Tunui, the other son, Joao, to a girl of the Tukano tribe, and his grandson, Jose, to a Yurupari girl. The Siusi man Francisco married an Ipeca girl and the Siusi Luciano has a wife from the Curipaco of Rio Guainia. All these marriages are patrilocal, which means that the woman inter-marries in the sib of her husband.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Baniva are well-formed, good-looking people. In character they are more open than the Tukano tribes of the Rio Uaupés. A mongolical positioning of the eyes does occur, but not as a general phenomenon. The hair, which is black and strong, is never curly. The teeth often reveal gaps but these may be caused by manioc flour and sugar cane.

MATERIAL CULTURE

AGRICULTURE

At the present time agriculture constitutes the principal method of supplying food. It follows a primitive pattern and consists of clearing the land by clearing and burning trees and shrubs. This work is done by the men, often carried out by various families working together and forming in this way a primitive co-operative called *ayuri*. Planting, however, is carried out entirely by women. The principal crop is the root of the manioc shrub. The roots are squeezed, the liquid is pressed out and the remaining mass toasted in a large pan over a hot fire. The yellow manioc flour produced by the Baniva is looked upon as first class in the Rio Negro region. To squeeze the liquid from the manioc, the Baniva use a *rалlos*, a wooden table studded with many small splinters of quartz. The manioc roots are pressed onto the quartz-studded surface with *tipitis*, a basket-like pipe about two metres long. Besides manioc, the Baniva plant ananaz, sweet potatoes, yams, sugar cane, bananas, *açai* (*Euterpe oleracea*) and *bacaba* palms (*Oenocarpus*

bacaba) and *ingá*, a leguminosae. The Baniva sometimes prepare an alcoholic drink called *caxiri* by mixing fermenting manioc with the sap of sugar cane. In 1970 I found near the mission of Asuncao a stone axe, measuring about six centimetres long and 3.5 centimetres broad. Chief Benedict's son, Valentin, told me that such axes were used by the "old ones."

FISHING, HUNTING AND COLLECTING

Fishing also forms an important part of the diet of the Baniva. The Içana is rich in such fish as *surubi*, *piraiba*, *tucunare*, *mandu* and *piranha*. There are three methods of catching fish. A poison called *timboo* which is extracted from a leguminosae (*Derris guianensis*) is used to stun fish which are then collected as they float to the surface. Unfortunately, this poison also destroys any eggs that have been laid. Fish traps or *cacuris* made from wood of the *paxiuba* palm *Iriarteia ventricosa* are installed in rivers in the form of a fence. Nets are also used. The fish which are caught are preserved by drying or smoking processes.

Hunting plays a lesser rôle in the lives of the Baniva. There are available in small numbers forest pig, deer, tapir, monkeys and many kinds of birds. These include *mutum* (the curassow *Crax nigra*), *cuxubi* (the Piping Guan, *Pipile cuxubi*), *yacamin* (the White-winged Trumpeter, *Psophia leucoptera*) and pigeon. The *caiman* or alligator is also hunted.

Many Baniva still use blow-pipes, measuring about 2.5 metres long, in which they use darts, about 15 centimetres long, although the use of firearms is becoming more common.

Food collection is also of minor importance. The Baniva collect the nut of the *para* (*Bertholletia excelsis*) and sometimes the eggs of turtles, as well as the turtles themselves.

NAVIGATION

The Baniva are skilled river navigators. They make canoes by hollowing out with tools and fire the trunk of a hard wood tree (*Eperua purpurea*). The paddles used vary in length from sib to sib.

CERAMICS

Like many Aruakian tribes, the Baniva excel at making pottery. Pots and bowls are made with great care from a red-brown clay and decorated with geometrical forms. Unfortunately, pottery-making has declined since white traders began producing pots and bowls made from aluminium. Only on the upper Içana and Aiari, where traders almost never appear, does this artistic occupation still flourish.

BUILDINGS

The houses of the Baniva are the best and most beautiful that I have seen among the Indian people of the Rio Negro. Built in rectangular form and constructed with a framework of hard timber and ribs of the *paxiuba* palm (*Iriartea ventricosa*) the walls are completed with clay which dries hard. The walls are painted with a caolin-like white earth. Inside, there are generally two rooms. In the centre of each there is a strong pole which is used to support hammocks which radiate from the pole like the spokes of a wheel. Clay is used for the floor. The houses are often decorated with brown clay ornaments bearing signs similar to those found on the pottery. The roofs are generally made from the leaves of the *carana* palm (*Mauritia carana*).

