

DOCUMENT 60



Indigenous survival among the Barí and Arhuaco: Strategies and perspectives

**Roberto Lizarralde, Stephen Beckermann
and Peter Elsass**

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IWGIA Document No. 60

Indigenous survival among the Barí and Arhuaco: Strategies and perspectives

By Roberto Lizarralde, Stephen Beckerman
and Peter Elsass

Copenhagen November 1987



Arhuaco

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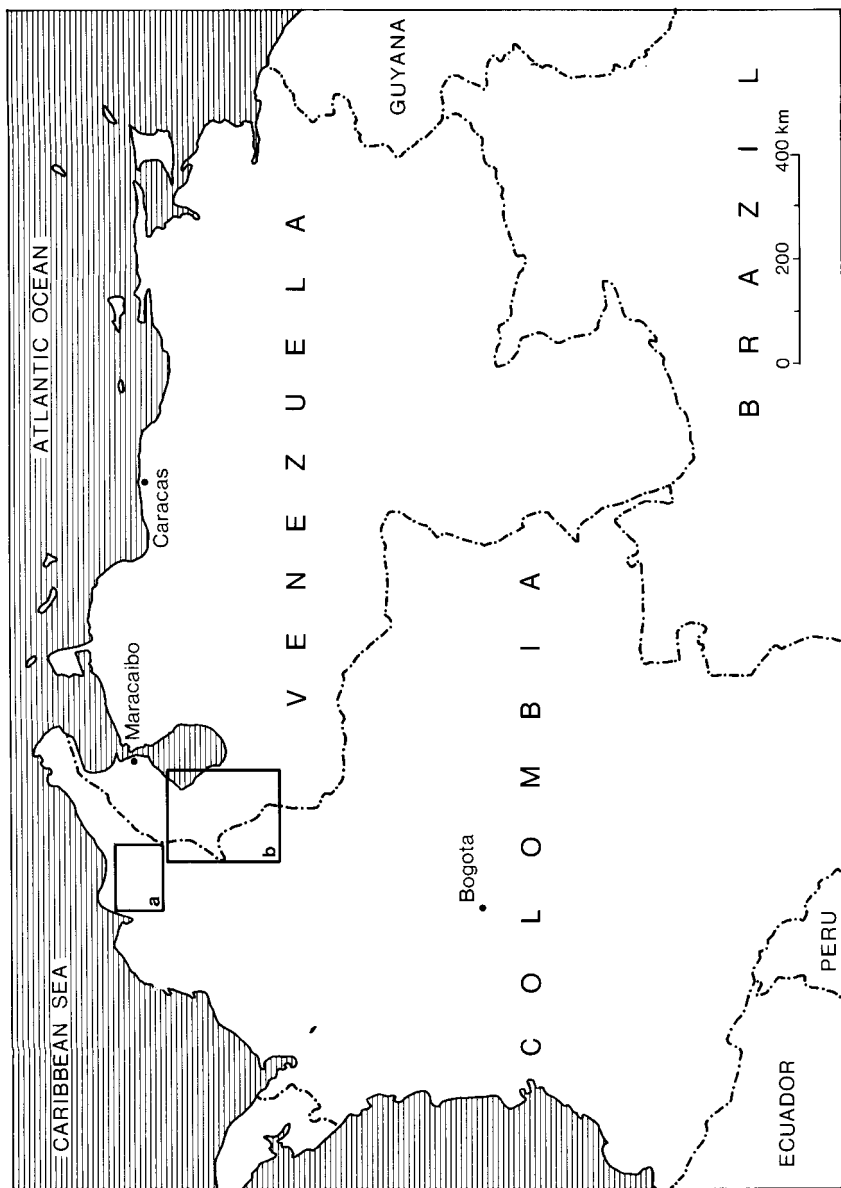
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Foreword

This document is a collection of articles and material comparing the problems and issues facing the Barí and Arhuaco nations of Venezuela and Colombia. These two Chibcha-speaking peoples live close to each other but have widely contrasting environments and histories. The aim of the document is not only to demonstrate differences in strategies available to indigenous peoples who confront hostile outside interests, but also the different ways in which the problems facing indigenous peoples are perceived by outsiders.

The first article in the volume was kindly offered to IWGIA by Roberto Lizarralde in 1986. Although published originally in 1982 in *Antropologica*, the author considers that the problems described in the book are as relevant today as they were then. Indeed, this year, the Barí are still fighting invasions of their lands by colonists (see IWGIA Newsletter May, 1987). In a recent statement in Europe on the situation of the area, a Yukpa leader, neighbours of the Barí, told of their attempts to extend their reserved lands and the immediate need for health facilities in the area.

The Arhuaco section of the document has been compiled from published documentation and visits to the region. It has been organised in a manner which parallels the article on the Barí, providing a "contemporary history". The Arhuaco have a clearly developed indigenous organisational structure and are currently striving to use this to defend their rights to land and culture.

The success of the foundation of their own indigenous controlled school which arose from the buildings of the mission which they had expelled from their lands, has led them to pursue educational projects further. They are currently trying to reproduce this system in other parts of their territory and have set an important precedent for other indigenous peoples who seek to combine education, cultural development and preservation under one curriculum.

The article by Peter Elsass compares the Barí and the Arhuaco from the point of view of their conceptions of power and how this is connected to their political struggle as indigenous peoples. His thesis is that whereas the Barí, with their decentralised power structure, have found resistance to colonisation and missionisation difficult, the Arhuaco, with a potential for forming hierarchical political structures, have resisted both government and mission intrusion in their lives. Indeed the expulsion of the missionaries from their territory was a major achievement in the assertion of Arhuacan sovereignty.

The Barí and the Arhuaco should not be seen as a story of "failure" or "success" because such evaluation can only stem from the indigenous nations themselves according to their own criteria. The comparison cannot provide, either, an automatic rule whereby one can predict the form which indigenous resistance will take because there is always a multiplicity of factors involved, such as the desirability of the natural resources, the current world economic climate and the politics of the state government. Nevertheless, such a comparison shows that indigenous conceptions of power undoubtedly influence how any nation will react to outside political and ideological forces. Those indigenous nations which are more adaptable can resist outsiders as a unity, can bring centralising and decentralising needs into line when forming inter-community organisations and stand a greater chance of putting their demands clearly and effectively.

The document also provides another contrast, not only between the Barí and the Arhuaco but between the authors of the first and last article. Peter Elsass argues from the position that power is a cultural construct. The contrast between the Barí and the Arhuaco stems from their respective cultural constructions of power. The corollary of this is that the missionary institutions most hostile to indigenous culture are therefore the most dangerous to the survival of the Barí and the Arhuaco. Through their struggle with the missions the Arhuaco paradoxically become a "people with history", as opposed to a "people without history".

Lizarralde and Beckerman, on the other hand, put less emphasis on the destruction wrought by missionaries but on the continual devastation of Barí territory through history. The loss of land, the threat to Barí social life and to their culture comes primarily from colonists, multinational companies and government policies. For the authors, the Barí are not a people with or without history, they are a people *in* history.

The document can thus be seen as a comparison between both indigenous strategies for and non-indigenous perspectives of the struggle for survival.

IWGIA, Copenhagen, October, 1987

The Contemporary History of the Barí

By Roberto Lizarralde and Stephen Beckerman

The Barí are an indigenous Chibcha-speaking group who inhabit the tropical rainforest southwest of Lake Maracaibo in western Venezuela and northeastern Colombia. Their traditional subsistence practice is slash and burn agriculture and their main crop is sweet manioc, followed in importance by bananas and plantains. Agriculture, their main production activity, is complemented by fishing and, to a lesser extent, hunting; they also gather natural forest products, especially palm fruits.

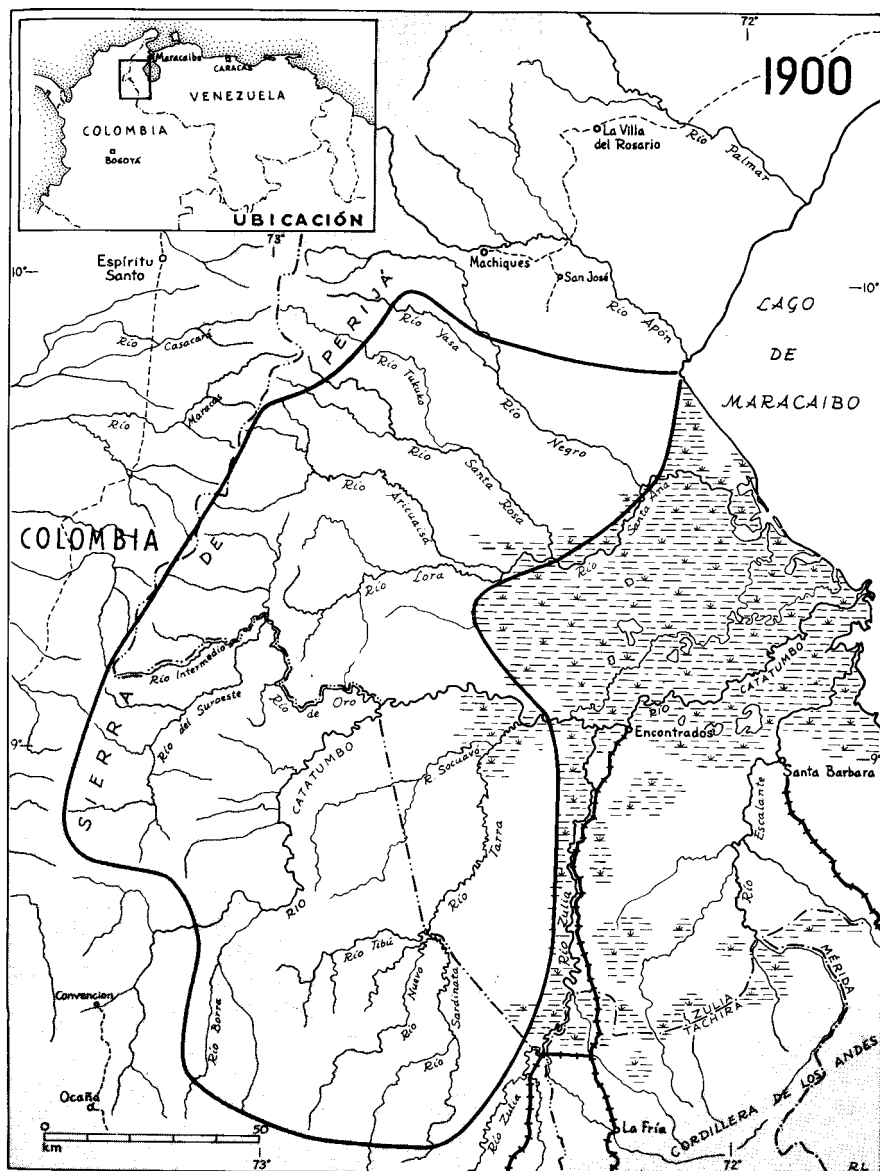
The Barí have been known since at least the beginning of the 17th century but for almost two centuries peaceful contact was impossible. At the end of the 18th century they were "reduced" by the Capuchin missionaries but recovered their liberty following the expulsion of the Spanish missions from Colombian and Venezuelan territory during the War of Independence.

The main object of this work is to chart the second reduction of the Barí during the 20th century. This part of the document is preceded by some ethnographic data to provide a background to the discussion. More extensive information can be found in a work by Pinton (1965) which is the best ethnographic description of the Barí published to date. Among the more specialised works we should mention those by Arvelo de Jiménez et al. (1977) on Venezuelan indigenist politics, Beckerman (1975) on subsistence and ethnohistory, and Alcácer (1962) on the ethnohistory of the Barí.

After a description of the second reduction of the Barí, the main consequence of which was the loss of their lands, we will examine the factors responsible for this loss and the resulting final destruction of the Barí as an independent political unit. We shall conclude with some observations on the present situation and the paradoxical defence of the indigenous Barí which has been undertaken by non-indigenous people.

The Barí

The habitat of the Barí is the low-lying tropical rainforest which extends from the southwest of Lake Maracaibo basin. This region is bounded biogeographically by: the Cordillera de los Andes to the south, the Sierra de Perijá to the west, Lake Maracaibo and its swamps to the east and the dry forests which are gradually turning to savannah to the north.



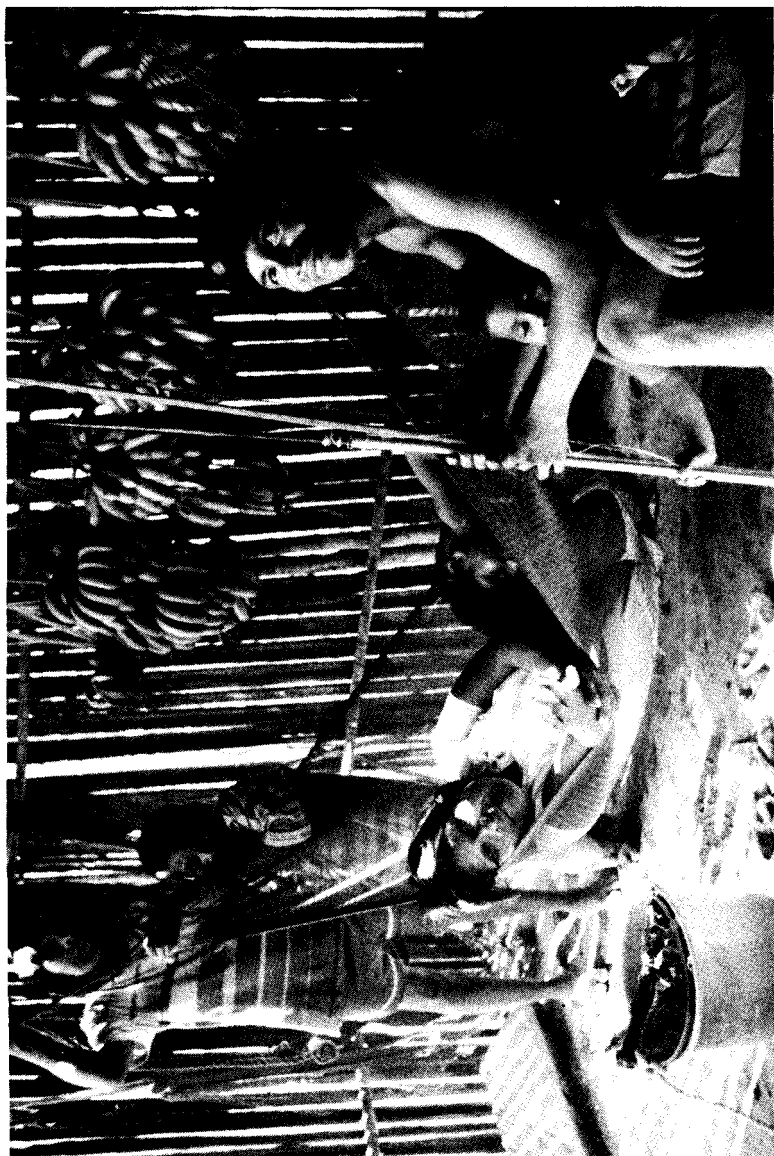
At the beginning of this century the Barí still occupied most of the area outlined on Map 2. We have no evidence that there have ever been permanent settlements in the mountainous zone above 600 m., the swamps and marshes or in the deciduous forest, but we do know that the Barí have made incursions beyond these frontiers in recent times and in this way have managed to maintain a buffer zone of uninhabited lands of varying width around their territory.

In general, the Barí's adaption to this tropical rainforest habitat is similar to that of other Amazonian groups, though in detail there are many differences. Making use of the present ethnographic information we shall continue by describing the situation of the Barí after contact in 1960.

A typical Barí local group consists of 50 (+/-20) persons controlling a territory of between 400 and 1,000 km² where they build two or more large communal houses called *bohio*. The members of the group, usually together but not always, move from one *bohio* to another following a cycle which generally coincides with the seasons. During the winter months of December-March, which are characterised by scant rain and good fishing, they go to the *bohio* located on the low lands along the major rivers. For the rest of the year, when due to the increase in rainfall the rivers are generally turbulent, in flood and, most important, less productive for fishing, they move to the *bohio* situated on the high land. The decision to change *bohio* also depends on other considerations: the size and maturity of the gardens, the abundance of hunting resources, the proximity of other Barí groups and Creole people and also supernatural considerations.

The person who initiates and co-ordinates the construction of a *bohio* comes to be known as "chief" (*ñatobay*) of the house. The man who acts as his assistant during the construction is considered the "assistant" chief (*duashina*). The absence of coercive political authority among the Barí is shown in the way that a local group may have different pairs of chiefs for different *bohio*. In fact, the construction of a *bohio* is one of the few activities where a person of authority emerges.

