

## Abon Indians

Mentions Tarabee  
expedition (p. 5 + p. 11).

Compare information  
with Tarabee reports -  
particularly Mipedian,  
Taruma; also

Spinning and hammocks  
Much (if not all) is also  
in the long typed account.

Excellent information, actually. <sup>2/11/67</sup> 8/12/63

The beginning of the present century found the Aboriginal Indians, at least those of the far interior, living in fairly primitive conditions. Transport to and from the coast was very slow and the dangerous falls and rapids on the Essequibo and other rivers practically unknown to coastal boat crews and steersmen, presented difficulties that considerably damped down the ambitions and ardours of all except the most foolhardy pioneers. There was little or nothing of value inland, so far as was known, to tempt anyone to leave civilization for months and months of hardship, the probable loss of health, and the certainty of considerable financial loss. Thus only a few traders, and a small number of scientific expeditions had penetrated to the savannahs adjoining Brazil - too few to have much influence on the manner of life amongst the Indians, their arts and crafts.

The Macussi and Wapichanna tribes had their own contacts, with the coast but these again were so few and so far apart that their influence was negligible. Even when a man spent years on a timber grant or gold mine as a hunter, they ~~were~~ very soon reverted to tribal custom and habits: often indeed becoming more-dyed-in-the-wool in many respects than most of his neighbours. An outstanding example of this is the history of one woman of the Wapichanna tribe reported to me by Mr. Melville who had met the party, although she was dead before I arrived in the district.

A Wapichanna family went down to the coast on a trip some time about the middle of the last century. Some Americans met them and took a great fancy to a young daughter of these people and offered work in their home as nurse. She proved so successful that when these Americans returned to the States they carried their Indian nurse with them. She resided with these people for some 30 years or so but was eventually shipped back to the Colony. She met the De Roys - Dutch traders in the Rupununi - in Georgetown and anxious to find her relatives that were still alive in Rupununi returned to the Savannahs with them. The unfortunate maid now an elderly woman had completely forgotten her tribal language, but she made her way over to the Quitaro to join her immediate relations. In due course she re-learned the Wapichanna language and in a few years became a peiman or medicineman, although the tribe frowned on women as such. She became an adept in locating Kenaima or evil spirits, probably the worst influence in aboriginal culture, and she was more than anyone or anything responsible for the complete abandonment by the tribe of that river (Quitaro) along the upper reaches of which there were at that time quite a number of flourishing villages. The one-time American nurse seemed to absorb every superstition of the tribe in more serious form than the average tribesmen and in her old age was held in fear if not dread by everyone in the Tribe, who heaved sighs of relief when she "crossed the Bar".

Owing to geographical disposition those aboriginal Indians (Arecuna, Patamona and other tribes) who reside in the mountain ranges between Roraima and the low lying flats on the Rupununi and various other rivers always have had a minimum of goods of overseas manufacture. A few only were able to make woodskins or even corials of kinds, but of little use in navigating the falls and rapids that blocked easy access to the coast. Movement overland was equally hampered. Most of the tribes still record in their oral teachings and myths the petty wars of extermination of early ~~years~~ generations when the Caribs raided far and wide in search of slaves for sale to the early pioneers of civilization. These raids led to feuds and fights between different tribes and most of them, even to-day, live in dread of some neighbouring tribe, through whose territory they pass with fear and trembling although such tribe may be as inoffensive as so many sheep.

There are certain supplies that all tribes must have once they have left the stone age behind and such articles - mostly cutting implements of iron, a few beads, salt and a minimum of cloth - had to come by way of barter in exchange for hunting dogs, cassava graters, bows, arrows, or such articles of native manufacture as they could produce. To carry on such inter-tribal trade a few middlemen or intermediaries had been accepted by most of the tribes in the Colony who lived in an undefined

undefined No Man's Land on the boundaries of their respective territories. These people handled all trade on an unpaid basis except that they had the free use of such manufactured articles while in their possession. Not infrequently a man would have an axe in his possession for six months or even a year, during which time he could cut his field or do some other equally necessary work. Many such articles were years on their journey between the shop and its final destination in some remote tribe, where they may arrive half worn out or at best well rusted and <sup>with</sup> dulled edges. I recall how once on a tracking expedition in the forests far to the South of this Colony the excitement amongst the Indians when I produced a bright clear shining axe from its original waxed paper in which they were packed and sold. For one entire day the axe was passed from hand to hand, ~~from~~ man, woman and child, admiring its appearance (as a mirror) and thumb-nailing (their method of feeling if an implement is sharp) its unbelievably sharp edge.

