

The Parecí
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Three distinct groups speaking different dialects of an Arawak language are known to Brazilians as Parecí. They call themselves Kashinití, Waimaré and Kozárene. The Kashinití have traditionally lived furthest east, on the Sumidouro and Agua Verde Rivers, which flow to the Arinos, and the Sepotuba, which flows to the Paraguai. The Waimaré homeland is the Rios Verde, Sacre and Papágaio. The Kozárene (Cabishí-Parecí) live on the headwaters of these three rivers and the sources of the Juba, Cabaçal, Jauru, Guaporé and Juruena. The ethnocentric attitudes which maintain group identity tend to persist, despite a long history of intermarriage, which is probably a response to depopulation. Outsiders recognized the difference between the three groups in the 1700s (Serra 1844:195), but there has ~~been~~ been a tendency to classify them all as a single "tribe."

The heart of the Parecí region is a high, dry, gently rolling plateau that separates the northern and southern parts of South America. Streams rising to the north of the watershed flow to the Amazon, while those rising to the south flow to the Paraguai. There are a few patches of good soil around springs and along some of the streams, but most of the region is a desolate savanna, almost entirely devoid of trees.

The Salumá, Iranshe and Umutina are neighbors of the Parecí. The Salumá, who speak a language related to Parecí, live in a large village about 20 kilometers south of the con-

fluence of the Rios Iquê and Camararé. They were known in the 1700s (Serra 1844:196), but have remained self-sufficient until recently. In 1974, Padre Thomaz de Aquino Lisboa, director of the Missão Anchieta's operations at Utiariti, began making contact with them. Since they were not in immediate danger, he was able to proceed slowly and carefully. He has managed to protect them, so far, from the more devastating influences of Western society. The Iranshe (Mũnkũ) live to the north of the Waimaré and to the east of the Salumá. Their language (Meador 1967), is not related to Parecí, as was formerly supposed, and it appears quite different from other languages in the area. Two small reserves have been established for the Iranshe; one of them has been demarcated. The Umutina (Oberg 1953) were "pacified" early in this century. There are now only two or three old people who can speak their language, which is related to Bororo. Nevertheless, they have a strong sense of ethnic identity. On June 23-25, 1975, the president and directors of the FUNAI held an open meeting with the Indian agents of the 5th Regional District in Cuiabá. Among the Indians who also attended was the ~~XXX~~ leader of the Umutina. In a memorable address, he said he had been informed that the tiny post where his people now lived was federal property. "We shall be glad of Brazil's help in foiling the designs of those who would take our land," he said. "But let there be no mistake. This land does not belong to Brazil. This land belongs to the Umutina."

The Parecí were first contacted by the roving bands of bandeirantes who scoured the interior of the continent in search

of gold and Indian slaves. One, Antonio Pires de Campos, wrote an impressive account of the "Kingdom of the Parecí" in 1723 (Campos 1862). He said there were so many villages that it was not unusual to pass ten or twelve in a single day's march; there were ten to thirty houses per village; and the houses were 30 or 40 paces across. Trails linking the villages were straight and wide. The people were tireless workers and had beautiful gardens of manioc, corn, beans and sweet potatoes. They were not warlike, and only fought when attacked. "Being all of the same nation," Campos said, "it is their misfortune not to have any single head whom all obey as a king or chief, but many among whom the government is divided."

By the end of the 18th Century, the Parecí had been decimated. In a geographical description of Mato Grosso written in 1797, Ricardo Franco characterized the Parecí as "an ancient nation, predominant in the savanna of the same name, living on the sources of its principal rivers (which flow to the Tapajoz). Almost extinguished by incursions, slaving expeditions and emigration occasioned by the Portuguese, this nation owes its downfall to its valor and peaceable conduct" (Serra 1844:195).

The surviving Parecí learned to live on the fringe of Brazilian society. They were just beyond the frontier, which stabilized in the 19th Century around the towns of Diamantino and Vila Bela. They learned how to trade for scarce goods and maintained contacts in Diamantino, where they obtained metal implements. They learned to act docile around Westerners, but associate with them as little as possible and live their own lives in private.

In 1888 Karl von den Steinen had 12 Parecí (9 men and 3 women) brought to Cuiabá so that he could measure their bodies and ask them questions (1894:424-440). Max Schmidt visited Parecí villages in 1910 (1912). Rondon, who became a Brazilian national hero by building a telegraph line through Indian country from Cuiabá to Porto Velho early in this century, developed a special interest in the Parecí and published his observations, together with a vocabulary and some photos (1947). Roquette-Pinto described the Parecí in his classic work, Rondonia (1935).

Today, the Parecí customarily wear Western clothes and many can speak Portuguese. They retain their traditional social organization and religious beliefs, however. Some live beside highway BR-364, where they sell home-made rubber balls and ream-feather dusters to passing motorists. Others live in small villages, lost in the savanna. Sometimes there is only a single house at the edge of a tiny oasis where an extended family can make its gardens.

It is hard to reconcile this settlement pattern with the description given by Antonio Pires de Campos. One might suppose that he exaggerated the size and density of the villages, or that rainfall has decreased or soil quality deteriorated. But the recently-contacted Salumá live in a large village such as Campos described, located in an area which does not appear, in aerial photos, to be particularly fertile.

During the 1920s, the Indian Protection Service and the Telegraph Commission were often indistinguishable, as Rondon headed both organizations. Telegraph stations sometimes doubled as