Every *bohio* is surrounded by an oval or circular garden constructed in a series of concentric rings. Generally, banana and plantain trees form the exterior ring; sweet manioc forms a ring which occupies most of the area of the garden; then comes a ring of mixed crops including sugar cane, cotton and chili; the next consists of *tephrosia* plants (a plant used like *barbasco* fishing poison); and possibly sweet potato or yam which form the ring closest to the *bohio*. With the exception of the rings of bananas and manioc which are the widest, the others are narrow with only two or three rows of plants (for a discussion of the organisation of Barí gardens, see Beckerman, 1983). In general, apart from this garden, there are



Barí in their bohio (Peter Elsass)

others in the environs of the *bohio*. They appear to increase in number with the age and altitude of the *bohio* (Beckerman, 1976). These gardens are given over exclusively to the cultivation of manioc; sometimes the Barí plant banana trees as a single crop encircling the manioc; at other times one sees a mixture of manioc and sugar cane. There are also gardens for the cultivation of wild *caña brava* (*Gynerium sagittatum*) from which they make arrows. More than 90% of the calories in their diet comes from cultivated crops of which manioc is the most important.

Most of their protein comes from fish. The *bocachico* (*Prochilodus reticulatus*), which lives on algae and reaches 25 cm. in size, makes up about 70% of all the fish eaten and 50% of their meat intake (Beckerman 1980). The Barí fish exclusively with spears, bows and arrows but above all with spears. The most common and productive way of fishing consists of constructing two dams to close the branch of a river on one side of an island. The area dammed is approximately 100 to 300 m. They use spears to catch the fish that remain caught in it.

Hunted animals, including monkeys and large animals, make up most of the meat intake in the Barí diet. Amongst the wild gathered fruits the most important is probably palms fruits because they provide protein, fat and carbohydrate. Dam fishing, garden felling and hunting large animals, above all tapir, are collective activities within the local group as is the construction of the *bohio*. To a certain extent, all these activities depend upon the co-ordination, though not by direct mandate, of a "chief" who directs the operation. Most of the other activities (sowing, weeding and harvesting individual plots in the garden, cleaning, repairing the roof, maintaining the individual sections of the *bohio* and the different stages in the manufacture of all the artefacts) are carried out individually by those persons belonging to what we will call the "hearth group" (*grupo de fogón*). This consists of a group which varies from between three and twelve individuals who cook and eat together in a particular part of the *bohio*. Each hearth group and its head are responsible for their specific area of the *bohio* where they hang their hammocks. This area is triangular in shape: one of the corners ends at the hearth while the two sides stemming from the hearth are left sufficiently wide so that all the hammocks of the group can be hung between them. The sides of this triangular "room" open out towards the outside and the garden, clearly delimiting the area corresponding to each hearth group.

Each one of these groups almost always consists of a nuclear family. Some of the largest groups are made up of two nuclear families (whose kinship ties can be quite distant) together with "near ones" from both families, such as step-fathers and stepsons, unmarried brothers and aged widowers. Because the Barí permit marriage between people of different ages, it is common for an individual

to outlive more than one spouse and, therefore, there is a high incidence of step and in-law relatives.

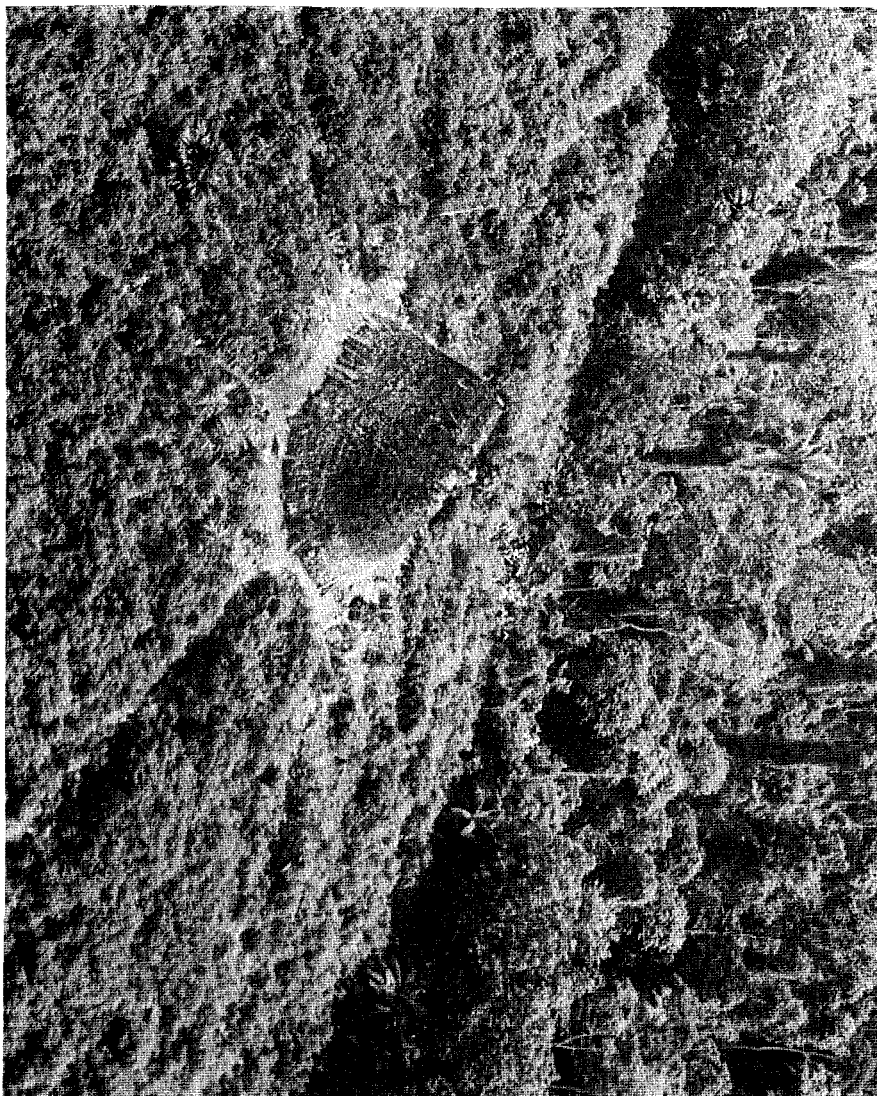
The Barí do not generally recognise genealogies beyond known individuals and real consanguine relations, in most cases, are only recognised as far as parallel cousins. In general they do not permit marriage between people who are recognised as relatives. The only exceptions that we know are a few cases of marriages between cross-cousins. We have no evidence for the existence of lineages, clans or any other descent group. The ordering of social relations is based on the use of a fictitious kinship: Barí adults are classified as *sagdodyira* or *okdyibara* whose significance can be translated as kin and affine respectively. We would emphasise that these relationships do not necessarily imply "real" consanguinity and affinity; they are a type of contractual relation, something similar to *compadrazgo*. The logic of the system is as follows: the kin of my kin is also my kin while the affine of my affine is also my kin. Following the same principle, the kin of my affine is my affine and the affine of my kin is my affine.

All the *sagdodyira* (kin) of the opposite sex are bound by an incest taboo while the *okdyibara* (affines) may marry between themselves if they have no real consanguinous links (such as mother and son) that prohibit it.

Sons and daughters inherit the ties *sagdodyira* and *okdyibara* through their paternal line; ideally each individual's ties are identical to those of his or her father and opposite to those of the mother. The fictional kinship ties are validated and reinforced in a ritual which is one of the most impressive Barí events.

For this ritual, some or all the members of a local group visit other local groups in their *bohio*. The male hosts hang their hammocks very high up, near the roof of the *bohio* while the women keep them as low as possible to the floor. In this way each adult guest is provided with a hammock to rest in. With every guest sits one of the adult hosts of the same sex; both sing in turn and the host swings the hammock. The guests stay in the hammocks while the hosts take turns to accompany them. Each adult pair sings songs and exchanges identical gifts (under ideal conditions): handfulls of arrows in the case of the men and skirts for the women.

In accordance with the nature of the fictitious kinship ties which validate this ritual, there is no co-ordination in the songs between each pair of singers (guests-hosts); each one sings to their own rhythm, beginning and ending where is suits them. Although men sing only with men and women only with women, and the primary ties confirmed in this way are between members of the same sex, the basic function of the system *sagdodyira-okdyibara* is to direct and regulate marriage. In this way a tie between men implies an identical relationship, whether as affine or kin, with the sisters and daughters of these men. In the same way a tie between two women implies an identical relationship with their sisters



Barí communal house (Lizarralde, 1961)

and opposite tie with their sons. Therefore this way each dyadic relationship affirms certain marriage possibilities and proscribes others.

Though in principle, kinship ties are inherited patrilineally, we have observed sufficient discrepancies to make the following distinctions: 1) some people are unable to trace a relationship through their parents and grandparents; 2) some people deliberately ignore their paternal descent in order to manipulate their marriage possibilities. These exceptions to the formal logic of the system may be connected to the absence of moiety sections among the Barí because if the system was to be respected with absolute consistency, all Barí would be divided into two large groups (moieties). Each group would therefore consist of people who would be all *sagdodyira* (kin) and all the members of each group would be *okdyibara* (affines) with respect to the members of the other group. Such moiety section groups do not exist for the Barí and given the number of exceptions in the strict logic of the system they cannot even have hypothetical delimitations. The fictional kinship ties *sagdodyira-okdyibara* are limited to the level of dyadic relations.

It is possible that these ties (they extend beyond the local group) have played an important role in the extraordinary internal peace which the Barí enjoy. We have just two references to internal conflicts in all of Barí ethnohistory. These supposed incidents arose in periods when they were subjected to strong territorial pressure. The veracity of one of the reports is questionable. In general, the Barí put a lot of value on friendly relations among themselves and almost never show hostility, not even in their language. If two people do not get on well one of them simply moves to another *bohio*. On the other hand, relations between the Barí and outside people is in striking contrast to their internal harmony. The Barí are famous for the bravery they showed when fighting other indigenous groups and against the Spanish conquistadors and their modern descendents. Very early on the Barí appeared to have allied and/or possibly been enslaved by the Quiriquire, a warlike Arawak group which lived on the southwest coast of Lake Maracaibo; both groups made attacks on the Spanish during the 16th and 17th centuries. After the Quiriquire suffered a final defeat in 1638, the Spanish left the Barí in peace for almost half a century and were rewarded by being allowed to enjoy relative tranquility in their *haciendas* and nearby settlements, though, on the other hand, they were subject to invasions from pirates. It is possible that these incursions (from which there was a constant worry and fear in the Lake Maracaibo basin) diverted the attention of the Spanish away from indigenous lands. The Barí reiniciated their attacks when the colonists again started to put pressure on their territory and the missionaries and colonial government began violent incursions against them.

Attacks and counter-attacks followed one after the other from 1700 to 1772 when the Barí were "pacified" with the help of a young Barí captured five years before during a punitive expedition by the Spanish. A large number of them were "reduced" in missions in the course of the next two or three decades, although the numbers recorded in a census of those relocated in the ten Capuchin mission centres is questionable.

But however the reductions took place, the majority of the Barí did not stay in the missions very long. Half of them were closed around 1813 and the remaining five were left abandoned in 1818 shortly before the Capuchins were thrown out of the countries liberated by Bolivar in 1821. The Barí returned to the forest and for the rest of the century there are almost no references to them in contemporary accounts. Apparently, they were not involved in any serious attacks until the beginning of the 19th century when pressure on their territory began again. The abandoning of the missions and the general disarray after the War of Independence appears to have enabled them to recuperate a considerable part of the lands which they had lost during their period of captivity in the missions.

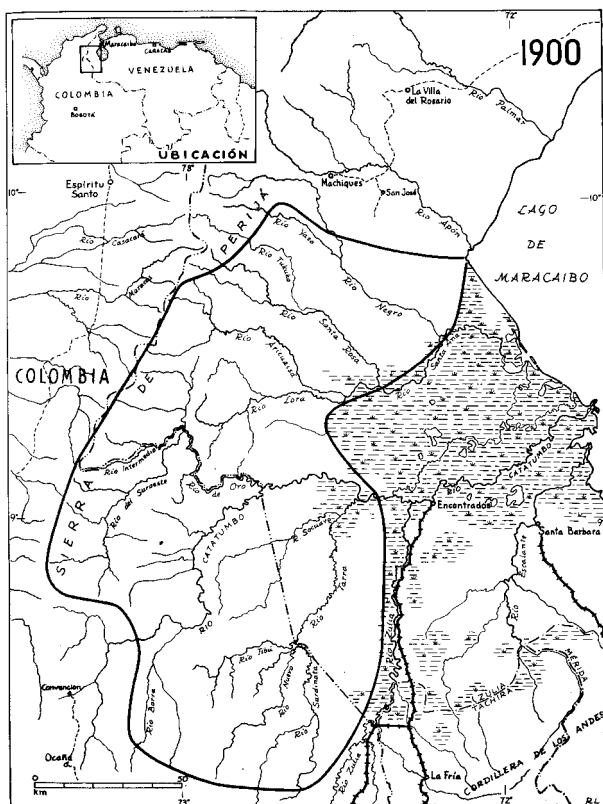
It is important to emphasise that after the first "pacification", Barí incursions ceased almost immediately and there is no evidence of violent clashes between them and their captors while the missions were functioning, although some escaped from the reductions from time to time. We can see that this same pattern is repeated in the second current pacification. In fact, the Barí have not been involved in any violent confrontation in their recent pacification even though they faced provocations and abuse.

After this brief ethnographic sketch, we will turn to the main object of this document: the loss of Barí lands in the 20th century.

Successive Reductions in Barí Territory

Our starting point is the year 1900. Map 2 is a detailed map of the southwest of Lake Maracaibo, showing the then extent of Barí territory: this comprises almost all the lowlands and eastern slope of the Sierra de Perijá from a line which runs from the River Apón at the foot of the Cordillera de Los Andes in the south to the swamps of Lake Maracaibo and the river Zulia in the east. The construction of the Estación Tachira-Encontrados railway (completed in 1894) established a well defined boundary along the river Zulia.

This area covers, therefore, approximately 16,000 km². The Barí population for this period was probably between 2,000 and 2,500 people. In spite of this tentative number, it implies a population density of 0.12 - 0.15 persons per km². In the following pages we will survey the progressive diminution of Barí territory in intervals of 10 years from 1900, showing for each period the main invading forces and their role in the reduction.



1900 – 1920

As far as we can determine, the Barí did not lose any significant area of land between 1900 and 1910 so we will omit this first decade and pass directly to 1920.

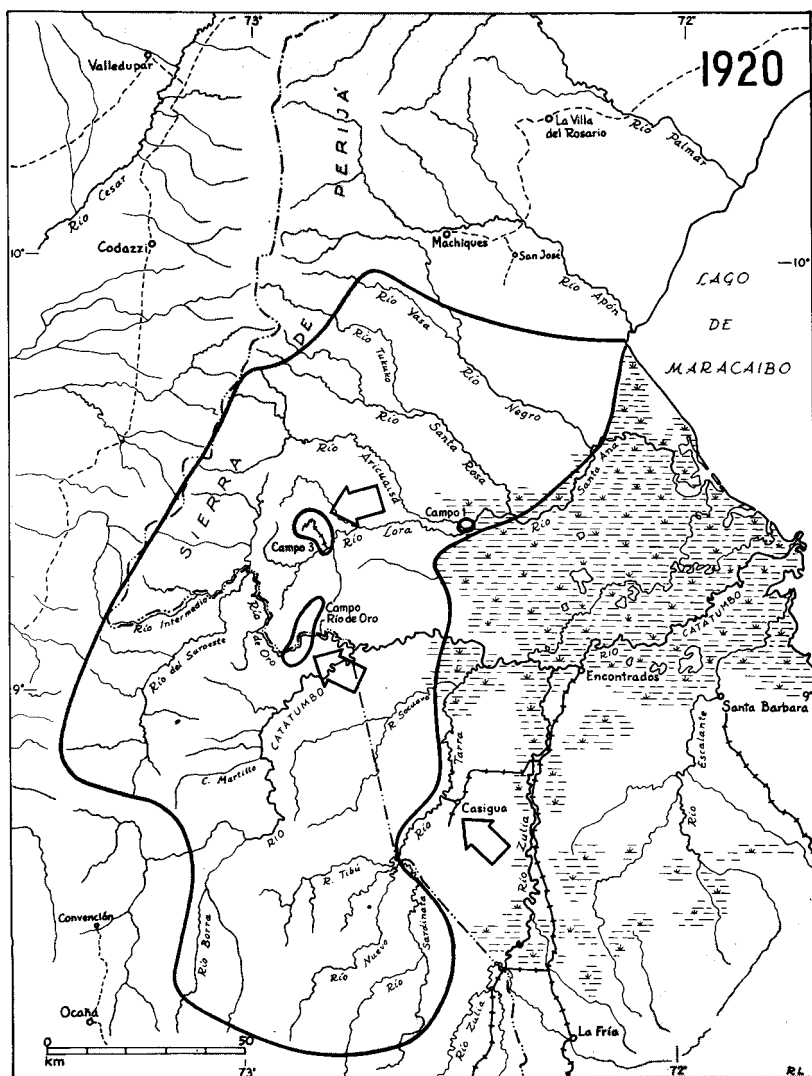
Map 3 shows the extent of Barí territory for this period. Between 1910 and 1920 the beginning of oil exploration and exploitation produced the greatest loss of Barí territory. From 1912-1913 geological exploration teams in the service of European and North American oil companies discovered deposits in this region and almost immediately began to drill wells and pump oil.