Tribes reduced to such methods of trade and transport naturally never have more than the barest minimum of supplies and the tribes on the Upper Ireng or Mahu River had often not even that, I doubt if there was more than one gun in the whole district in 1900. The blowpipe, bows and arrows and various traps for fish and game were in general use to provide necessary food. I have known a complete family - father, mother and children - get along quite comfortably for a year or two with a single cutlass as the only article of foreign manufacture they possessed. They wore bark or cloth of their own spinning and weaving and all ornaments were made by themselves. In the event of such a family requiring a field to be cut or such other work as required tools he did not possess, they would stage a piwarri (drink) and invite the neighbours who had the necessary tools and the work would be done in a day or two.

The Macusi tribe - whose territory is principally on the savannah plateau bounded by the Kanaku and Pakaraima Mountains - of all the aboriginals in the far interior had experienced the greatest amount of contact with civilization during the last century. The erection of a fort at Pirara in the middle of their savannahs, the Officers and Soldiers stationed there whether Brazilian or British over a period of years must all have had considerable influence on their methods of life, their arts and crafts and demands for new types of supplies. The appointment of the Rev. Mr. and Mrs. Youd as reputedly successful missionaries in their midst, would naturally lead to changes in their mental attitude, their myths and general conduct. These overseas influences were eliminated sometime about the middle 1840's, after which they had little contact with white people for some 50 years.

During the latter part of the last century one or two small traders such as Holmes, David Bracey, Christie Davis had done a certain amount of business in the district. The present century opened to find the two former of these both dead and only Christie carrying on trade and that on such a minor scale as to have little effect on supply and demand. The Macusi therefore had dwindled from the position of being the richest (best supplied) tribe to an equal or probably even inferior footing with neighbouring tribes - a position they felt keenly. The Macussi had few contacts with the outside world. They were very poor corial and boat builders. Such vessels as they made were barely safe in the quiet uninterrupted rivers running through their own country and very definitely useless and unsafe for the dangerous falls and rapids on the way down river to Georgetown. A few - very few - members of the tribe ventured to face these dangers in either woodskins or their Heath Robinson corials to become huntsmen of some of the coastal mines or timber grants in order to get certain necessities of life as payment of labour.

The Rio Branco District was opening up as a ranching country, <sup>creating</sup> a demand for local labour and food supplies and as the Macussi could reach these markets on foot with ease it is not surprising that business swung towards Brazil through sheer necessity <sup>although</sup> ~~since~~ the Indian had good reason to fear what their treatment would be through age long experience. A few men got work on the growing ranches, but the main source of revenue to the Macussi was the supply of foodstuffs - cassava, farine, yams and other vegetables. At that time the Rio Branco was very poorly supplied with transport facilities by river to Manaos: in fact during the dry season - October till May - the service as a rule was discontinued entirely, practically every year. The Rio Branco lived a hand to mouth existence and every year saw a shortage of food. Brazilian hospitality is most extravagant especially to the man from overseas yet I have visited

visited Brazilian ranches where they, with shame-faced apologies, had only beef cooked without salt in some form or other to offer me as a meal.

During such times of distress the men would mount their horses and scour the country in every direction in search of food. They entered our Colony by the dozen and once they found one Indian with a decent field (which was general) the Brazilian would squat down in the Indian house for, up to two or three weeks, displaying a knife or whatever he had by way of barter, even empty promises, and for which he wanted a bag of farine, until the Macussi in order to get rid of a very unwelcome guest would order his people to prepare the farine. The Brazilians always travelled in pairs, and Indian hospitality demanded that he should place food before the stranger within his gates each time when he himself sat down to eat, hence the Brazilians got free board and lodging for several weeks and would only leave when he had got whatever he was after. In most years the Indian fields were completely exhausted in this way and the poor Macussi had to take to the savannahs or forest and live on Nature - fruit, roots and game. This has been the custom since the Brazilians entered the Rio Branco. Schomburgh mentions it - and it has left its mark on the tribe as why should they toil and raise good fields and supplies only to have the results taken away, almost forcibly, by strangers with a minimum of payment in return. This Brazilian habit still continues up to the present year of writing (1942).