EARTH WALLS

In the forest near the village of Carmo there are earth walls which the people of Carmo say were used by the "old ones" as protection against attacks by other tribes.⁵

ELEMENTS OF RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

Today almost all Baniva are confessed Christians—one-third Roman Catholics and two-thirds Baptists of the New Tribes Mission. Underneath, however, they still preserve much of their old natural religion. The most famous of the old cultural heroes was *Inapirikuli*. The Baniva say that from his blood originated the first men, and myth has it that the first Baniva appeared from a hole in the Uapi rapids on the upper Içana.⁶

Another cultural hero, *Kowai*, survives to this day. He may be identical to the Yurupari, a cultural hero of the Tupi tribes, or to *Neengatú* of the Rio Negro *caboclos*, a crossing of whites and Indians. It seems likely that *Inapirikuli* belongs to the older stratum of religion whereas *Kowai* may be of relatively newer times.

Characteristic of the *Kowai* cult are large posaunes, horn-like instruments made from the *paxiuba* palm. This is an instrument which is surrounded by much secrecy and which must never be seen by women.⁷ *Mathyari* or bush ghosts, which are said to transform into jaguars and are capable of attacking people, are another aspect of the cult.

RELATION WITH WHITES AND REACTION

EARLY CONTACTS

It was with the foundation of the village of Barcelos by the Carmelite friar Mathias and the powerful Manaus chief

⁵ Information from Father Carlos Galli, 1970.

⁶ Information from Chief Benedict, 1970.

⁷ Information from Valentin, son of Chief Benedict.

commandery some time after 1730 that mention is first made of the Baniva. The chief headed a confederation of 2,000 Manaos led by six chiefs—Ignacio, Faustino, Maycanary, Cauarubana, Jamdaby, and Tarrimary and his son, Granitary. They were joined later from the Rio Marie by the chiefs Janabaty, Jama Damara, and Maucabana with their Bare and Baniva tribesmen.⁸ The journey by the Baniva over 500 kilometres of country from far away Içana was a considerable feat but it should be remembered that even today the Baniva undertake wide-ranging migrations. Many Baniva travel from the upper Içana down the river for two or three weeks and then up the Rio Negro to Colombia to work there and earn a living. A group of 20 people came down the Rio Negro about ten years ago and settled between the Cauaboris and Marie rivers on the left bank of the Rio Negro. In 1971 another Baniva group travelled with their canoes to Manaos, 1000 kilometres from the mouth of the Içana. In olden times before the coming of the Portuguese, there may have been a steady contact between the various tribes in the Rio Negro region, a view which is supported by the fact that most of them, like the Manaos and Bare, were Aruakian tribes like the Baniva.

After 1755 Carmelite missionaries did visit the lower Içana, founding a residence at Carara-poco, which is now a Salesian mission. When the vicar-general, Dr Jose Montero de Noronha, was visiting the Rio Negro villages in 1759, he reported finding Baniva in the following villages: Manaos, Barcelos, Lamalonga, Santa Isabel, Sao Felipe, Sant' Ana, Sao Miguel, Nosa Senhora de Guia, San Marcelino, San Jose de Marabitanas.⁹

In 1853 the Capuchin missionary Frei Gregorio Maria de Bene entered the Içana, founding 14 villages.¹⁰ Unfortunately missionaries are generally followed by other explorers, traders, soldiers and adventurers and it was as a result of their activities that the Baniva began to react. The second half of the nineteenth century saw the arrival on the Rio Negro of the "messianic movements." These movements were a reaction against foreign religions and customs. At the same time, however, these movements adopted some names from the new spiritual teachings, just as today in their Afro-Brazilian rites the Brazilian negroes resurrect the old African

⁸ Arthur Cezar Ferreira Reis, "Manaos e outras villas," *Revista de Instituto Geographico e Historico do Amazonas*, Ano. IV, Vol. IV, Nos. 1 and 2, Manaos, 1934, p. 82; Francis A. Knobloch, "Geschichte der Missionen unterden Indianerstammen des Rio Negro Tales," *Zeitschrift fur Missions- und Religionswissenschaft*, Munster, Westfalen, April-May 1972, p. 86.