The Colón Development Company, a subsidiary of Shell, moved west towards the river Tarra on the southwest frontier of Barí territory with exploration groups, drilling teams, camps, pumping stations and an infrastructure which included roads and a railroad track as far as Casigua camp which joined with the railway from Estación Tachira to Encontrados. Casigua camp, built in 1915, prompted the withdrawal of the Barí from the river Zulia to the river Tarra.

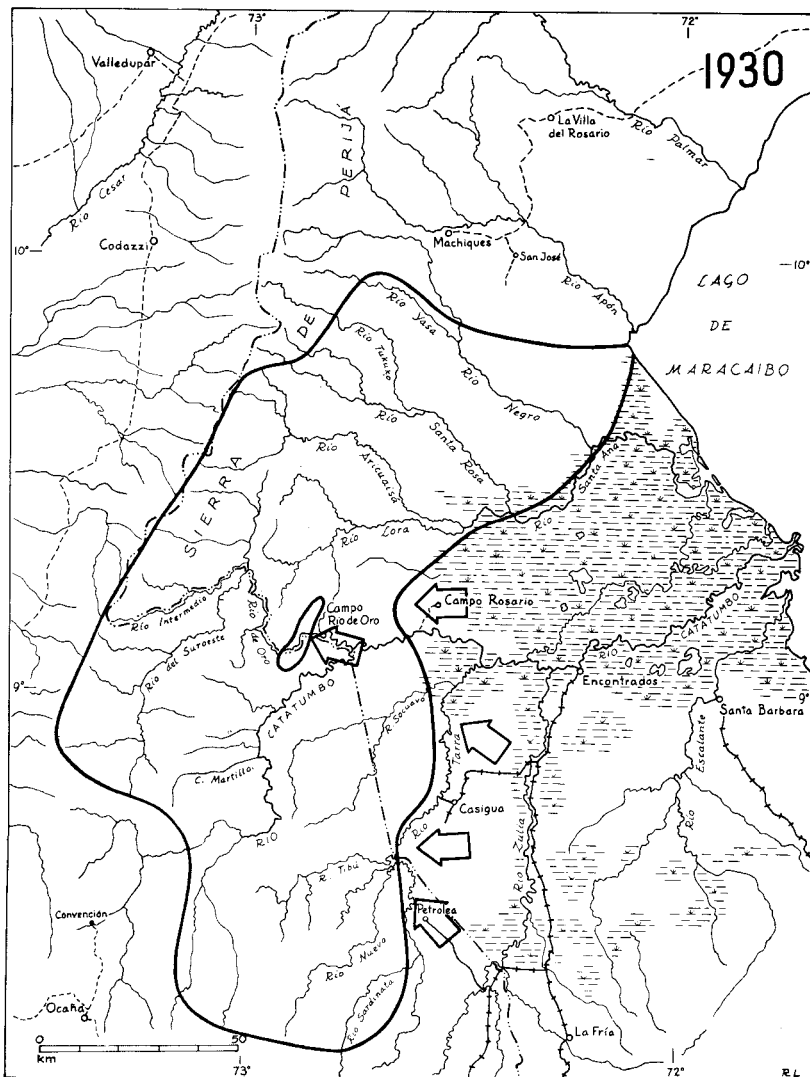
In 1914 the same company established the Río de Oro camp near the confluence of this river with the Catatumbo, in the very heart of Barí territory. For its part, New Jersey Standard Oil, through its Venezuelan subsidiary, penetrated the river Santa Ana and established three camps in 1921: camp 1 on the river Santa Ana and camps 2 & 3 on the river Lora. These camps, situated some 30 kms. north of the Río de Oro camp, sprang up in the heart of Barí territory. The three camps belonging to Standard Oil and the one of the Colón Development Company in Río de Oro, which appear as islands in the middle of Barí territory on Map 3, received supplies by river from Lake Maracaibo and not by road and in this period would have lacked the necessary back-up facilities for permanent occupation.

Already at the beginning of this century the Barí and the oil workers waged pitched battles. It seems that, during this period, the oil companies and the Barí were the only ones to show an interest in these lands. Colonists, ranchers and missionaries had not reached that far yet: the first two were kept back, mainly by the malaria which was endemic in the lowlands of Catatumbo and impeded any type of agricultural colonisation.

It is possible to calculate that by 1920 the Barí had lost about 12% of the land they possessed in 1900. As we can see from Map 3, the area lost included, above all, the piece of land between the rivers Zulia and Tarra, approximately 2,000 km², in the southeast of Barí territory.



Map 3: Map showing Barí Territory in 1920 (the circled areas are oil camps)
(Lizarralde and Beckerman)



Map 4: Map showing Barí Territory in 1930 (the circled area is Campo Río de Oro) (Lizarralde and Beckerman)

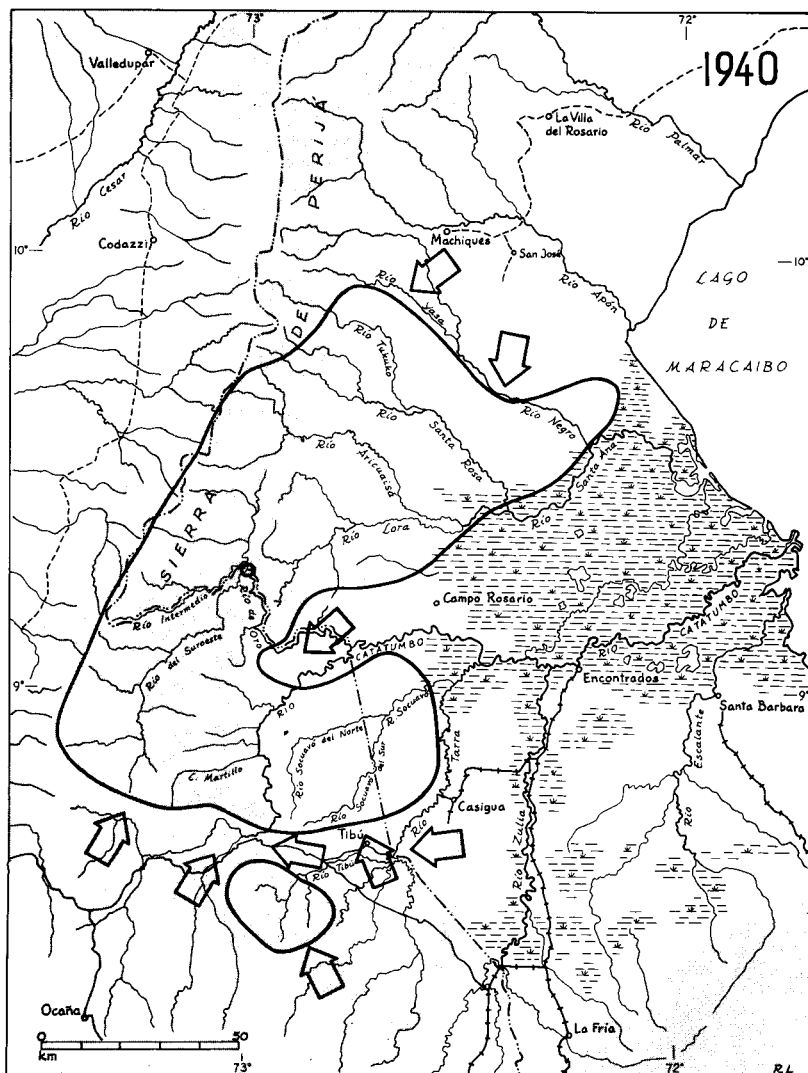
1920 – 1930

As we can see from Map 4, by 1930 the Venezuelan Standard Oil Company had suspended its operations in the neighbourhood of the river Lora and dismantled its three camps, leaving Shell the major occupant of the Barí oil lands. Shell maintained the Río de Oro camp intermittently during this decade, like an invader's island in the middle of the hostile Barí, while the Rosario camp, owned by the same company, was opened north of the river Catatumbo in 1929. In spite of the withdrawal of Standard Oil, the net result of these activities in terms of Barí land was the loss of another 474 km², about 3% of the original territory.

1930 – 1940

The major success of the 30's was the advance of Colpet, a North American consortium, which in 1931 acquired enormous oil concessions in Colombia. As we can see from Map 5, by 1940 Colpet had established its own Río de Oro camp directly opposite the camp of the same name belonging to Shell, on the other side of the river. This company also constructed a pipeline and a communicating road along the southern limit of Barí territory from the town of Tibú towards the valley of the river Magdalena in the west. The pipeline itself only left the Barí with 8%, about 1,300 km², of their original territory there and left the headwaters of the river Tibú as a small island of Barí, separated from the rest of the nation. Also during this decade, Shell extended its operations towards the southwest at the same time as Colpet was expanding towards the east and opening a corridor downriver from the Río de Oro camps and the new Puerto Barco camp on the river Catatumbo in order to unite them all with areas which were under firm national control. The result of these activities, including the pipeline, meant a loss of a total of 3,800 km² for the Barí, about 24% of their original territory in 1900. By 1940 the oil companies were already the main occupants of the usurped lands on the south side of their territory. The only exception to this was a small wave of colonists which moved in from Colombia, from Las Mercedes in the south. But this reduction was almost insignificant in comparison with the magnitude of the losses caused by the oil companies.

Between the years 1932 and 1938, the Colombian-Venezuelan Border Commission (*La Comisión de Fronteras Colombo-Venezolana*) was present in the region of the river Oro and its headwaters. Its activities had only a very limited and localised impact on the Barí in this region even though some of its topographical survey teams penetrated deep into their territory.



Map 5: Map showing Barí Territory in 1940 (Lizarralde and Beckerman)

1940 - 1950

By 1950, as Map 6 indicates, there was a dramatic change in the proportion of land lost because of oil activities in comparison with incursions from colonists. During this decade the oil companies dedicated themselves to establishing installations and maintaining only those wells which they considered economically profitable. At the beginning of the 40's the Colpet Tibú camp between the rivers Tarra and Catatumba snatched away a portion of Barí territory in the south with the intention of building a secondary road to the Río de Oro camp and for the construction of other installations. Also, the Barí lost lands when New Jersey Standard Oil, through its subsidiary Creole, renewed its activities in the northern part of their territory in the Alturitas sector on the river Negro.

Nevertheless, the land that the Barí had to abandon because of these new assaults by the oil companies in the south and the north was relatively small. In contrast, the important loss of land during the 1940's was due, for the most part, to colonists and ranchers who began large scale deforestation and cultivation of the lands from which they had expelled the Barí and at the same time made expeditions and raids against them. In this enterprise and in this decade the landowners were helped indirectly by the government's anti-malaria campaign which considerably improved the region for those practising herding and agriculture both on a small and large scale. The Barí areas had always remained relatively free from malaria due to a low population density and few mosquitoes but not the plains of Lake Maracaibo which, for most of the time, was considered an unhealthy area.

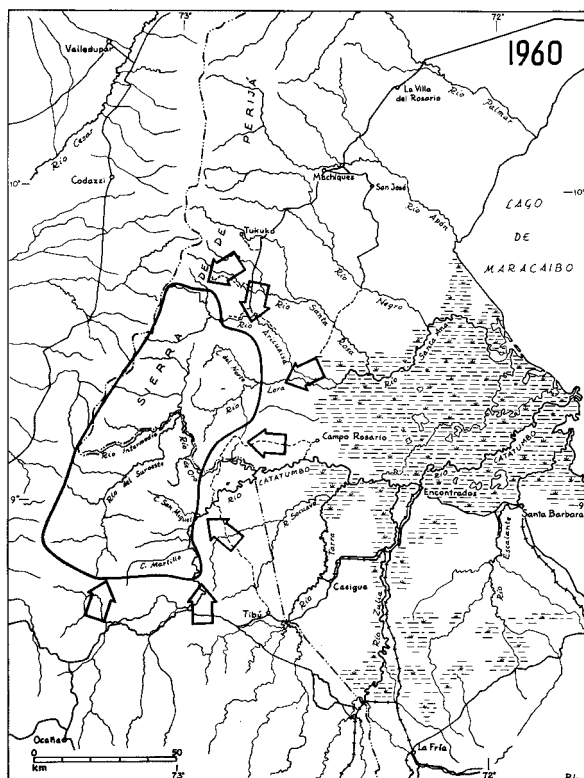
In the south, in Colombian territory, most of the new invaders were *campesinos*, individual peasant colonists, generally workers for the oil companies who could still resort to the company for help and informal incentives, such as a market for their crops. In the north, cattle farms were predominant; the people who took possession of Barí land in this zone were mostly ranchers from the region of Machiques who had considerable capital of their own and could occupy large areas without having to depend upon the help of the oil companies.

In total the land lost during this decade reached approximately 2,300 km², 14% of the land the Barí possessed in 1900.

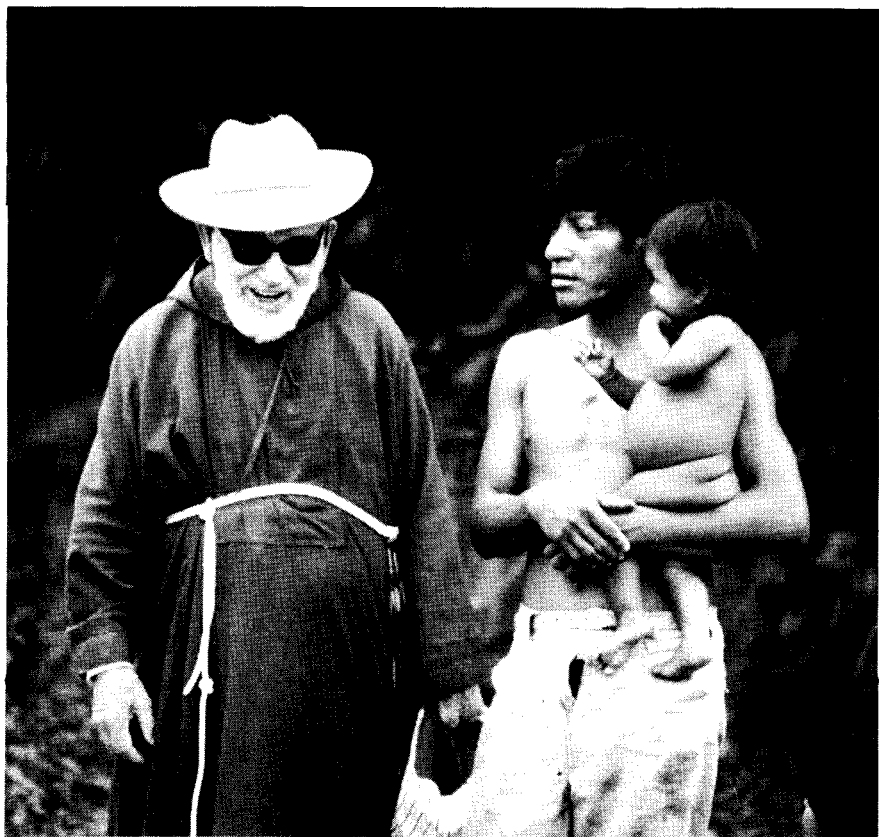
1950 -1960

During the 50's the incursion of oil companies on Barí territory decreased as can be seen from Map 7 which shows the situation for 1960. The territory they usurped was limited almost exclusively to a small area near the confluence of the river Catatumbo and the river Oro. In contrast, the ranchers and particularly the most powerful of them, were able to advance deep into the northern and eastern zones of Barí territory. There were also some small territorial invasions in the south caused by Colombian colonists.

The total area which was taken from the Barí during this decade represented another 2,300 km², approximately 14% of the original 1900 area; however, this meant that proportionally the Barí had less than half of the territory they controlled in 1940.



Map 7: Map showing Barí Territory in 1960 (Lizarralde and Beckerman)



First mission contacts with the Bari (Peter Elsass)

1960 - 1970

In 1960, the context of the incursions changed dramatically. At the end of the 40's the Capuchins in Venezuela, who had hoped to recuperate their old mission territory among the Barí, persuaded the oil company Creole and later the Venezuelan Air Force, to carry out flights over the Barí *bohío* in order to drop bundles of gifts such as clothes, tools, salt, etc. This aerial campaign was suspended in 1950 when its protagonist, Padre Cesaseo de Armellada, was transferred to Spain because of a conflict with some ranch owners in the region.