Another source of trade was letter-wood for which there was good prices in Manaos and other cities for the manufacture of walking sticks. This wood grew in considerable quantities in the Kanku Mountains and I have more than once seen six to a dozen or more Indian droghers crossing to Brazil carrying from 3 to 6 pieces of wood each. These pieces of letter-wood had to be one metre long and of a diameter not less than 4 inches. The payments made for these were invariably low as the Brazilian was adept at pointing out flaws, but the poor Indian was in desperate need of something - a knife, powder, shot, caps, salt etc. - so he had no alternative. The wood was not saleable in Georgetown, and it was no use carrying it back to his village so it was wisest to make the best of a bad job and accept whatever he was offered.

VAMOS FAZER UM NEGOCIO

There was also a fair trade in hammocks to meet the needs of a growing Brazilian population in the Rio Branco District. The rather low grade Brazilian of that time, with nothing to lose, had one motto in life, "Vamos fazer um negocio" - "Let us do some trade" - hence if he came across a spare hammock in an Indian Village while hunting food, that hammock somehow had to go off with him when he eventually left for home. He probably had no need for it himself, but some one in his district he knew was sleeping on a cowskin and in any case the mere fact that he had a hammock for sale pleased his vanity by placing him in the category of a "merchant" with something to sell, a valid excuse to a visit round the best ranches where (with nothing to lose) he was almost certain to find some free pickings - food, shelter and news (scandal) if nothing else.

The few small traders from our side were unable to do more than handle such trade as existed along the Rupununi River, hence it became the rule that all Macussi trade to the West went through to Brazil, while that to the East went to Georgetown. As a result of this the customary movement inside the tribe became centred in two opposite directions and gradually led up to the point where the people of the different trade routes became total strangers to each other although speaking the same language. This cleavage has been kept open by the action of two Chiefs - one appointed by the Brazilians - and the installation of two Mission stations of widely differing beliefs or tenets.

In the first decade of this century I suppose the Macussi tribe made not less than 200 hammocks each year for trade purposes after satisfying all their own requirements. I used to handle some 50 to 100 each year: there were other traders passing up and down as also the Missions and an unknown number carried off to Brazil each year. On enquiry recently (1942) Mr. Edward McTurk informs me many of the Macussi now sleep on the ground, that hammock making is practically a lost art. When I knew the Macussi first (1900) sleeping on the ground simply was not done. Every man, woman and even the smallest child had their own hammock. Many of the better workers and more elderly people would have two hammocks each - a large one for use in the house and a small one for travelling.

Towards

Towards the close of last century Mr. M. McTurk as District Commissioner appointed an Indian called Snap as Official Chief of the Macussi. Snap's only qualification was a sunny obliging nature and the ability to speak a little English after a sojourn of some years as a hunter on a timber grant on the coast. His appointment was a complete failure, as he could not rule even his own family and had no influence with anyone outside his own hut. John Bull resident in the same village as Snap - was the real Chief of the Tribe - a rather taciturn individual, with a very limited knowledge of English, but possessing such personality that the entire tribe held him in great respect and tacitly accepted him as Chief. John Bull's one trouble in life was that no trader would settle amongst the Macussi and he tried every inducement to get some one to do so. He had two extremely pretty daughters of about 16 and 18 years old whom he offered to such white men as met his approval "you can have your choice or if need be take even both as wives if you will settle amongst us".

I came to an arrangement with John Bull under which I advanced him various supplies of necessary barter supplies on my way up from town each year. These he gave out to his people in exchange for hammocks as he pleased, only he must have my payment ready when I went back to the coast in approximately 10 months time, to purchase new supplies. He never failed in these deals; the hammocks would all be carefully stored up in his house and such as had not been repaid he would account for as due to illness or deaths in the tribe. This trade amounted to roughly 100 hammocks which could be sold in Georgetown for \$2.40 to \$3.00 each according to quality or market demand. Before I counted up original cost, freights, John Bull's commission and a few bad debts etc., this barter trade did no more than repay me, if that, but it gave me a lien on the services of the tribe if I happened to be in their territory and they would willingly do me small services when asked, such as delivering letters, turning out as droghers etc.