⁹ Alcnilio Brüzzi Alves da Silva, *A Civilizacao Indigena do Uaupés*, Missao Salesiana do Rio Negro, Sao Paula, 1962, p. 24.

¹⁰ Bento de Fiquerre do Tenreiro Aranho, *Arquivo de Amazonas*, Vols. I and II, 1906-1907, N.5, 86.

deities and invest them with the names of Christian saints. The chiefs of such a movement adopt the name "Christ" or the name of a saint, will carry out baptisms and introduce rituals with dances and the salvation, but what they are really preaching is liberation from white domination. Generally the movement begins in a village where the "Christ" is collecting his first followers. Then he travels from village to village fanatically collecting more and more converts, attacking plantations and "dissidents" or "unbelievers" and punishing them, as well as enlarging the whole movement until finally there takes place the inevitable confrontation with the military.

In 1858 a Colombian Indian, Venancio Christo, was leading just such an insurrection of the Baniva of Tunui village and clashed with imperial soldiers. Tunui was taken by force and the massacre gave rise to another messianic movement in 1870 led by the "Christ of Pirauavara" which involved almost 2000 people.¹¹

A third uprising took place at the beginning of this century. It was led by a person called Aniceto, who claimed to be "Christ resurrected from the dead." He preached that the Baniva should not work on the plantations and that the crops would grow by themselves if he blessed the earth.¹²

ARRIVAL OF BAPTISTS AND CONFRONTATION WITH CATHOLICS

The first Baptist missionary arrived in 1948 when Mrs Sofia Muller, an American, entered the Içana from the Guainia or upper Rio Negro where she had studied the Kuripaka language. She traversed a forest trail to the Cuiari river, which runs into the Içana and visited the whole Içana. Having a good talent for painting and being able to speak the language she taught the Baniva very quickly to read and write. In a second visit she distributed booklets containing extracts from the Bible. In a short time the whole of the Içana became Baptist and joined the New Tribes Mission.¹³ In 1950 there occurred a new messianic movement led by a Baniva from Colombia, who was a follower of Mrs Muller. He claimed to be "Christ," baptised his followers in the waters of the rivers and let them drink the "blood of Christ," promising them a better life. He and his followers descended the river in a fleet of canoes, destroying all Catholic chapels, throwing

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² In connection with this one is reminded of the appearance of another messianic movement far away in the eastern Sudan, the uprising led by the Dervish Mahdi, Mohammed Achmed, which cost the life of the able Scottish general, Gordon Pasha.

¹³ Mrs Muller tells the whole story in her book *Beyond Civilisation*, New Tribes Mission, Chico, California.

into the river medallions and pictures of saints. The Brazilian authorities became alarmed and when they imprisoned the "Christ" his followers disbanded without resistance.¹⁴

In 1952 the Salesians founded the mission of Assuncao. Father I. Schneider visited the whole Içana and succeeded in convincing many people to turn back to Catholicism. It is from this time that my reckoning of two-thirds Baptists and one-third Roman Catholics dates. The Baptists have taken a very militant stand. If a person arrives who is suspected of being a Roman Catholic, the women and children will hurry to the forest leaving only their menfolk and the Baptist minister. Even Dr Rudolfo Richter, a botanist and authority on orchids from Sao Paulo, experienced this behaviour. There is evidence that Baptists persecuted those who preferred to be Catholics. As a result of such persecution the Siusi chief Leopoldino was forced to abandon his homelands on the upper Içana and settle with his sib—about 40 people—near the Assuncao mission.¹⁵ The chief of the small Sucuriyu settlement of Koro Koro near Tunui was poisoned when he refused to become a Baptist.¹⁶

When I visited the Içana in 1970 the situation had changed very little. In some villages—such as Akara, Piranavara, Belem and Tunui—the Baptists were clearly hostile. In other villages they were coolly courteous and almost friendly.

A NEW BANIVA CHRISTIAN CHURCH?