The campaign to make contact with the Barí was put into action again in 1957 when Padre Adolfo de Villamañan was assigned to Tukuko, a Capuchin mission founded in 1945 amongst the already reduced Yukpa people, whose territory was adjacent to the Barí. A road was then opened from the Tukuko mission towards the south, but in 1958 the Carlos Eduardo ranch appropriated the lands situated at the end of the road in Santa Rosa in such way that its continuation south was left incomplete. Padre Villamañan shifted his campaign to the newspapers and began a series of contacts with official Venezuelan organisations. Meanwhile, the Indigenist Commission (an official body assigned by the Venezuelan Ministry of Justice to attend to the nation's indigenous population) pressured by the national government, the administration of Zulia State and the press (the latter questioning the ranchers' bloody appropriation of Barí lands) drew up a plan to approach the Barí peacefully. In this they were united in that the oil companies also wanted to be able to carry out their activities in the region without any danger and the Capuchins were looking to recuperate their previous missionary influence among the Barí.

In 1959, out of all these forces came a pacification project which Roberto Lizarralde was called upon to put into action. After various helicopter reconnaissance flights he tried to make peaceful contact with the Barí. Immediately after this contact, the Capuchins quickly made an expedition on foot led by Padre Villamañan and another by helicopter. After a few days the government's pacification plan was cancelled and the Minister of Justice prohibited anthropologists involved in the first contact to return to the zone.

Since their penetration of Barí territory in the 60's, the missionaries have continued there as important agents of contact, deliberately introducing some elements of western culture and intent on stopping the arrival of others. In Venezuela the Capuchins, with the help of the Sisters of the order Madre Laura, continue exercising the missionary monopoly among the Barí. In Colombia, the most influential missionary is a Protestant, Bruce Olson, who in 1961, on his own behalf, established contact with the Barí. The Laura Sisters also maintain a Colombian mission without a priest in the river Catatumbo. The rivalry between



Barí and missionary (Peter Elsass)

Catholic and Protestant missionaries in the decade 1960-1970 (and subsequently) has been documented by the press in journalistic reports which show little objectivity and are considerably removed from reality.

The peculiar situation seen in Map 8, corresponding to the year 1970, is the result of the manipulation of the Barí's pacifism by ranch owners and Creole colonists to continue the exploitation of their lands. Barí territory therefore suffered a reduction of 3,300 km² – approximately 21% of its size in 1900. Nevertheless, one can see the upsurge of a series of small islands between the ranches, corresponding to groups of Barí who had returned to their traditional locations and ancestral houses in the low lands where they lived, subjected to the local ranchers and, to a certain extent, under the protection of the Capuchins and Laura Sisters.

In Venezuela in 1961 a Barí-Yukpa indigenous reserve was created by a ministerial resolution from the Ministries of Agriculture, Cattle Raising and Justice. The part which belongs to the Barí consists of 1,492 km², approximately 9% of their 1900 territory in both countries, and is demarcated on Map 8. The Carlos Eduardo ranch which is located in the northern part of the Barí portion of the reserve was not expropriated by the National Agrarian Institute (*Instituto Agrario Nacional* – IAN) in 1961 but some years later.

1970 -1983

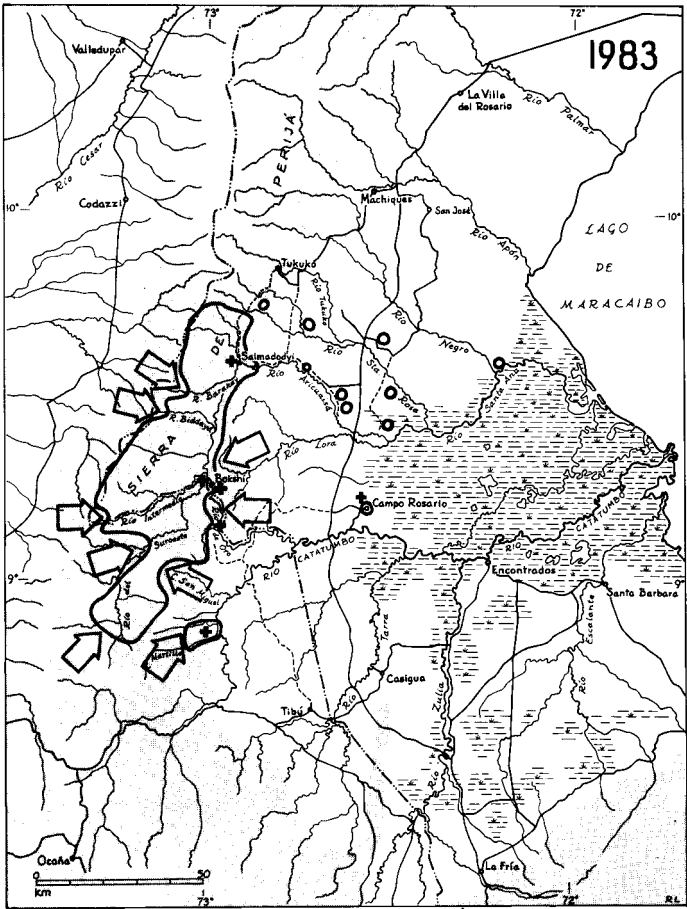
In 1974 another Barí reserve was created in Colombia by the Ministry of Agriculture; it covered an area of 840 km², a little more than half the size of the Venezuelan reserve, and is under the administration of the Colombian Institute for Agrarian Reform (*Instituto Colombiano de la Reforma Agraria* – INCORA). The colonists do not respect it.

The reserve is demarcated on Map 10 which shows some further changes. In the course of this decade some small scattered Barí groups in the lowlands of Venezuela disappeared: the members were "encouraged" by the landowners and missionaries to move and were not able to subsist on the scanty parcels of land that they had been permitted to occupy in the middle of the ranches. This process is continuing today.

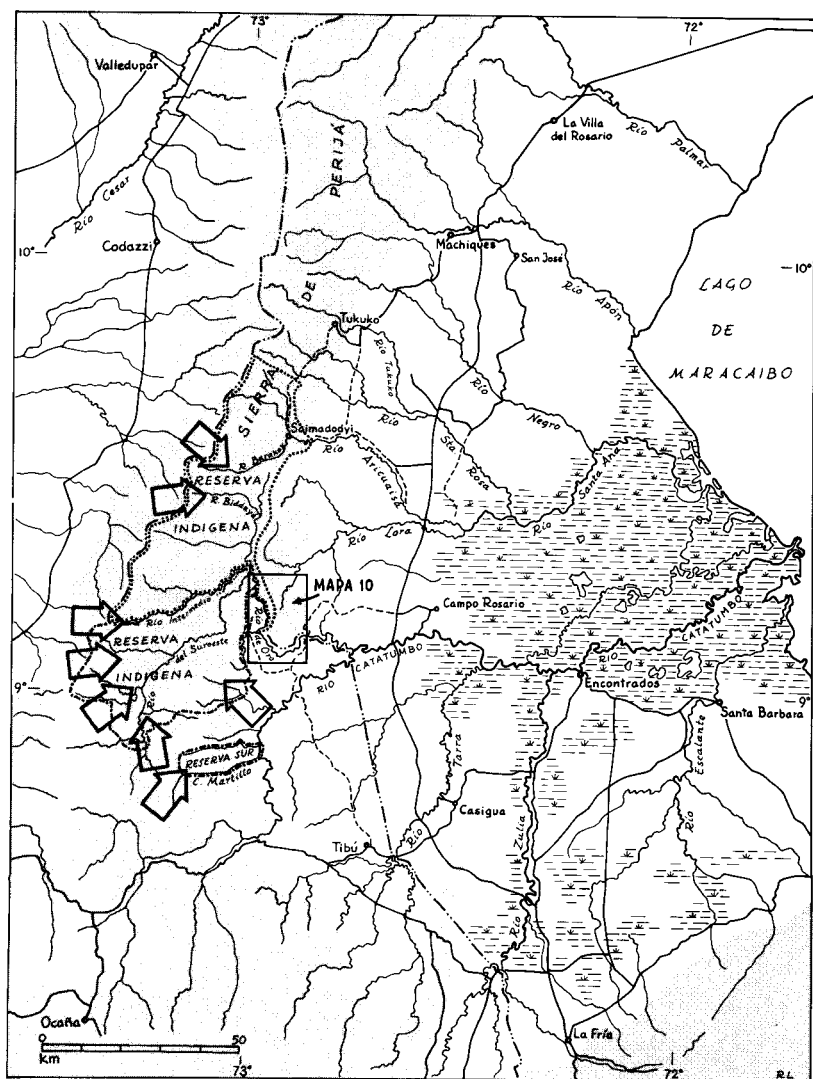
One of the islands is Rosario camp, an abandoned Shell camp which was converted in 1977 into a mission station by the Laura Sisters. In Colombia, the mission station run by the Laura Sisters is situated in a sector which once

formed part of the indigenous territory; today this sector, located in the south of the zone, is totally surrounded by colonists. As Map 9 indicates, the only territory still under Barí control is the reserve, but this, under the continuing process of invasion, is being reduced more every time.

As Map 11 shows, the southern part of the Venezuelan reserve has already been invaded by Colombian colonists whose settlements have extended along the river Oro.



Map 9: Map of Barí Territory in 1983 – crosses are missions, circles are Barí community enclaves between farms (Lizarralde and Beckerman)



Map 10: Barí Reserved lands in Venezuela and Colombia (Lizarralde and Beckerman)

Colonists and ranchers continue pushing from the north, south and east. In recent years there have been two new waves of invasions from the west which, until now have not been penetrated by colonists. This invasion comes from two directions, one in Colombia and the other in Venezuela, and is led by poor Colombian colonists who are moving down the eastern slopes of the Sierra de Perijá. As Map 9 shows, the little land left for the Barí is obviously on the point of disappearing. Furthermore, in the last few years, Colombian guerillas have appropriated remote parts of their territory for hideouts. In response to this, the Colombian government has embarked upon the construction of roads which penetrate the eastern part of the Colombian reserve, thus contributing to the advance of colonisation in the region. Though the guerillas have not come into direct conflict with the Barí, they are encouraging the colonists to invade the reserve from Curumaní to the west.

By 1983 Barí territory measured 1,900 km², approximately 12% of the size of the Barí land in 1900.

Discussion

From this brief outline we can see a obvious gradual reduction of the invaders' capital and the size of their agricultural units.

The first companies to appropriate Barí lands were multinational oil companies with almost unlimited resources of capital, equipment, technical experience and political influence. In the south there then came, in the wake of the oil companies, small groups of colonists, the majority of whom were people with few resources and in part dependent on the oil camps and their facilities. This is probably the reason why in the 50's penetration was much faster in the north than in the south. The Venezuelan ranchers were able to permit themselves the luxury of building their own roads, acquiring their own lorries, tractors, barbed wire and arms and paying for all the expenses of setting themselves up. The Colombian colonists, in general, were not able to do the same and consequently kept themselves under the wing of the oil camps. Many Colombians crossed the border to offer their services as "Indian hunters" (*mataindios*) to the Venezuelan ranchers so that they could establish new ranches and work on their lands. In fact, to date, it is quite common for the majority of the workforce in the ranches to be Colombian.

The missionaries appeared as a considerable force in this region after the pattern of invasion described above had been consolidated. The mission of Tukuko, founded in 1945 in the region of the Barí-Yukpa, had a double objective: to "civilise" the Yukpa and "pacify" the Barí. After contact in 1960, the Capu-

chins first established a series of mission stations inside the reserve which had been placed under its tutelage. Later the missions were reduced to two, Saimadodyi and Bokshí. From 1967 the Capuchins used the Laura Sisters as support workers. The only Catholic mission in Colombia, which is situated on the river Catatumbo, is also administered by the Laura Sisters. Bruce Olsen's mission stations are all in Colombia: Iquiacarora, the oldest, founded in 1964 and other important centres in Sapakdana and Tibú.

All these missions, which were created to administer to the Barí, apart from Tukuko, Rosario camp and Olsen's centre at Tibú, are in Barí territory; later some of them became surrounded by Creole farms. All the missionaries had a two-fold policy concerning Barí lands. On one hand, they opposed – but not always successfully – most of the new invasions by ranchers and colonists. On the other hand, they promoted the expansion of the lands under the control of the missions within Barí territory. The fact that some of the latest invasions by colonists on Barí lands took place in a zone where there were no missions indicates undoubtedly that the new colonists tried to settle themselves firmly before the Church could successfully oppose their presence.



At the mission the Barí sell arrows to tourists (Peter Elsass)

We must emphasise that Barí territory is a frontier zone from the international legal point of view. Although it is not exactly on the fringe of the law, the region is on the periphery of the power of the law; with the result that it is attractive to colonists and ranchers. Some of the first Colombian colonists were liberals who during the period of unrest in their country (in the 40's and 50's) fled to the extremities of Barí territory without actually penetrating it. The liberals felt safer on the frontier than under the protection of the law. On the other hand, the ranchers who violently invaded Barí lands in Venezuela used blood and fire tactics to monopolise huge areas. In other areas of the country they would have been stopped and convicted according to the law. Today it is quite common to meet men on the river Oro who admit frankly that they cannot go downriver because on the trip they will come up against a police station. Consequently, as far as the river Oro is concerned, the directives from Caracas or Bogotá are no more relevant in 1983 than those from Caracas in 1920. Apart from the obvious resistance to the legal methods that are used for the benefit of the Barí at the expense of those who possess or hope to own their lands, there is, as in other frontier zones, a certain resistance to the law *per se*. This partial absence of the law is what constitutes one of the most attractive aspects of the region for some of the Creole inhabitants.

For this reason, the attempts to remedy the Barí's situation by exclusively or predominantly legal means have come to nothing. These observations are not meant to imply that all the colonists on Barí territory and the surrounds are criminals; on the contrary, the majority are poor people who arrived there because they had nowhere else to go. They are the ones most affected by the criminals taking refuge there.

The Barí Today

We will now examine the present situation of the Barí. They number a total of 1,560, some 1,083 of whom live in Venezuela (Republic of Venezuela 1983) and about 475 in Colombia, an increase since the 60's when there were no more than 800 to 900 people, decimated through epidemics as a result of contact. The territory they occupy today is about 2,400 km² which represents 15% of their original 1900 territory. A significant proportion of the population lives outside the territory: 300 in Venezuela and 50 in Colombia.

The traditional *bohio* which had an important cohesive function is in the process of disappearing. In Venezuela there are none left. All Venezuelan Barí live in single-family houses grouped in small villages: Saimadodyi, which is the largest, has a population of around 300 people living in 42 houses. In Colombia some 150 to 200 people still maintain four traditional *bohio* but nevertheless, single-family housing predominates and is becoming more accepted by the day. In view of the strong relationship which previously existed between the residential pattern inside the *bohio* and the utilization of land and social structure, it is evident that the abandonment of the *bohio* represents a profound socio-structural change with grave consequences for the Barí. While this change was first encouraged by the missionaries in the course of the 60's, in the last few years it has been the Barí themselves who have showed a strong desire to adopt single-family houses, in a conscious imitation of the Creole population around them, but unconscious of the fact that it contributes to the destruction of their own social structure.

With the abandonment of the *bohio* one of the principal tasks of a "chief" or *ñatobay* loses its validity. Nevertheless, all the Creoles who are more or less continual residents in the area, talk of *caciques*, who in general are chosen for their knowledge of Spanish, and therefore stand in the way of the traditional *ñatobay*. The gifts and petitions that the Creoles channel to the Barí are almost always through these *caciques*. Thus Barí society is letting itself become less egalitarian with permanent chiefs who hold real power.

The subsistence economy has suffered a series of changes. The Barí continue to cultivate manioc and sweet potato but a large number of people grow them for sale. There have been efforts to encourage the Barí to cultivate maize, rice and other cereals with which they are not familiar but with little success. On the other hand, they are fascinated by cattle. The Venezuelan Barí have about 500 head; some own them individually and others in various community collectives. Recently, producers from the community of Saimadodyi formed a community company with the help of IAN to administer their cattle. As for the

Colombian Barí, they have more than 100 head which are the property of the *Asociación Comunidad Motillon-Bar*² of Colombia, a co-operative initially encouraged by Bruce Olsen but totally cared for by the Barí. Pig production has been developed successfully on a small scale and has given them an occasional income. Fishing is still practised but today spears are not used so much. The implantation of a new technology together with overfishing practised further downstream in the waters of the river Catatumbo seem to be responsible for the decrease in the average size of the fish *bocachico* from 330g to 150g. Furthermore, commercial foodstuff is playing a significant role in the diet of many of the Barí.