This considerably enhanced John Bull's influence with that portion of the Tribe residing within the limits of Brazilian trade, but the Brazilians soon after managed to get a Chief from the Rio Branco to take up residence in our Colony in opposition. This man, a Macussi called Magilliao was a thorough scamp, but the Brazilians, for some years at least, kept him supplied with considerable amounts of barter and as they purchased large quantities of food stuffs, far in excess of what I could lay out for hammocks. John Bull's influence fell to being Chief of such Macussi as resided along the Rupununi. When two different denominational missions were started in the country they each got one of these Chiefs to join their Church and make absolute, two separate branches amongst the Macussi.

The cutting of balata in the Rupununi District began in 1902-3. The bleeders, boathands, etc., were men recruited on the coast and several hundred would each year ascend the river to work. These men found the Indians to be quite friendly and exceedingly simple, so every form of rascality was practised at the expense of the Macussi. A favourite trick was a gang of, say 15, bleeders would come up without taking a proper supply of food with them. They would go to work within reach of a village or better still an Indian field from which they would draw their necessary supplies, under a promise to pay when they returned to work next year. Needless to say that gang of bleeders took good care not to return and the Indians had no redress. These depredations took place during the rainy season which meant that when the bleeders left - after the dry season set in - the Indian crops which should have, in normal circumstances have lasted until the following year were completely exhausted and the Indians were unable to replant with any hope of success till the following rains, probably some six months distant. So acute was the shortage caused by these bleeders that the whole Macussi Tribe was reduced to almost starvation point for a couple of years. The situation was brought to the notice of Government who introduced drastic reform. Notices were posted at every Indian landing and entry to forest creeks forbidding anyone to land at an Indian settlement under a penalty of a \$50 fine. The different companies were forbidden to employ Indians in any capacity, and it was made a penal offence for any bleeder to have any trade or dealings with Indians. Government arranged the necessary means to enforce these Regulations very effectively and the situation soon became normal, but a good deal of damage had already been done to Indian morality and general mode of living. The combined effect of all these detrimental influences account for much of the rascality and shiftless ways of the Macussi

generally although there are still many good, hardworking, honest members in the Tribe.

The entire savannah country lying to the South of the Kanaku Mountains was originally the home of the Atorad Indians. Some time during the eighteenth century about one half of the Tribe packed up their goods and chattels, went off into the forests farther south and completely disappeared from history and human ken.

Early 1914 found the writer shepherding an expedition far into the forests in Brazil along some creeks lying well to the South of the Upper Trombetas River. We had arrived amongst a tribe who called themselves Maopidien whose language could only be guessed at through a relay of interpreters. I had with me, however, an Indian who spoke Atorad and Wapichanna with equal facility. On our first night there this man came to me and said he could understand a fair amount of the new language especially if spoken slowly. I encouraged him and when we left at the end of 10 days he was speaking Maopidien fluently and being understood. Keen to claim kinship he delved back into their folklore to find that these people had a tradition that they had originally lived in the Savannahs and he was perfectly convinced that he had met the lost half of the Atorad Tribe. I took down in a notebook a whole string of words in this new language and after returning to my headquarters tried out these words on one or two of the near-pure-bred Atorads who, living in Wapichanna country, spoke <sup>THEIR OWN</sup> ~~THEIR~~ language by preference. Quite a number of words they knew at once, an equal number had to be repeated before they realised the meaning (their own pronunciation was slightly different) while a certain percentage of the words could not be understood at all.

The Maopidien, as the old time spelling runs, were said to be "Frog Indians". Actually they call themselves Mapidien, which is an Atorad compound word "Ma" - a negative word - and "Pidien" - people. It seems within the bounds of probability that the lost half of the Atorad Tribe, now so far from their original home wished to become unknown and so called themselves "No people". These Mapidien were a small tribe only and in fairly recent years would seem to have been composed of a majority of males. Mr. John B. Melville tells me that a couple of years ago (about 1938-9) the Mapidien raided the WaiWai country. They stealthily surrounded several WaiWai villages, shot down all males who offered opposition but spared the women whom they seized ~~and~~ as captives and prospective wives. Since then such WaiWai as were raided have retired deeper into the unknown forests that lie between the South Boundary of our Colony and the River Amazon.