On the Baptist chapel in the rock village of Tunui there was written in May 1970 in large letters "Igreja das tribos unidos" (Church of the United Tribes). Certainly the name may have its origin in the New Tribes Mission, but at the same time, consciously or unconsciously the Baniva appear to be seeking a church of their own. In the village of Buya Igarape I was asked to assist in a ceremony presided over by the *diacon*, the Baptist minister, who at the same time holds the title of chief. The ceremony began after sunset when all the people in the village, perhaps 15 in all, collected in the chapel. The only illumination was an oil lamp. There were readings from the Bible and hymns were sung. After these the *diacon* made a speech about the multiplication of bread. What I took in with respect are the following facts: (1) the cult is very simple and well adapted to suit these people; (2) it is easily understood by the people because it is

¹⁴ Personal communication from Father I. Schneider and Sr Valentino Garrido Othero.

¹⁵ Communication from Clotilde Luciano, grand-daughter of Chief Leopoldino, in 1970.

¹⁶ Information provided by the chief's son.

carried out in their own language; and (3) it gives the people every satisfaction because they themselves are able to practice it. The cult does not demand the presence of American Baptist missionaries, except sometimes when a "conference" is held. The Baniva have a strong feeling of nationalism and are proud to be Baniva. This is true for both Baptists and Catholics. Both are hard-headed enough not to give in when they believe they are right.

Intermarriage with Whites or *caboclos* almost never occurs. On the other hand Catholics and Baptists will intermarry, even if they are enemies, the wife generally adopting the religion of the husband. Although the Baniva borrow many ideas from the Whites if they think they will be of use to them, they do not want to be submerged in the mixed-blood society of the Rio Negro *caboclos*. In some ways they remind one of the Japanese in the times of the Emperor Meji who while absorbing many European ideas had no intention of allowing his people to become "Europeans," let alone allowing European technology to dominate the Asiatic sphere.

THE FUTURE

It may be too early to say what may happen in the future. An independent Baniva church like the Bantu separatist churches of South Africa would strengthen Baniva nationalism, united with the messianic dynamic. The main question may be, how strong is the will towards unity and how strong are the dividing factors? For union speaks the same language and tradition, while on the other hand there are the divisive factors of the different sibs and religions. Despite this it remains true that the Indian is often his own bitterest enemy. Mexico provides an object lesson. The full-blooded Indian Benito Juarez, today so often hailed as liberator, did not hesitate to execute in 1867 the full-blooded Indian General Tomaz Mejia just because this brave and honest soldier did not share the ultra-liberal views of Juarez.

The Races and Peoples of North and Central Asia

By BERTIL H. LUNDMAN*

I

The vast region of north and central Asia is actually homogeneous in only two respects. The first is the character of the land, which up until recent times has been generally unfavorable to cultivation. The second is the predominance everywhere of the low-skulled (chamaecephalic) North Mongolid races among the populations of this region prior to the migration of the Russians in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

At the end of the Stone Age, however, these populations were generally more primitive. In other words, they consisted of different preliminary stages both to the true Mongolids and also somewhat to the Europids. We possibly still find remnants of this stage among the chiefly primitive-Europid Ainus of northern Japan and directly this side of the western border of the region among the Volgids of eastern Russia. In addition, traces of this earlier population may be encountered in the mountain valleys of the Altai.

Evolution has then followed truly different paths in the steppe belt and in the taiga and tundra. In the first-named region around the third millennium B.C. a time began in which the climate was damper and somewhat less parched and hot in the summer than at any time earlier or later in the post-glacial period. Now cattle-raising and agricultural tribes from southeast Europe migrated into the vast expanse of central Asia. They gradually pushed across Asia up to northern China—passing along the routes later traversed by the silk traders. These European migrants introduced a number of southeast European and southwest Asian domesticated animals and plants into north China. These included millet, sheep, cattle, and the horse, *et al.* The culture was for some time—around approximately B.C. 2000—remarkably uniform from the lower Danube lands up to far into the East. For prehistorians the culture was particularly characterized by its beautiful multi-colored ceramics. These central Asian Europids are likely to have spoken “pre” or “semi” Indo-European languages which have now disappeared.

Soon afterwards, however, true Indo-European peoples traversed the same routes into these regions of central Asia. These people rode mounted horses. They included countless Iranian

*Translated from the German by Donald H. Swan.

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