Changes in subsistence are being reflected in social relations with agricultural production. In Venezuela, just as in Colombia, the official organisations, IAN and INCORA respectively, which are concerned with the distribution of land to peasant farmers, have insisted on giving individual land titles to the Barí who live outside the reserve. The size of the land parcels is subject to the law for awarding land to the colonists. Some individual property titles have been obtained, due to the initiative of Bruce Olsen in Colombia and the peasant farmers' union (*Sindicato Campesino*) in Venezuela. These titles, in turn, confirm individual ownership of land which is a concept alien to Barí culture and produces areas of land much smaller than the area required for the traditional system of subsistence practised by the Barí, including subsistence on an individual level. In this way, the application of the law governing occupancy of the land has contributed to the acceleration of the process of acculturation and disintegration of the indigenous people by fragmenting the social unit of the communal *bohío*.

The destiny of the hearth group in this situation is not clear. It seems likely that the Barí's keenness to imitate the social patterns of the Creoles in the region will result in a reduction in the average and maximum size of the residential unit presently living in the single-family houses and that the hearth group will come more and more to resemble a nuclear family. The activities which the Barí carry out communally, such as fishing with double dams, constructing the *bohío* and felling communal gardens will tend to decrease in importance. With the development of cattle production and the transport of the products to the market it is possible that a new form of communal work will emerge, though it is more likely that specialists will appear.

To date the Barí have remained peaceful though in the face of provocations such as the assassination of one Barí man and the threat to kill two others who were with him by a group of Colombian colonists in 1972. They explain their pacifism, above all, in terms of the attraction they feel for the national Venezuelan or Colombian culture and the benefits they gain from consumer goods such

as tools, clothes, processed food, etc. on which they have a notorious dependency. Undoubtedly, their previous experience of interethnic peace has also played a part; it seems that beforehand the Barí had only two patterns of relations: peaceful towards those within the society and aggressive towards those outside. Perhaps, seeing the Creoles as a source of useful goods, the Barí situated them more inside than outside, and therefore did not threaten them with violence.

The changes introduced due to the acculturation which we have noted, have roots in the precontact experiences of the Barí; furthermore, one can see changes that are real transplants. The most important of these is medicine. As with other indigenous groups in the continent, the Barí are characterised by their poor resistance to diseases of the Old World at first contact. We do not have exact statistics available, but we can estimate that up to one quarter (perhaps more) of the total population died as a consequence of the diseases introduced at the beginning of the 60's. If it had not been for the immunization programmes carried out by the missionaries and the government and the Ministry of Health's anti-malaria programme, reinforced by immediate medical attention, the Barí would today be extinct. Health conditions will maintain their present promising level, when and if medical services continue to reach the Barí. In Venezuela, the Laura Sisters work in the dispensaries at Saimadodyi and Bokshí. In Colombia, on the other hand, two Barí work as rural nurses with a base on the river Oro.

Formal education represents a second transplantation. On this theme the following question can be asked: are the Barí capable of functioning and maintaining their cultural identity in the new surroundings in which their indigenous nation is at present entangled? In Venezuela four youths have graduated from ordinary schools and work together with the Laura Sisters as teachers in the schools in the two mission centres, but they teach in Spanish as the law requires them to. Nevertheless, the official programme for bilingual education which is just starting in some experimental schools with nine Venezuelan indigenous ethnic groups is about to be introduced into Barí schools. At present three boys are studying in agricultural colleges and some 20 in technical schools. About 300 children attend primary school at the mission centres and also Venezuelan public schools. As for Colombia, approximately 20 children follow studies in middle level classes in Bucaramanga, and some more study in technical colleges (total matriculation reached approximately 100 pupils) where instruction is in Spanish. All those who study outside of Barí territory spend their holidays at home with their families and up till now appear to be maintaining their identity.

Recently, the above-mentioned Colombian co-operative acquired legal status; in this way the Barí can present themselves collectively before the Colombi-

an government on legal matters. At present, about 40 Colombian Barí possess identification papers which give them the right to vote. In Venezuela the situation is similar though the number with identification papers is significantly higher.

It remains to be seen whether these instruments will be used in order to maintain Barí identity or to reject it. It is impossible to over-emphasise the fact that many individual Barí seem to be anxious to adopt the culture of Colombian and Venezuelan national society. Its material wealth and marvellous technologies blind them and they are, without doubt, also aware of its overwhelming demographic superiority.



A Barí sizes up his arrow (Peter Elsass)

Conclusion

The Barí have lost 85% of their lands since 1900 and are receiving an ever-growing influx of people with an alien culture. These people are intent on imposing their own cultural patterns on the Barí. Yet their prospects for survival is not yet at the critical level of other indigenous groups in Colombia and Venezuela. They still possess land, their population is increasing, practically everyone speaks their mother tongue and their level of health is good, though precarious. At present they are not threatened by physical violence (though a major confrontation between guerilla groups and the Colombian army could precipitate a desperate situation in which the Barí would find themselves in the cross-fire, since each of the two factions has been trying to use them against the other); individually, the Barí still retain a certain control over their own lives though this situation is mostly due to the fact that they live on a political and religious frontier. In Colombia and Venezuela today there are some indigenous groups whose much less favourable situation cannot be compared with that of the Barí.

Nevertheless it is evident that each time the Barí come into contact with an official organisation they are manipulated into following its suggestions. There is no question whatsoever that either IAN or INCORA would change its methods or requirements in order to make room for the practicalities of Barí subsistence; that none of the missionaries would modify their religion to adapt it to that of the Barí. (To be fair, we must note here that the Barí have had a strong influence on Bruce Olsen and for this he has been heavily criticised by other missionaries for admitting that this influence guides his politics. Similarly, a Capuchin missionary, Padre Adolfo de Villanañan, assigned to the Barí in the 60's, was relieved of his duties and transferred when he took a pro-Barí stand which compromised his position as a missionary and a member of his Order.) Several organisations from the dominant society are charged with the task of "protecting" the Barí who eventually become the reason for the continued existence of these bodies. Each programme that these organisations carries out is judged by its success with respect to the national government, the prevailing political climate or the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Nothing is judged in Barí terms of success or failure. They are not consulted. (Once more Bruce Olsen is an exception who, because of his particular position in the missionary organisational structure, has to count on the support and good will of the Barí themselves in order to continue working among them).

Table 1: Changes in Barí Territory between 1900 and 1983 (Venezuela and Colombia) - Lizarralde and Beckerman

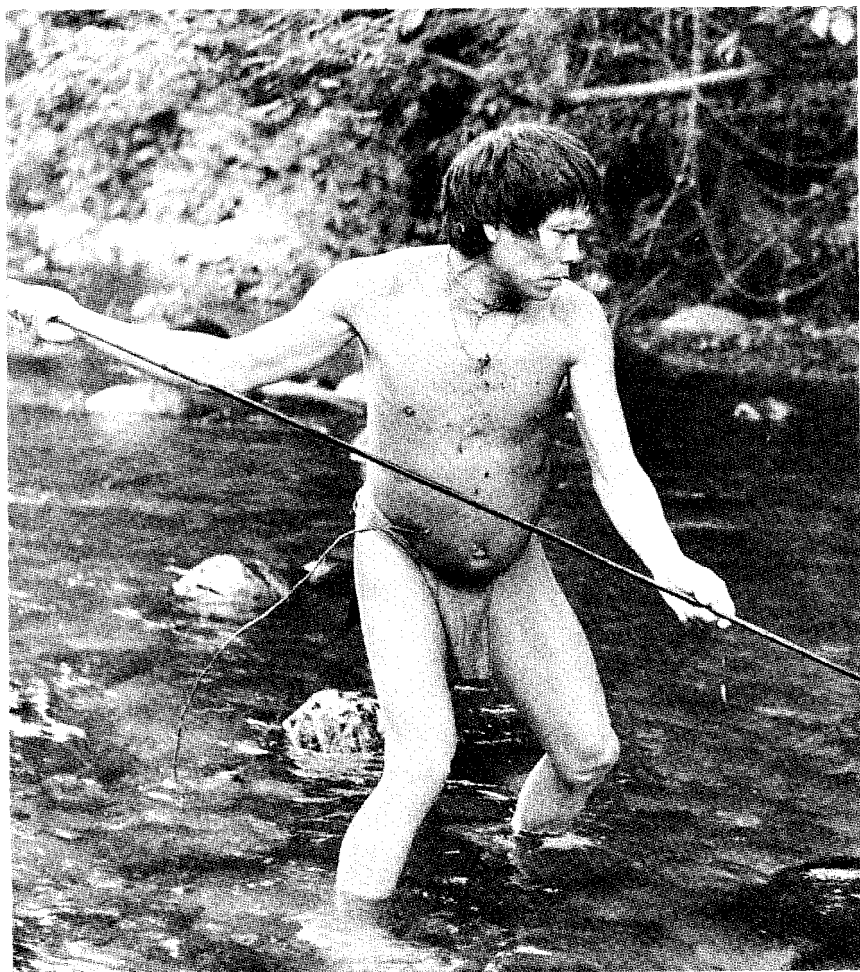
Year	Barí Territory		Loss of Territory	
	Total	% of 1900	Absolute loss since previous decade	Loss relative to 1900 (%)
1900	16.000	100,0	--	--
1920	14.000	87,5	1.970	12,3
1930	13.500	84,5	475	3,0
1940	9.700	60,5	3.800	23,7
1950	7.400	46,2	2.300	14,4
1960	5.100	31,9	2.300	14,4
1965	4.770	29,8	330	2,1
1970	3.300	20,6	1.800	11,2
1980	2.400	15,0	900	5,6
1983	1.900	11,9	500	3,1

Population total
estimated and census

Land/Population Ratio
Density of
Population per km² Km² per
inhabitant

2.000-2.500	0,12-0,15	8,0-6,4
2.000	0,14	7,1
2.000	0,15	6,7
1.500	0,12	8,1
1.300	0,11	5,7
1.100	0,21	4,6
850	0,18	5,6
1.100	0,33	3,0
1.375	0,57	1,7
1.560	0,82	1,2

The future of the Barí continues to be uncertain. The biggest threat to them is, in fact, not the Creoles living in the area, but certain development organisations in Caracas and Bogota who are working out plans for hydroelectric dams in the rivers Aricuaísa, Catatumbo and Oro. These projects will do away with the best Barí lands, the scant territory which is left them and finally, all possibility of maintaining a strong and authentic Barí culture.



Barí fishing with spears which reach 3-5 metres in length (Lizarralde, 1961)

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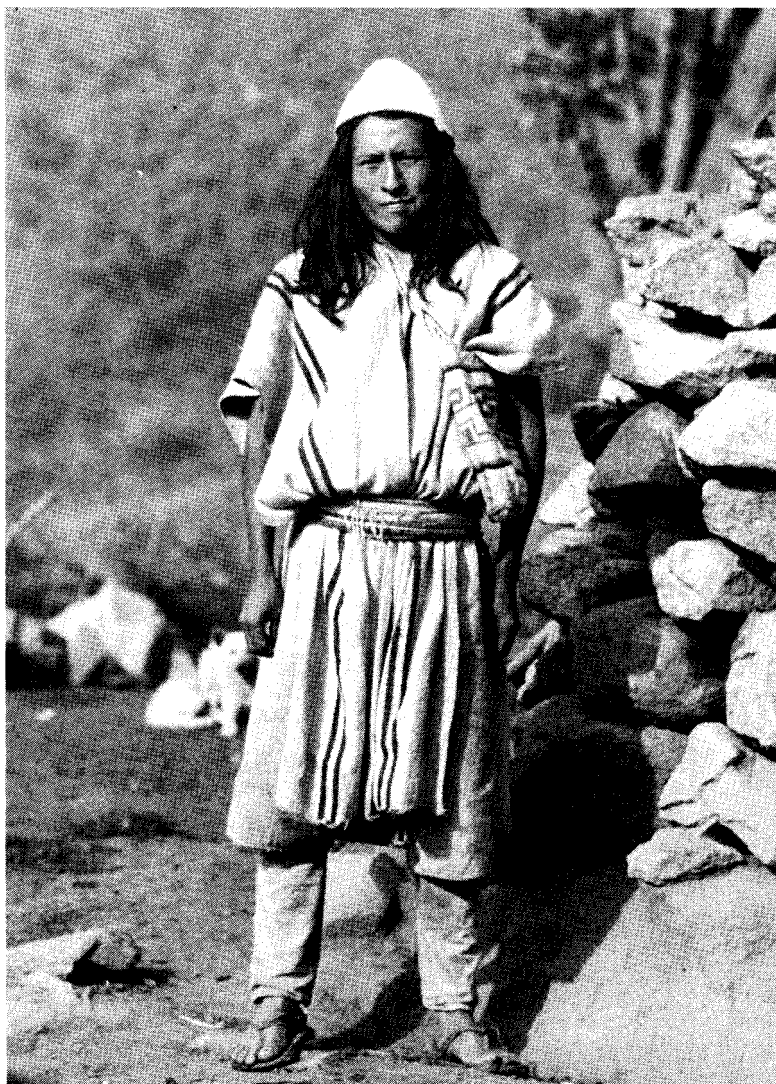
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An Arhuaco Indian (Peter Elsass)

The Contemporary History of the Arhuaco

Introduction

We the Ika or Arhuaco, are an indigenous people who since antiquity, along with our neighbouring indigenous brothers the Kogi and Malayo, have had our sacred home in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta.

Seinekan, the earth is our mother.

We protect our leaders, the *Mamu*, we meet and make offerings so that the plants and the animals can live and that we may make houses, cook, weave clothes and sow coca, maize, beans and manioc seeds for a healthy life.

Today we have to work hard making houses, clearing the land, sowing crops in Chinquingama, Rio Piedra, Chincorro, Galaxia, Chinchikua and Serankua so that the colonists do not penetrate any further.

Therefore all of us have to work together to defend our land and our culture.

It is necessary to educate and train ourselves. And this ought to be done according to our beliefs and values so that we come to know our history and our culture.

We want bilingual education, Spanish-Ika; we want our children to learn about the history of Colombia and the world, mathematics and all the sciences; we want the school to help us in teaching about collaboration and mutual aid between people and not about egoism.

Our children learn from us, our culture is the Arhuaco school and it is everywhere in the Sierra.

Through years of hard struggle we Arhuaco have received recognition of one part of our lands. We have been assigned a reservation zone.

Our brothers Kogi and Sanka have been given a title for their reservation. But all this is only on paper. Our best lands have been invaded by colonists and landowners.

YAVI – mural no.6 March-April, 1983.

The Arhuaco belong to the widely-spread Chibcha linguistic family and inhabit the southern part of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta in the northern Colombian departments of Cesar, Magdalena and Guajira. The Sierra Nevada mountains consist of a distinct and almost inaccessible plateau with snow covered peaks reaching 5.700 m. above sea level. From the snows spring rivers which flow through different climatic belts down to the lowlands. The Arhuaco live in the temperate and tropical belts of the deep mountain valleys.

The Sierra Nevada mountains are inhabited by three indigenous peoples: the Kogi (or Cogui), the Sanká (or Malayo) and the Arhuaco (or Ika). Arhuaco territory was delimited in 1972 to include 186,000 hectares and the Kogis-Sanká received a 365,000 hectare reserve. However only about 8% of this land is considered fertile.

There are different estimates for the Arhuaco population. The Indigenous Affairs Office of the Ministry of Government (*Asuntas Indigenas*) issued a figure of 3,615 Indians in 1972, whereas the Ministry of National Planning (*Ministerio de Planeación Nacional*) in 1980 estimated 8,680. The Arhuaco consider themselves to number 10-15,000 people.

The Arhuaco practise a semi-nomadic lifestyle, regulated by the seasons, for sowing and harvesting in the two zones, subtropical and temperate, where they have their gardens. In this way they are able to produce a wide variety of foodstuffs. Horticulture is the basis of their economy. In the low sub-tropical zones they grow sugar cane, plantains, maize and coffee. They also plant manioc, yam, and other tubers. In the higher lands, the temperate zone, the most important products are maize and potatoes but they also grow cabbages, chilis, onions, apples, lemons, some types of beans, lettuces and tomatos. They rarely eat the sugar cane and the coffee but mostly sell or barter it. The Arhuaco diet is based on maize and manioc. Each family may have a couple of cows, a horse or a mule, some sheep, pigs and hens as a supplement to their horticultural produce.

The basis of Arhuaco society is a family consisting of parents and unmarried children which is considered a self-sufficient work unit. The families are grouped into exogamous patrilineal clans of which there are approximately ten. The clans do not occupy a physical territory today but in the past each had a discrete area and ceremonial house. The highest authorities in Arhuaco society are the *Mamu* who govern through elected civil and religious leaders in the different regions of the land. The office of *Mamu* is usually hereditary through the father's line but a boy may also be elected by consecrated *Mamus* when he is between 9 and 10 years old; the position of *Mamu* is developed after a life-long education where the acquisition of knowledge of Arhuaco history and culture is fundamental. As a priest, the *Mamu* is the intermediary between the Indians and supernatural powers. A *Mamu* is first and foremost a priest but also a curer, chief and judge. The Arhuaco have built a centralized political institution around the *Mamu* which has defended their right to autonomy over the centuries.