The reasons given for the flight of so many Atorads were two :- fear of the Caribs and fear of the Macussi. This fear was genuine and still in evidence in the early part of the present century. Many a time have I heard a Wapichanna mother during the night reduce a crying child to complete silence by saying "Hush, my child, the Caribs will hear you" or "Listen, I hear the Caribs coming". The child might have ~~been~~ toothache or tummy pains and be howling in agony and it was frequently pathetic to hear the child, often at once lapse into silence, or at most, gradually subsiding gasps. The Carib raided Atorad country by ascending the Rewa and Quitaro Rivers in search of slaves and there are a number of rocky hills in the Savannahs still pointed out where the Atorads put up a successful fight. One such hill could only be scaled by climbing up some bushropes that fell from a clump of trees on top in search of moisture or water in the forest soil below. One by one such daring Caribs as tried to follow were despatched until a swarm of superior numbers attempted the ascent together. The Atorads waited till those were arriving over the brink of the precipice when the bushropes were severed and the climbers dashed to death on the rocks below. The Atorads had carefully cut one bushrope at ground level and drawn it up on top of the hill. It was down this rope that the Atorads subsequently escaped when the Caribs abandoned the siege.

The Quitaro River is still regarded as the main avenue of approach to the Wapichanna country for Kenaima - evil spirits of which all Wapichanna live in dread. Kenaima are supposed to emanate solely from the Macussi and can be sent at will by most any member of that

tribe. Yet no Macussi has ever resided on the Rewa or Quitaro Rivers and to ascend by this route the evil spirits have a couple of extra weeks paddling against a very rapidly running stream. These spirits rarely ascend the Rupununi River, although it flows through the heart of the Macussi country and the distance less than a fifth of that through the Quitaro.

The Atarods and Macussi would seem to have constantly been engaged in actual warfare, but I could never find a good reason given for the habit. Such inter-tribal wars that I have met has generally been owing to a shortage of women leading through polyandry to disruptive discontent. I have experienced this amongst some four tribes of Indians residing in the forests far beyond the boundaries of our Colony. This did not apply in the case of the Macussi according to oral tradition. Such Atorads as were still alive said they thought the Wars were brought about through Carib influence and the lust for slaves of any description.

The Guiana Indians are generally peaceful as a tribe. They may have their petty internal quarrels and vendettas which is expressed in murder due to the principle of "an eye for an eye" when a medicine-man takes credit for a death within the tribe, but it takes great incentive or provocation to force them to active warfare against a neighbouring tribe. The Atorads further removed from the coast and with no connections with Brazil could not have any material wealth to induce another tribe to stage a War in the hope of loot. All Indians are confirmed Communists also, and the supplies of any tribe are easily obtainable by another for the asking through the accepted channels of middlemen.

The Atorads and Macussi territories are separated by the rugged densely forested Kanuku Mountains except for a narrow stretch of savannah along the Tacutu. It was always through this gap that the hordes of Macussi used to surge when bent on War. The last great battle was fought on the Sawarra Wow about 20 miles inside Wapichanna territory proper. The fight continued for 3 days and nights and ended in the Macussi having to retreat. The Atorads did not consider they had won much of a victory. They certainly forced the aggressor to retire back beyond the mountains, but the Atorads suffered such serious losses in dead and wounded that they were unable to take any advantage or comfort from the success. As far as I can learn it was just after this that a great part of the Atorad tribe decided to migrate to the forest in search of home and a territory where they could live in peace.

AT this time some considerable distance to the West of the Atorad country there lived the tribe known as Wapichanna - Wapitchan or Wapichan; singular, plus their word Nau, plural, giving Wapichannau or with the final letters silent the Wapichanna of to-day. With this tribe the Atorads seemed to have been on very friendly terms and conducted such trade etc. as was possible without any middlemen. They also had considerable similarity in language, myths and habits of livelihood. This territory of the Wapichanna lay well into Brazil - their centre being west of the so-called city of Boa Vista of to-day - and were amenable to Brazilian laws and methods of livelihood. When the Rio Branco became the "Botany Bay" of Manaos, these Wapichanna were subjected to serious annoyances and indignities from the prisoners - almost entirely males - sent up for long term or life sentences, as women had to be found for the kitchen, household duties or worse. Invitations and an open welcome were given by the Atorads to all Wapichanna who cared to come East, ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ and into Atorad territory. I do not think there was ever any great mass migration but more of a general infiltration over a long term of years ( up to even this present century when I can remember several new families arriving) until the Wapichanna became the predominant tribe of the district.