History

In the beginning of time Kaku Serancua created the land, made it fertile and respected it as his wife. The world was supported on four upon four interlaced threads of gold which hung from the four cardinal points; the crossing of the threads forms the heart of the world – the Sierra Nevada – which is delimited by the *Linea Negra* where Kaku Serancua lives and keeps vigil over creation. Just as Kaku Serancua created the world, he also created the waters which are like the veins where the blood of mankind runs, feeding the land. He also created the stars, the sun and the moon. In creating living things he gave laws to all people.

Our history, our traditional sciences, our *Mamu*, our *cabildos* and *comisarios*, our language, the music of our pipes, drums and rattles and our territory are not respected by the *bonachis* (non-indigenous peoples). They forget that we are the first settlers and inhabitants of these lands.

YAVI mural no.6 March-April 1983

In northern Colombia, the impact of the Spanish conquest was first felt by the indigenous peoples along the coastal zone. But with the building of the town of Santa Marta in 1525, the foreign influence began to make its mark in the mountain region. In the 16th century the Spanish divided the territory into provinces; a province was an area of indigenous people with similar characteristics. There were ten indigenous provinces in the Sierra Nevada, one of which was Arhuaco. In the second part of the 16th century the Arhuaco province was explored and conquered.

The arrival of the conquistadors and the implantation of new organisational forms meant great changes for the Arhuaco. First of all there was the appearance of the *comisarios* (superintendents) who were nominated by the Arhuaco. This began the development of a civil power which was strengthened when the first *cabildo gobernador* (indigenous councillor) was established by Law in 1890. Such a relation with the Colombian national society implied an internal transformation for the Arhuaco which gave them the means to get to know and understand the economic, political and social workings of the majority society.

The 18th century saw the arrival of colonists, an evangelical centre and the first chapel in the area which resulted in the assimilation by the Arhuaco of certain elements from the national culture e.g. new crops: sugar cane, wheat, potatoes, plantains and onions and westernised house construction. Other introductions were the use of machetes, axes and their long robe-like form of dress.

In the 19th century there were three agents of acculturation in the Sierra Nevada: the missionaries who built chapels and taught the Catholic religion, the

Creole colonists and political refugees who settled in various regions of the mountains and colonised indigenous land. Acculturation increased and the Arhuaco adopted new domesticated animals: goats, sheep and mules; some of them began to wear western clothes, to drink rum, attend Mass and learn Spanish.

At the beginning of the present century the Creoles from Valledupar region established the village of Pueblo Bello on the road to Nabucimaque, the traditional Arhuaco capital. The Arhuaco began to grow coffee and sell it to the Creoles, even though they themselves did not drink it.

In 1915 the Arhuaco from Nabucimaque decided to break contact with the colonists and prohibit the use of alcohol bought from the Creoles. They sent representatives to Bogotá to protest to the President about the colonist invasions of their lands and asked for schools, seeds and tools. The Colombian government cancelled the debts that the Arhuaco owed the Creoles and this, together with a serious epidemic of measles, brought tensions with the Creoles.

Between 1915 and 1920 the Capuchin mission was established in the Nabucimaque valley, based on farming with cheap indigenous labour. The mission used traditional methods of acculturation by first of all institutionalising children in an orphanage and destroying their culture by catechisation, forbidding them to talk their own language, cutting their hair and making them wear western clothes. Sometimes the missionaries tried to defend them against the Creoles, who, in turn, wanted to turn the Arhuaco away from the priests.

Through the influence of the Workers' Federation of Magdalena, the Indigenous League of the Sierra Nevada (*Liga Indígena de la Sierra Nevada*) was formed in 1930. The League's objectives included doing away with debts of labour to the mission, ending obligatory military service and the sale of lands to outsiders, refusing to provide lists of names of indigenous people to the inspector of police and the teacher and stopping the persecution of the *Mamu*. Because of the tensions created by the missions and the colonists, most of the Arhuaco abandoned the centre at Nabucimaque: one group retreated to the west to the region of Serankua, another to the north to the river Donachui, while others went downriver to Sevilla.

In 1962, against the will of the Arhuaco, a road was opened from Pueblo Bello to Cerro Inarwa (the Arhuaco Holy Mountain above Nabucimaque) to facilitate plans for a military observation post and the erection of antennae and Telecom communication bases. This road usurped Arhuaco territory and violated their sacred areas. As a result of this the Indigenous League was brought together again to defend their rights and some leaders went to Bogotá to demand the suspension of the proposed building.

Over the past twenty years in particular, there has been an awakening of Arhuaco indigenous consciousness and a desire to return to their old cultural forms in reaction to the influence of the outside world. They have tried to resist the colonists' invasion of their lands and consider white influence as negative, bringing only problems, alcohol and illness. 80% of the Arhuaco speak Spanish but use their own language between themselves. They show a continuing desire to use indigenous teachers in their schools and to teach in their own language. The Arhuaco have harboured a strong antagonism towards the missionaries. They consider themselves exploited, particularly when children, taken to the mission for their education, have been set to work for the priests.

Since 1969, the position of *primer cabildo gobernador* has been established among the Arhuaco and is elected by all the indigenous civil and religious authorities. This new centralized political organisation has been charged with the task of negotiating with all the representatives of the national society facing the Arhuaco – government officials, representatives, etc. In 1972 the *cabildo gobernador* raised the issue of the Arhuaco's right to a territorial reserve. This was approved by INCORA (*Instituto Colombiano de la Reforma Agraria*) and was followed by the recuperation of Arhuaco lands in Sabana Crespo where they built some meeting houses with the purpose of strengthening their cultural unity and acting as a force against missionary participation inside the communities. In the same year the First Congress of the Arhuaco Indigenous People took place, which gave birth to the Arhuaco Indigenous People's Organisational Council (*Consejo Organizativo Indigena Arhuaco*) – COIA – with three basic aims: to defend their land, their culture and to gain control of their own education.

The Takeover of the Mission

In 1979 the Central Directive Assembly (*Junta Directiva Central*) was created which, above all, sought a dialogue and unity between the different sectors of Arhuaco society over communal problems. This was the period when the problems with the Capuchin mission increased.

On the 7th August, 1982, the situation of the mission was discussed and it was decided that the mission buildings should be taken over and an Arhuacan commission be appointed to formulate a letter to the Governor and the Bishop of Valledupar. This letter would explain the reasons for their action and state

that "in the light of all these problems we have decided to take over the installations of the Capuchin mission peacefully, until such time as the problem is solved." Towards four in the afternoon, the Arhuacan leaders began to collect signatures for the letter. Eventually every Indian signed his name. They collected ten pages of signatures.



Arhuaco attack on the mission, August, 1982 (Cromos)



Towards half-past-six in the afternoon the people left the village and moved towards the mission. In the last light of day they arrived in front of the door. Luis Napoleón Torres asked Father Antonio Nacher and the Spanish missionary Maria José if they would accompany them because they wanted to talk with them. Because of the darkness nothing could be seen. Rumours circulated and some children cried. Suddenly lights were lit at different points. Someone on the top of the staircase situated opposite the door passed a beam of light over the gathered multitude. The missionaries paled, obviously nervous. Amiro Mestre, Treasurer of the Central Committee, read the letter in a firm and clear voice. Father Antonio said that the Bishop was in Bogotá and that he could not resolve anything. When he was asked who the lands belonged to, he replied: "I cannot say anything, the only thing I can say to you is that they do not belong to the Capuchins, they belong to the diocese and the Indian community." Luis Napoleón explained the conversation in Arhuaco. At the end one could hear shouts of triumph and the Arhuaco began to march towards the mission buildings and settle themselves neatly into every corner. Their faces reflected their triumph, the decision and resolution of their claim for which they had been waiting for 66 years.

(Evecherry, 1982)

Over and above the irregularities in the management of the mission there were other reasons for the Arhuaco taking the decision for its non-violent appropriation:

1. The Capuchin Mission considered itself the proprietors of Arhuaco land, even though it was in the zone of the indigenous reserve.
2. The hospital at the mission was constructed with money destined for the Arhuaco and was built by their own hands.
3. The donation was on the condition that the Arhuaco authorities participated in the management of the hospital centre.
4. The Arhuaco had sent letters denouncing the situation and asking for help to the Ministry of Government, the Cardinal, the President of the Republic, the Governor of Valledupar and the Bishop and had not had any reply.

In January 1983 the Ministries of Government, Education and National Planning sent a joint Commission to Sierra Nevada where it met more than 2,000 indigenous people in Nabucimaque. Nine months later the Government gave a positive response and official recognition of the negotiations and the historical moves the Arhuaco people had made. On the 13 April, 1983, the Ministry of Education announced publicly that the education problem in Sierra Nevada had been solved, that the Capuchin mission had left and that the education programme had passed into the hands of the Regional Education Department (*Fondo de Educacion Regional*) which, in general, approved the education programmes presented by the Arhuaco. In 1984 primary and secondary school education was started in the buildings which were formerly the mission.

CIVIL GOVERNMENT ORGANISATION

Mamu

Maximum Authority

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The whole community which meets once a year

CENTRAL DIRECTIVE
COMMITTEE

(Cabildo Gobernador Secretary
General, Treasurer, Attorney Super-
vises work, plans internal policies)

INDIGENOUS POLICE INSPEC-
TION OF NABUCIMAKE

(a community spokesman working
with the Alcalde og Valledupar)

CENTRAL COMISARIOS &
CABILDOS COMISARIOS &
CABILDOS FROM DIFFERENT
AREAS

(civil authorities - resolve problems
of internal law and order)

COMMITTEES: HEALTH,
EDUCATION, PRODUCTION,
HISTORY

(work teams for the improvement of
each of the above areas)

(Unidad Indigena 1986).



Año 1 N°1 Enero 1975 DIRECTOR: TRINO MORALES LIC. N° 002128 APDO AEREO 32366 800004



Arhuaco on the front page of the indigenous magazine "Unidad Indígena" - without unity we will never have the strength to defend our land and provide for our children.

ARHUACO DOCUMENTS

1) Arhuaco Education – Our Language must be defended

Unidad Indigena November, 1983.

We, the Arhuaco Indigenous people speak our own language, but until recently we did not know that it was so profound, valuable and complete. They (the missionaries) always wanted to instill in us the idea that to speak our language was a sign of backwardness and savagery. So for a long time many of us have shunned it and been ashamed of it. Others have thought that to teach it in schools was a waste of time and that it was much more important to teach Spanish. But today we are certain that our own language is important for the progress of our children; those of us who speak it propose to study it in depth, and those who don't learn it because it is just as important as any other language spoken inside or outside our country. We think, moreover, that it is a fundamental part of our people, of our culture and of our identification as an Indigenous Community; for these reasons we have to defend it in the struggle for our own education. We are confident that very soon we will be able to publish this grammar in order to continue developing text books in a more organised manner.

We have also established an investigation group to talk with the Nayoies so that we can continue looking for words that have been lost and have been replaced by Spanish words. We will go ahead with the compilation of our oral history so that we can rediscover our history, and enrich our education programmes.

2) Message from the indigenous communities of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta to the 3rd National Congress of Peasant Producers.

from Mendoza, 1977

To all our indigenous brothers, our *campesino* comrades, workers, teachers, students and all those who are conscious of our liberation, we send greetings from the indigenous communities of the Sierra Neva de Santa Marta, Arhuaco, Kogi and Malayo. We want to tell you of the different problems that we indigenous people are faced with in our present way of life.

What does the Land mean to Indigenous People:

Today the main problem we have is the right to our own land because we are not recognised as the legitimate inheritors of those to whom it was given in the beginning, namely four indigenous groups: the Arhuaco, Kogi, Malayo and Cancuamo, of which only the first three groups remain.

Our land was delimited by the *Linea Negra*, the Black Line, around the foothills of the Sierra Nevada which was drawn by our Father Serankua, the Creator God of all the universe and all that we see. He himself gave us the real Laws; he taught us that the earth is our Mother and that it is to her we owe our existence and she should not be abused.

The Original Religion of Indigenous People:

All human races are equal: each one has been designated its own rights and laws so that the rights of our own brothers are not violated. Each race has been given the means to know and find God. It was ordained that we must obey and respect our own authority, an authority which was not created by ourselves but given by our Father Serankua and which shows us how to cultivate the land, to produce equally, to protect the forest, all types of animals, the water, the mountains, to protect the sun, the stars, the moon, the summer and winter, the sicknesses, the earthquakes and all the things he gave the world; all these are for the benefit and well-being of the whole of humanity. In this way we will live, without egoism, without trampling over each other, without coveting the rights of our brothers. We do not pride ourselves over others, nor are some people less equal than others. These Laws were given so that we could help one another, mutually, equally, justly and with understanding; if one becomes weak the others strengthen. These are the real Laws that were given to the five continents. All animal life and nature have their own Laws and in order to conserve them we have to comply with their Laws. This is how it was laid down and this is how it should always be. These Laws are represented in the sciences of the *Mamu*, transmitted since antiquity from generation to generation. The wisdom of the *Mamu* is put at the service of man; they know and control illnesses, the rains, the *summers*, the earth's tremors etc.

The Destruction of the Land:

But our brothers began to abandon the real Laws and broke away, violating the rights of their own brothers, wanting to have more right to the land and disregarding their brother elders.

This was how it was when the Spanish arrived and began to rob us of our land within the Black Line, taking it away and giving themselves the right to possess it by means of titles, legislations and laws which were unknown to us. And so it has been continued by those who inherited the Spaniards' ambitions, people who have now made themselves into big landowners. They have created their own laws between themselves in order to maintain a dominance over us and our lands.

Today, powerful politicians and landowners continue to try to confine us more and more, depriving us of the right to our land and of maintaining it for our children, our grandchildren and our future generations. They believe that they are the only ones chosen to possess the land and they use different forms of authority in order to get it. They threaten us with prison and fines of enormous sums, they send for their supporters to overwhelm us, the civil authorities, police and the military maltreat us. This is the way the law is administered to our indigenous people today.

They permit our sacred Mother Earth to be made into places of degradation and exhibited to tourists and foreigners. It is a profanity; they permit the sacking and destruction of sacred places by tomb robbers and foreigners who are themselves searching for their own enrichment. They rob the offerings which are sanctified for conserving the water, the forest, the mountains, the fertility of the land, the abundance of animals, all of which contribute to ensure the best harvests which will keep humanity free from illness, calamities and earthquakes. The consequences of this violation of Nature are: bad harvests, destruction by earthquakes, great floods, prolonged summers, the death of animals, foreign illnesses and the infertility of the land. All this is due to the violation of the inheritance of Mother Earth, of her real Laws, of our land and of the real national culture.

Politicians and Landowners:

In the past these people have fenced off our lands and natural pastures by means of deceiving us and using the authorities in general to threaten us with fines and prison. This still continues today but even worse. There are no authorities acting in our favour; the lawyers and the laws are there to intimidate us with all kinds of threats and not to help us and respect our rights.

All they try to do is hand us over to repressive forces by accusing us of subversion so that they do not have to defend our cause; they consider us friends only so that we give them our votes, but when it comes to land they treat us like their worst enemies who only deserve to be left to die. They have also established community businesses in order to split us into factions and tie us down with debts which we can only pay by using the land which belongs to us. They force us to accept new things each day which are of no use to us or our families and which will only create new and greater needs for things which are unknown to us. These things are done only to enslave us and take from us everything that is ours.

The important politicians who live nearby, keep themselves hidden and pay a sum of money to cheat and gather together the indigenous people, throwing us into trucks like herds of cattle and taking us down to Valledupar or to Pueblo Bello so that we can give them a vote, giving in exchange rum and false promises which are not going to solve anything for us. After the elections they forget all that they promised and find indigenous people drunk in the street, robbed of all they have. But in order to impress us, they present themselves to the Inspectors and Commissioners as the regional representatives of the Governor.

How should we receive Technology and Education:

In spite of the fact that they did promise to return our lands to us in respect of our rights, today, less is said of this so that we forget about it and instead all the authorities want is to create artesan centres, experimental farms financed by the Caja Agraria, to open roads and show us techniques – ‘‘progress’’, ‘‘development’’.

The point of all this is that it brings us many things that are not good for the continuing health of our own ideology: an artesan centre is not good because we ourselves know how to make all we need for our own use and we do not want to be commercialised. Commericalisation will make us forget the real necessities of the family, of work and of our lands. As far as farms are concerned, our experience of them is one that we will never forget in all our history; a farm was established in Nabucimaque, our traditional capital, and the threats the authorities made to get the indigenous people who lived there peacefully to leave their lands cost much waste and destruction. This has left very deep marks. There was not a single benefit for us, only for the missionaries and the government employees. Therefore we will not accept more farms because they could be even worse.

The Caja Agraria loan system has resulted in the people developing ambitions to have money and this has meant that they fall into serious debt with the Caja, with people from their own community and with people from outside. Getting the loan itself involves expenses and can take from one to three months; interest is high because in order to repay one has to forget one's family obligations and sell everything to get free of debt and be left alone with the bitterness, the tragedy and the discontentment of one's family.

We will not let them open roads because this makes way for colonisation by outside people and permits yet further violation of our lands, our women, the theft of our animals and our produce; furthermore this erodes away our Sierra Nevada bringing lamentable destruction on our beloved Mother Earth.

We believe that technology ought to be selective so that we understand it and receive it as a good thing that is compatible with the necessities we demand and does not serve as a means of creating divisions or misunderstanding and discrimination between groups, as it is considered to have done. We are the ones who ought to choose what we want to use and what we don't.

The "progress" and "development" that the politicians talk of is only a means of permitting entry to those who want to destroy our cultural values, our ideology and our original religion or to break us down and give us ambitious desires or to get us to destroy our traditional wealth.

Education began in 1916 with the priests and was a very dark beginning; it cost the lives of many of our elders and was badly oriented. The priests brought dolls and figures of wood, telling us that they were gods and we were forced to pray under threats and different kinds of maltreatment.

This education caused the worst disgrace: those who came out of the mission treated their families very badly and were ashamed of their own prayers. They could only speak their own language under threat of punishment; they were taught to deny that they were indigenous. Those who were acculturated by the mission or by the outside did not respect their elders, they despised their own people and lost their pride in being indigenous, they were filled with foreign vices, despised their religion and their cultural origins and became enemies of their own race.

All the missionaries, whether Catholic or Protestant appear to be working for indigenous people and because of this are inside our territories, but they do nothing in our favour and what they do do is for their own economic interests. They do not act in response to the needs of any part of the Community; they say they are studying our languages but have done nothing which we recognise as beneficial.

When the son of our Father Serankua came it was to reaffirm these laws – he did not come to impose a religion that was different to humanity or any other races, he came because man had wandered from the sphere of reality of the Laws of our Father. But people began again to interpret the real Laws of Knowledge in their own way and their own understanding and according to their own ambition. They started to mistreat and constrict them, forcing their own ideas on their brothers. We know that our Laws are the real ones because they show us how to live in peace with humanity and Nature and all that is within it. This is the understanding transmitted by our elders through generations to the great sages, the *Mamu*, who structure the traditional authority and organisation of our community, an authority embodied in the the elders who are the most knowledgeable and most respected. And the community accepts them because the people know that they will be vigilant for the good of everyone; they have no preferences, we are all equal.



Arhuaco (Peter Elsass)

This is difficult to understand for those who only know how to take from life and not to give to it; this is what has happened to Nature, they have destroyed it, they don't know how to conserve it; and this is what they have done with us and they continue to do it, treating us as children so that they can deny us our rights, treating us as ignorant because we do not have a language we can use to cheat and feed us from the rights of others. They have their own interests in owning what does not belong to them and are submitting us to discrimination and their way of thinking which is not good.

The politicians and landowners only make use of the authorities in order to appease us and control the land more easily over and above our rights; they use them in order to maintain their own political and economic interests. These politicians and landowners are generally the same people who permit the colonisation of our Black Line Reserve by other peasant farmers, whose land they have already taken away by violence. They appoint Inspectors and Commissioners, according to their desires, all of whom are foreign to our people, in order to aid our exploitation and the buying of our lands by colonists. The latter end up losing their jobs and selling the land which is ours at a low price.

Conclusion:

The indigenous communities of Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta are daily more convinced of the importance in having our own organisation and of the need to be united with all our indigenous brothers who suffer the same exploitation and oppression as well as with all the peasant farmers and friends who have been kindled by our liberation.

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Compiled by Sheila Aikman and Peter Elsass



Organisational patterns for ethnic minorities

An analysis of the different survival capacities of the Barí and Arhuaco
Indigenous Peoples

by Peter Elsass*

Introduction

The concern of this article is to discuss the organisational patterns best suited for the survival of ethnic minorities. The social psychology of the Barí, who live on the border of Venezuela and Colombia, is contrasted with that of the Arhuaco, from the northern part of Colombia. In comparison with the Barí, the Arhuaco have been able to turn missionaries and white colonists away from their lands and have maintained more aspects of their traditional way of life.

The survival of ethnic minorities depends on their capacity to organize themselves and their fight for autonomy and land. Minorities are very unequal in this respect, not only because the surrounding state societies differ, but also because their own communities are structurally different. One aspect of indigenous social structure seems particularly pertinent here: power. Power is culturally constituted and expressed in symbols which serve the purpose of maintaining a particular power structure. There are no societies without power, but in some "tribal" communities, power is constituted non-hierarchically and involves no threat of violence; this is the so-called "powerless" power.

According to Clastres (1977), political power can be based on either coercion or non-coercion. Coercion is the reaction of command-obedience, as is found in manifestations of political power in Western culture. Non-coercion exists in cases where political institutions are absent, where there are no chiefs and where social bonds are created without force or threats of violence.

But the dimension of coercion/non-coercion is only one element in a larger social-psychological context. In the description of the organisation of power, other contrapuntal dimensions must be analysed. With regard to internal organisation, we must look at equality/hierarchy and expressions of historicity or non-historicity, while with external relations, we must look at withdrawal/isolation, confrontation and organisation. All these elements contribute to the possibilities for survival of ethnic minorities. The purpose of this article is to give two different examples of survival in South America. The hypothesis we are using here is that the more invisible and "powerless" the organisation, the greater the

problem of surviving Western society without being absorbed through ethnocide.

Since 1973 the author has stayed eight times with two indigenous peoples of South America, each with different survival capacities.

The Barí, living in the lowlands on the border between Colombia and Venezuela, illustrate the non-coercive type of society, almost egalitarian and with little chieftainship. They express little knowledge of their own history and, although they have lost almost 9/10 of their territory since 1900, they have made very few public claims to land or autonomy. Their culture is almost totally encircled by the Catholic mission.

The Arhuaco, living in the mountains of Colombia, illustrate a society of both coercive and non-coercive structures, where the coercive elements have been strengthened and are particularly apparent in their meetings and confrontations with the state society. They have thrown out the missionaries and have established their own education, underlining their traditions and history. They are well organised, with a hierarchical structure, and have elected spokesmen who meet with government representatives in the big cities. In recent years they have increasingly emphasized the visible expressions of their ethnicity, by, for example, their traditional dress and the use of their original language.

The Barí

The Barí are a society of about 1500 Indians living in forested lowlands on the border between Colombia and Venezuela. For a detailed antropological description see Pinton (1965) and Lizarralde & Beckerman (1982).

Internal organisation: Social equality and non-coercive power.

The Barí's internal structure is best illustrated by their tradition of living in communal houses, the so-called *bohio* which is a collective unit consisting of 40-80 Indians. The *bohio* resemble the upside-down hulls of boats, placed like isolated green islands in the jungle with circles of cultivated land radiating out from the centre. Each one has about 400 km² for its use.

The Barí have always lived by hunting and slash-and-burn cultivation and although their land has diminished drastically during this century, they have only made minor changes in their manner of cultivation, even after the introduction of new crops such as coffee and beans.

The *bohio* is a microcosmos which reflects a special logic between time and space. It not only contains the key to Barí social organisation, but is also closely connected to their history, mythology and cosmology.

The big interior room is divided so that every family has its own area. The position of the hammocks and the small sun rays penetrating through the palm roof demarcate one family's space from another.

The Barí live relatively crowded in their houses, but what, to an outsider, seems provocative anarchy, is a well-structured community related through kinship. The Barí differentiate between social relationships which are *sagdodyira* - family relations of genetic origin and *obdyibara* - working relations. Their incest taboo forbids marriage and sexual relationships between the first generation of *sagdodyira*.

In the *bohio* there is a relationship between space and kinship. The oval house is divided into four parts, each inhabited by a family group with a specific name. The centre of the house consists of a common area with hearths around which each family lives with others in the same 'fire' (hearth) group. Sometimes the family members cook in succession for the others with the cooking order reflecting their spatial position in the *bohio*. This order also determines the order of succession in which people walk in the jungle or work collectively in fishing or cultivation.

Besides this horizontal division, there is a vertical division. The height of the hammocks above the ground demonstrates kinship relations. Man and wife sleep side by side close to the ground, while young children sleep above them and unmarried youths sleep in those hammocks placed highest. The older the people, the closer to the ground and to the entrances they sleep. Each hearth group has a special relationship to another *bohio* to which they often travel. A child is a member both of his family, and of the group of children connected to their special part of the *bohio*. If his family dies he is still a member of the *bohio*, and the members will collectively take care of him.

Inside the *bohio* there is a functional leader *ñatobay* who co-ordinates work. For activities outside the house there is another leader called *isdora* who directs and organises the communal work such as fishing, hunting and cultivation. These "offices" are neither formal nor visible to an outsider, but consist of authority without special privileges. Among the Barí the *ñatobay* has the distinctive features of a "titular chief" (Clastres, 1977), a peacemaker who is generous with his possessions and a good orator.

The *ñatobay* is responsible for maintaining peace and harmony in the group. He is the one who appeases quarrels and settles disputes through his fairness and verbal ability; he seldom employs force. He is generous, often providing all for which he is asked, which plays a fundamental role in determining the degree of his popularity.

The Barí give generosity within the kin-group a high priority. Wealth is considered attractive because it improves the material basis of showing generosity which is considered to be unifying.

Public decisions are expressed collectively, and will very seldom take the form of a command from leader to subject.

Orders are rarely given and even more rarely obeyed. This kind of egalitarian social relationship has significant social psychological implications for drawing boundaries between individuals because direct aggressive confrontation is seldom used. On the contrary, if conflicts between two members of the same *bohio* arise, the two people concerned will initially distance themselves from each other and, in the last resort, one of them will move to another house. Because many individuals live together in a small space, open conflicts or direct confrontations between the members would have the catastrophic consequence of dissolving the community. Therefore a psychological mechanism has developed which prevents open aggression within the *bohio*. The titular chieftain, who cannot demand obedience from another person gives few opportunities for quarrelling. Furthermore, individuals are always connected to one or two other *bohio* by kinship and so the solution to conflict is flight and withdrawal.

It is rare, however, for the Barí to move from one *bohio* to another. Each *bohio* constitutes a self-contained social system and although everybody has kinship relations to other *bohio*, they only visit each other occasionally. The individuality of each member in the *bohio* parallels the individuality of each *bohio* as a whole. Although they speak the same language and are located in the same territory, the separate *bohio* do not constitute an inclusive social organization, which can meet the outer world in unison.

External Relations: Strategies of Isolation.

Even though the Barí seldom show open aggression inside their society, until 1960 they were openly aggressive and hostile to any foreigner who intruded on their land. Prior to 1960, Catholic Capuchin missionaries had, for about 15 years, made a two way campaign of pacification. One way was to fly over the *bohio* frequently and drop so-called "peace-bombs", "*bombas de paz*", containing

presents for the Barí such as sugar, salt, machetes and cooking pots. The other way was to educate those Barí, who in one way or another, had fallen into the hands of the mission. They gave these Barí special privileges such as money and clothes, and after a prolonged stay at the mission school, they were used as scouts in the pacification expeditions sent by land. In that way a peaceful relationship gradually developed with the Barí, and in 1960 contact was established with all the existing *bohio*.

Pacification was followed by the destruction of the *bohio* and thereby destruction of Barí social structure which was symbolically expressed in their collective houses. The destruction of the *bohio* is a typical example of the Western way of 'trying to help', but it is a commitment without anthropological or psychological insight.



Drawing from
the Pacification Campaign Photograph dropped with the Peace Bomb pacification campaign

As Lizarralde and Beckerman show, the size of the Barí population dropped by 25% in the first years of pacification. According to Jaulin (1973), the missionaries introduced various new elements in the construction of the *Bohio*, which almost resulted in genocide.

Jaulin (op.cit.) says that the Barí in the old *bohio* used to throw rubbish on the ground and the children were allowed to relieve themselves inside. They used to cleaned the ground with a machete and scrape the rubbish onto a palmleaf and throw it out of the house. But the missionaries considered the earth floor unhealthy and transported sacks of cement out to some of the isolated *bohio* and cemented the floor. When the Barí could no longer clean the floor with a machete, infectious diseases developed. Furthermore, the mission disapproved of the small entrances and the fact that so little light was allowed into the *bohio* and so they told the Barí to widen the entrances; but with the light came mosquitoes and then malaria epidemics broke out.

Another element in the destruction of Barí social life was also, according to Jaulin (op cit), that the missionaries advised the Barí to have their hearths outside their houses as the smoke could harm their health. This meant a break-down of the hearth-groups and of the social order of cooking which in its turn led to a gradual weakening of kinship relations.

This has now reached a point where today, after 26 years of contact, all the *bohio* in Venezuela have been replaced with small single-family houses, most of which are made from cement and have tin-roofs. All the 1100 Venezuelan Barí are baptised. In Colombia there are some 600 Barí of whom about 100 are still living in the last three existing *bohio*, several day's walking distance from outside settlements. Since 1900 Barí land has been reduced by 90% (Lizarralde and Beckerman in this document). Colonisation has been dominated by land colonists and oil-explorers, but the missionaries have nevertheless been major figures in the opening up of the indigenous land to outsiders.

There are various reasons why the Barí have almost capitulated in the face of this intrusion. The main reason lies in differences in power structure between the mission and the Barí in hierarchical order, the way they categorise themselves vis-à-vis outsiders and their generosity with material goods.

The Catholic mission is a very hierarchical system consisting of clearly defined positions ranked by formalised promotion. It is a social system which measures its own efficiency by numbers of conversions, baptisms, marriages or masses per annum – all held at a variety of isolated places and recorded in annual reports – supplemented by numbers of mission-owned cattle, miles of road built, houses of cement constructed etc.

The mission controls the infra-structure of the Barí reservation. It owns mules, jeeps and cars by which the missionaries can reach any isolated area. The Barí themselves are not travelling people and seldom walk more than one day from their houses. They own very little, only hammocks, a few clothes and tools. Material goods are important for the Barí primarily because they provide an opportunity for showing generosity. At one time the missionaries introduced dogs to the communities, but the Barí did not know how to control their reproduction and also became over-generous with food. They were soon overwhelmed by the dogs and at times were almost eaten out of food (Jaulin, op cit).

The contradiction between the missionary and Barí social systems and their respective power management can be seen in the way they select and use leaders. After a Barí has stayed at the mission for one or two years, he is often sent back to his home village to educate his relatives. The mission will often give such a man special status and will use him as a spokesman whenever issues concerning his village arise. But with their non-coercive and egalitarian power structure, the Barí often misinterpret the role of the spokesman and consider him as someone who will do all the hard work for the group. Converted Barí, are, therefore, sometimes treated as labourers.

In daily language the mission very often uses the categories of "we" and "they", or "converted" and "unconverted". The Barí have a few vaguely defined categories for the outside world. If one asks a Barí who he/she is, the answer will come "*neina barira*" meaning "I am Barí and I am man/woman". The person will distinguish between themselves and the neighbouring Yukpa or missionaries, but on further questioning a limited knowledge of the outside world becomes apparent.

The Barí have myths and legends about their genesis, but generally their history is not clearly conceptualised. Furthermore, they have few oral or pictorial traditions in presenting themselves.

The mission, in contrast, has written down all of its history and every month it has been present in the territory of the Barí is documented in annual reports. The Barí have been aware of how missionaries see themselves since they first picked up their photographs which were thrown down from the planes that flew over the *bohio*.

The only existing Barí organisation is *La Asociación de Los Barí* which was started by a Protestant missionary and includes some of the Indians living in Colombia. Otherwise they have no organisation. Only in cases of direct oppression have they protested such as in the case reported in IWGIA Newsletter, May 1987.



First mission contacts with the Barí (Peter Elsass)

Contact with Western culture has been a great threat to Barí social and psychological structures. Jaulin (op cit) states that contact has been easier and less disturbing with the colonists than with the missionaries. The Barí are used as cheap labour at several of the *haciendas* neighbouring the reservation. But this is mostly seasonal work and the indigenous workers are only temporarily separated from their own world. In contrast, those Barí who have become encircled by the mission have had to face major cultural and social changes of a permanent character: first of all the destruction of the ''*causa perpetua*'' of their culture - the *bohío*. In the social psychology of the Barí there are few mechanisms for showing aggressivity or marking status differences and individual boundaries inside the group. Aggressivity towards foreigners who intrude their land can be contrasted with distancing, withdrawal and a tendency to flight within the communities. In order to ''pacify'' the Barí the missionaries forced themselves into the group and influenced the points within the social structure which were weakest - namely where there were a lack of distinctions between individuals.