*Insert* \* The Atorads were strategically minded and cheerfully ceded the northern half of their territory to the Wapichanna and thus placing a friendly buffer tribe between themselves and every avenue of approach from the aggressive Macussi overland or up the Rupununi as also the Caribs or the imaginary Kenaima through the Quitaro River. Apart from the migration of a large portion of the Atorad tribe, there seems to have been no reason why there should not have continued to multiply and repopulate a now scantily inhabited country which was heavily stocked with fish, deer and various game but they kept on decreasing in numbers.

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By 1900 I doubt if there were more than a dozen pure-bred Atorads left alive mostly old men and women from whom I gathered much of the above data. I suppose there were some 20 villages along the fringe of the great forest around the extreme source of the Rupununi who used

the Atorad language exclusively amongst themselves, but the majority carried Wapichanna blood in their veins. In most tribes the male at marriage joins the female in or near her parents home. The male had to cut a field for her and in various ways prove ability to her parents' satisfaction, so the spare Atorad females attracted Wapichanna men. She could<sup>not</sup> or would not speak Wapichanna and the children naturally learned the mothers' language in preference through close association during their years before arriving at maturity and so the language continued even after all Atorads were extinct.

This habit of speaking their own language could be annoying at times. In a definite minority and pushed away in one small corner of the savannahs I had little chance of learning their language, especially as all spoke Wapichanna fluently, perfectly, but no head of a so-called Atorad household would speak Wapichanna to me until they had at least gone through the reception litany that was the general custom. Thus I would have to spend an hour probably listening to a ceremonious reception in a language of which I barely understood more than one word in five.

I employed almost steadily for 20 years a man called Roman as my head river captain who, whenever we met after a month's absence, would insist in speaking nothing but Atorad for the first half day or so. If he paid a visit to a Wapichanna Village or met a Wapichanna friend whom he hadn't seen for some time, he always spoke Atorad at first. (This procedure is not peculiar to the Atorads as every middleman who conducts inter-tribal trade invariably uses his own mother tongue - until he thinks he has satisfied the proprieties). Roman always spoke Atorad at first, then Wapichanna if it was essential, but invariably broken English when he got drunk. The high spot in Roman's life was to go to Georgetown in charge of a boat and crew, when he always endeavoured to get mildly drunk. When he reached the hilarious stage he would walk up to the nearest policeman, throw his arms around the bobby's neck exclaiming "Surar!," "You and I are brothers". Of course he spent the night in a police cell.

The word "Surar", I may explain, is an Atorad-Wapichanna word which is given solely to policemen and the male member of the chicken genus. The reason for this is the belief founded on accurate observation that both this human and feathered biped will chase any female of his kind that comes into view. Our policeman of course didn't know that, so was in no way either flattered or offended. This ignorance accounted for Roman's cherry greeting the following morning with "Hei! Boss!" "Where did you sleep last night?" "In my hotel of course", I would reply. "That's no good" Roman would say, "I slept with the police last night and they gave me coffee, rolls and butter and jam etc. just to speed me on my way this morning".

Most scientists class the Wapichanna as being of Arawakan stock, generally after a tip and run visit of a few hours to a couple of days. I very much doubt if this classification is correct. It is peculiar that the Wapichanna language has a number of words which is found in use amongst other tribes who live South of the Amazon. The name for gold - KaraKuli - is that (or one almost similar) given by tribes as far South as Minas Geraes whereas, as far as I know, the Arawaks and associated tribes have lived far to the North of Wapichanna territory. Men from Southern Brazil have often told me that the Wapichanna language contains a number of names of articles of overseas manufacture in "Lingua Geral" - the "General Language" founded on the Aboriginal Indian language of Tupi, by the Jesuit Missions of Southern Brazil. The Wapichanna word "MAKOWA" for gun is Lingua Geral yet the Spanish word "Araquebuse" is universal in every other tribe in the Colony. Arawaks are expert builders of corials, whereas no Wapichanna ever attempts to build one, he doesn't just know how. On the other hand the Wapichanna were expert boat builders. They hew out a log in somewhat the same manner as the Arawak does a corial, but on a much more pretentious scale. When "digging out" has been carried to the necessary point fires are lit under the log and carefully tended until the log is uniformly heated to the desired temperature, when a number of beams with a U notch cut in one end is fixed on the sides of the log and pressure applied (outwards) by a number of men and women to widen the log and lashed down till the log becomes cold again. Meanwhile two huge planks will have been hewn out of a cedar tree and long enough to more than reach from stem to stern of the dugout log and about 12 to 20 inches in depth. These planks - about 2 inches thick - would also be heated and lashed along the side of the