The Arhuaco

The Arhuaco live in the Sierra Nevada Mountains of northern Colombia. Together with the Sankas and the Kogis, the Arhuaco are the only descendants from the old Tairona culture. For a detailed anthropological description see Isaacs (1983), Loaiza (1984), Reichel-Dolmatoff (1984,1985) and Torres Marquez (1978).

Internal Organisation: Hierarchy and coercive power.

The Arhuaco are among those indigenous peoples in Latin America who have maintained their original culture. Although their land has been much reduced and their cultivation system has changed during recent centuries, they have built up an organisation which has helped them to maintain a significant form of autonomy.

The Arhuaco live in nuclear families which occupy separate houses. However each family is integrated into a larger social order according to their life style and their cultivation of the land.

The overall gradient of the Sierra Nevada mountains is not steep. From the snow at the top spring rivers which run through deep v-shaped valleys and slowly on, down a gradient of 2,000 meters. The rivers pass through different climatic belts until they widen out into the green lowlands. The valleys are about 50-100 km long, so one can walk from the lowland tropical zone to the temperate climate of the highlands within two or three days. In these valleys the Arhuaco have built their small villages which consist of 10 to 20 houses, situated so that each climatic zone's agricultural products lie within a day's walk. The Arhuaco often travel from one zone to another when they need food because they seldom store anything for more than a couple of days apart from some drying of produce in the sun. Instead they travel regularly to the fields according to family needs and not the season. There they cultivate fruits such as bananas, avocados and mangoes; in the subtropical zone they also grow maize and yuca while in the temperate zone potatoes and beans.

Arhuaco land use follows the ecological system of alternating cultivation and fallow which they express by saying: "We never take more from the earth than we can give back". In the mountains there are fertile plots of land which the Arhuaco do not cultivate; instead they save them for periods of underproduction in the ordinary fields, and as reserve territory for the future if the outsiders continue to invade. So while the white colonists accuse the Arhuaco of not using their land optimally, they have a strategy for every piece of their land, even when it is not used. Their agricultural system is very well balanced with the environment, and natural hazards such as droughts never affect all their resources at the same time.

Given this system of ecological zones, the Arhuaco are semi-nomadic in that they have houses and land at different altitudes in the mountains. They travel between between the houses and fields of relatives, so their movements are patterned according to kinship ties. This manner of cultivation has resulted from invasions by, first, the Spanish and, later, by Colombian colonists, and it is only during the last two centuries that the Arhuaco have adopted their semi-nomadic way of life, which gives them more access to higher parts of the mountains, into which they have gradually had to retire. One consequence of this is that the Arhuaco have a very dispersed social universe; only occasionally do they gather in a village or at a small ceremonial centre to celebrate some seasonal ritual. The urban tradition of the ancestral people of Tairona has disappeared among their presentday descendants. But behind this development is a social organisation, a leadership and a religious life which have been transmitted from the Taironas without major changes.

The Arhuaco social system is hierarchical and the religious leaders, the *Mamu*, have supreme power. To control the system of cultivation and access to resources, they have a centralised leadership which consists a small group of elders who have extensive ecological knowledge, that is, knowledge about soil characteristics, temperature, plant cover, rainfall, drainage, slope exposure, and winds – all of which have contributed to understanding agricultural procedures and yield expectancies. Basic to all this is an ecological awareness of a balance between man and nature, a balance which can easily be disturbed by an irresponsible human act, as, for instance, an unreflective development of a water system or intensive deforestation.

For the Arhuaco, the *Mamu* is like a scientist with a great factual knowledge of astronomy, meteorology, and ecology. But in addition, the *Mamu* has a particular knowledge of village social structure, and of every single individual's needs, capabilities and demands.

The authority of the *Mamu* is based on religious principles. An important factor here is the private or public confession of "sins" which are redressed by the *Mamu*'s giving advice, correction, and sometimes punishment. The Arhuaco call the different kinds of land, clay, and humus by synonyms for meteorological concepts such as wind, rain and sunshine. These words enter into the confessions, and the *Mamu*'s advice to the confessor directs cultivation. The planting of a piece of land and the harvest of its crops always demand special permission from the *Mamu*, just as do cutting a tree, burning a field or digging a irrigation canal. Apart from this, the *Mamu*'s knowledge directs choices of housebuilding, marriage partner, number of children, travelling, and trading. The Arhuaco have to contact the *Mamu* constantly for planning daily life according the rules of the gods. Any who neglect these are threatened by disease or accident or may be physically punished. The Arhuaco see the *Mamu* as a protector and a defender and often refer to him as "*un abogado*" – a lawyer – who is placed between the individual, the society, and the holy gods. The *Mamu* is never considered a possible enemy, dangerous or evil. He is referred to as the good and the almighty.

The *Mamu* has to control the behaviour of his group and its internal relationships, even in the most personal subjects. If the confessions are to strengthen society then the *Mamu* has to be both a diplomat and have the intelligence to find out what serves his society best. The Arhuaco describe it as important that the *Mamu* can perceive "coolly" and behave "scientifically" by distancing himself from his own personal feelings and needs. When he carries out a punishment it will never be perceived as aggression, even when it consists of direct physical violence; it will be interpreted as an expression of wise chieftainship, which

relieves stress, sorrow and worries from the shoulders of individuals and reinstates them at the right point of balance between nature and man.

The office of the *Mamu* has no apparent privileges but the *Mamu* himself is the first to obey the holy principles of society. The education of the *Mamu* takes many years and consists of acquiring control which is gained by learning different meditative techniques. The position of *Mamu* is normally handed down from father to son by a daily teaching of Arhuaco intellectual and spiritual knowledge such as myths, rituals, traditions and kinship-patterns. Spiritual knowledge gives status, never material wealth. It is a privilege to "saber mucho" - to know much - and even small children occasionally brag between themselves of each knowing more than the other. The *Mamu* occupies the highest rank in society primarily because he knows more than anyone.

Material wealth as such is not an end in itself. The Arhuaco consider prosperity to be a target of jealousy, scepticism, and hostility. In some ways, wealth runs counter to the idea of moderation which is a precondition for receiving spiritual knowledge. Landed property, stores of food and a great capacity for work, do not give prestige but, on the contrary, wealthy families are expelled from Arhuaco society and exiled to the surrounding Western society. In Arhuaco society the wealthiest people have the most children, because only they have the resources to feed them. Because of their obvious neglect of abstinence, the wealthy are less inclined to join the religious rituals and are attracted towards white society, where they can trade their surplus of crops, land, and labour. In a certain way the Arhuaco are proud of being poor. The goal of life is knowledge; hunger, frustration, suffering, and self-control are virtues.

Because the spiritual rules for life are also guidelines in the secular world, the *Mamu* have allies among various civil authorities. They elect *Cabildos* and *Comisarios* who are Arhuaco responsible for mediating between the *Mamu* and secular world. They often also act as intermediaries with white colonists or the Colombian state. They control Arhuaco public works, as for instance road building, and they direct trade negotiations, and act as representatives in official Colombian institutions.

Arhuaco society is divided into 25 areas, each of which has its own *Mamu* who is seconded by a *Comisario* and a *Cabildo*. Once a year they all meet and select a *Cabildo Gobernador*, who is the primary representative of Arhuaco society in the state of Colombia.

External Relationships: Strategies of Separation.

The Arhuaco are among the very few surviving indigenous groups whose social, political and religious institutions still contain many elements of the ranked society of the ancient chiefdoms of northwestern South America (Reichel-Dolmatoff 1984).

The hierarchical order of Arhuaco society makes it a more equal match for the surrounding westernised society than the egalitarian system of the Bari. The Arhuaco have spokesmen who can transmit messages and demands from their society, and this makes it easier for them to express publicly their claims to their land. The Colombian government institute INCORA made negotiations for the extension of the reservation directly with the Arhuaco and in 1961 these negotiations resulted in the first establishment of the boundary. When the Arhuaco realised that a spokesman for the entire community was necessary for any further discussions, they transformed their internal structure and created a new post, the Cabildo Gobernador, who thereafter directed the negotiations, which in 1980 resulted in the final demarcation of the boundary.

The main problem for survival during the last two centuries has been the repeated intrusion of white colonists. The changing of the indigenous cultivation patterns which had been in existence since the time of their ancestors, the Taironas, improved their survival capacity of the Arhuaco in highlands, but also made them vulnerable. The colonists could not understand that fertile areas were left unused and kept as a security against hunger and drought, and made this an excuse for stealing Arhuacan land.

A consequence of the Arhuaco's internal hierarchy and their idea that 'knowing much' gives prestige was that they felt a need to differentiate themselves from the Western system based on wealth. In turn this was a major incentive to organise themselves and demand that their land and autonomy be respected. In 1972 the First Congress of the Arhuaco Indigenous People took place which gave birth to the internal organisation called the Arhuaco Indigenous People's Organisational Council, COIA, and a relationship with the external organisation, YAVI, a Colombian organisation for indigenous rights. This was followed in 1983 by CIT, the Tairona Confederation of Indigenous Peoples. Their opinion of Western society was printed in the newspaper *Unidad Indígena* (1975), where they called themselves "Majores" – big brothers and sisters, and the Colombian people "Menores" – small brothers and sisters. They were physically separated by the border called "Linea Negra" – the black frontier.

In the newspaper was the report of a meeting with the government Institution for Indigenous Affairs *Asuntos Indígena*. One of the government representatives fell asleep during the meeting. An Indian photographed him and it was printed in a newspaper with the caption: "While we were analysing our problems, the leader of the government Department for Indigenous Affairs was sleeping".

In their world view some of the Arhuaco suggest that the Catholic religion was originally derived from their own religion. They say that some of their names have been copied by the Christians. For instance, the Arhuaco sometimes call their ceremonial houses *Cansamaria*, and say that this name has been copied in the Christian *Casa de Maria*, the house of Virgin Mary. In many of their myths an important figure is called *Sintana* or sometimes *Xusikungui* which is directly translated as "Jesucristo". When the Arhuaco are questioned about these names they say that it is the missionaries who copied them.

The Catholic mission has been in their land since 1915. The Arhuaco constantly criticised their presence, and in 1982, during a big anniversary meeting, about 600 Indians went to the mission and threw out the priests. First they delivered a critique of the mission's acculturation practices and of the material profit they gained from having converted an orphanage into a *hacienda* with about 500 hectares of land and 300 head of cattle while using the pupils as cheap labour. This denunciation was delivered in writing and signed by the representatives of the Arhuaco society. After a short dispute the Indians sat down in the mission corridors and started to sing some of their traditional songs. The missionaries left. Today the Arhuaco have transformed the missionary station into a school where they themselves teach their children. The school is bilingual and an important part of the education is the teaching of Arhuacan history and traditions. The Colombian government has to support the initiative as every child must have a formal education according to national regulations.

Discussion

The survival of ethnic minorities depends on a dialogue with the State, where indigenous organisation has to fit into the Western way of conceiving and understanding organisations. The Arhuaco have been very efficient in building up a structure which can formulate their demands for land and autonomy in a way that Western society can not only understand but partly negotiate with.

If indigenous peoples do not accept that their survival strategies must be established as a counterpart to Western society, then they only have short-time survival strategies available, such as the Barí strategy of withdrawing into isolation. Time is short because Western society's need for resources will soon engulf them.

But to express power in a language with a structure and logic other than those used by the West is itself a provocative move which produces further intrusion and dominance from the outside world into indigenous society. Indigenous peoples are, in these cases, considered uncontrollable and "unclean" (Douglas, 1964) by the dominant society, and are therefore targets for extermination, even though they may not have valuable resources on their land. The Catholic pacification campaign into Barí territory was not only carried out to gain resources but because of the belief that the Barí lived an "unclean" life, which had to be controlled and transformed.

Nabucímaque, Sierra Nevada

PRIMER CONGRESO ARHUACO



Mientras nosotros analizamos nuestros problemas el Jefe de la Comisión de Asuntos Indígenas del gobierno duerme.

"While we analyse our problems the head of the government's Indigenous Commission sleeps ("Unidad Indígena")

In analysing survival, the law of cultural dominance (Kaplan, 1960) is fundamental; cultural systems which can exploit the resources of a given environment most effectively will exhibit a tendency to dominate and conquer that environment at the cost of less effective systems. But efficiency must be measured by other means than the amount of extracted energy per unit of human labour. Efficiency must also include the indigenous capacity to build up a power organisation which can express their demands for land and autonomy to non-indigenous societies. This is especially difficult for those indigenous people with a non-coercive power organisation like the Barí. Clastres (1977) gives examples of indigenous peoples with a non-hierarchical structure and with a "powerless" power organisation which are very much like the Barí. Their survival strategies of withdrawal and isolation are not performed as a visible and explicit reaction to Western society but towards an uncontrollable and antagonistic force beyond – namely coercive power itself. For the Barí, coercive power is seen as the demoraliser of culture and they have a premonition that the transformation of power into its coercive form is a mortal risk for their group. The isolated and non-converted Barí see the missionaries as an external authority which creates its own legality and therefore challenges culture itself. They see coercive power as the de-moraliser of culture and cannot use that expression of power in their external relationships with the missionaries and so they withdraw into isolation.

The Arhuaco, in contrast, have developed the use of coercive power in their external relations and have as a consequence been able to confront the missionaries with their need for autonomy and throw them out. Clastres (1977) argues that coercive power develops when social innovation becomes important. Societies that are innovative are therefore "historical" while societies with non-coercive political power are societies "without history". In their fight for survival the Arhuaco have made a transition from non-history to historicity. Concretely, their reason for throwing the missionaries out was a wish to establish their own school system, where they could educate their children in their own history and tradition. They created the school in the former missionary station.

The Arhuaco strategies of survival and their way of making their cultural characteristics more visible has similarities with the movement among Indian people which has been called *Indianidad* "Indianism" (Varese 1982). The purpose of this movement is to reconstruct their collective memory and to rebuild history emphasising particularly the subversive antagonistic forces opposed to the conquistadors. This process of historical reconstruction is one way to revitalize traditional culture by using symbols in their actual, concrete reality (Tarp 1984). It is not always possible to make an objective replica of historical trends

back to the first time of colonisation, but the primary purpose is to establish a historical basis which gives the people a new identity even if this history is sometimes an invention (cf. Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983).

The establishment of indigenous ethnic movements implies a transformation of the original values of society to new organizational principles better suited for survival. However, this form of transformation is different from socialist development. Socialist strategies are converted into communism in technically and economically highly-developed societies whereas the development strategies of Indian movements are like neither the Western oriented concepts of development, nor like Third World dependency. Theories which are critical of large scale economic development have provided a new perspective on indigenous movements. The *planned collectivism* of non-indigenous development is based on an ideology where everything is always latent, or potential, and can be developed. In contrast to this, the *collective consciousness* of indigenous ideology is circular, and complete provided that society shows respect to the balance between human beings and nature (Tarp 1984).

The survival of indigenous minorities is dependent on their capacity to maintain this collective consciousness internally while externally they create an organisational pattern which can confront and stimulate dialogue with Western systems. However, this orientation towards Western institutions has the tendency to build up a westernised organisational pattern inside the indigenous community as well. Thus the indigenous people face the paradox that they more they try to learn non-indigenous organisational languages to defend themselves, the more will those "languages" intrude into their own society.

The first sign of the intrusion of westernised institutions indigenous into society is the emergence of a bureaucratisation which delays and even paralyses decisions. The Arhuaco are themselves starting an internal critique "of using too many meetings for nothing". The next sign of intrusion is when organisations split into different factions. A few years ago the Arhuaco made a written proclamation which was handed out at one of their big meetings saying: "We are going to be split up between those of us supporting government institutions, religions, and political parties. If this continues we will not have enough people to supply them all. Now the time has come for victory or death. Let us all regain our frontier "Linea Negra" - the black line - that frontier which our *Mamu* have scientifically established as the frontier between them and us, the frontier which guarantees us our life".

The survival strategies of the two cultures: Barí and Arhuaco, show how important it is for indigenous people to understand the larger context of which they are a part, and to develop a cognitive understanding of the State. This understanding will have effect in how indigenous organisations present their demands for land and autonomy. But the problem for indigenous people is that this strategy can lead to a sneaking involvement of Western cognitive structures inside Indian communities.

The important fight for indigenous peoples is their right to formulate their own culture; their right to be different and autonomous – even if Western society cannot understand the context of their symbols of survival.

*This article is a revised version of that published in Folk Vol 29:1987.

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This document is a collection of articles and material comparing the problems and issues facing the Barí and Arhuaco nations of Venezuela and Colombia. Loss of lands from invading companies and colonists is contrasted with threats to their culture from missionaries. The document not only charts the differences in resistance strategies used by the Arhuacos and Barí but also the different perspectives of those who describe them.



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