log and tied fast in position with an overlap of some 4 inches at the line of union. Holes were then bored at selected places by the use of a bambo tube and a piece of live charcoal. The boatbuilder would blow through the tube concentrating a half inch wide stream of burning heat on a given spot. By renewing the special charcoal which they used a hole was soon burned completely through both the dug-out and the plank. Specially strong lianas (bushropes) were then strung through these holes which then held the sides and the hull together for good. Pounded bark of the Brazil nut tree, or some other fibrous variety were used to calk the seam, which was then smeared thickly over with some variety of the natural pitch that can be collected from different trees in the forests. Since civilization came along augers have come into use to bore the holes and large nails substituted for bush rope.

These boats were very sturdy and large enough to face any fall that the average town built batteau could negotiate. I had one built on the Quitaro in which I descended the Essequibo to Rockstone carrying 10 men as a crew, their belongings and enough food for the use of myself and men for the trip and 2,500 lbs of balata as cargo. I know of no Arawak or other Tribe who can build such a boat.

All Indians in a natural state have a well developed knowledge of the stars. It is by the stars which respectively appear in the East at the earliest glimpse of dawn that they form their calendar. The morning is chosen as all must sleep during the night and it is a crime not to be up just before dawn. Night may find the Indian still under the forest heading for home from a hunting trip. They too are tired at dusk as a rule, to make many observations, and dusk is generally the hour when the big meal of the day is served, to say nothing of the "uncos" he has to relate of what he has heard or seen during the day. Therefore it is by the early morning stars that he knows when to plough, to plant or to reap. He knows when certain fruits are coming to maturity, when certain game reach their best in condition and flavour: when certain wild fruits ripen or when various game migrate in search of food, solely by his observations on the stars.

Apart from the economical side of astronomy they have a wonderful series of legends or myths woven round various groups or single stars, very much like those of civilization probably with the idea, since storytelling is their cinema, church and lecture hall, of creating popular interest amongst youth with a subject that at a later date, with increasing domestic and tribal responsibility, may mean life or death.

The Wapichanna have a very highly developed economical and mythological astronomy yet it is curious this is confined to those stars in the Southern Hemisphere only. North of the Zodiacal Belt there is not a single star they have a name for, nor which has any economical use, nor round which a legend is woven.

Naturally contact with civilized man must change aboriginal methods of living very much, but largely on the material or mechanical side only. On their knowledge, however, of the stars, depend their ability to live from day to day and to make some sort of provision against the changes of seasons when Nature is less bountiful in her supply of fruit and edible products for the use of both animal and man; consequently, it seems self-evident that such knowledge of the stars will stand the test of time especially as civilization cannot produce any simpler methods and even if attempted would almost certainly lead to confusion and suffering. Should any tribe migrate over a sufficiently long distance as to meet a difference of the seasons, it would be a simple matter through experience to fit such changes to an established although elementary system of astronomy. Since the Wapichanna do not recognise or pay the slightest economic attention to any star North of the Zodiacal Belt it seems highly probable they originally were located some distance much farther South than their present territory just North of the Equator - probably somewhere South of the Amazon.

The best way to decide whether the Wapichanna are of Arawakan Stock or otherwise is in a comparison of their respective knowledge and myths of the stars. To judge their origin by the similarity of a few words or even certain customs and habits may be extremely misleading. As an example, why should the entire Wapichanna Tribe sing only songs in the Macussi language at their feasts and piwarris? The Macussi Tribe were the actual bodily enemies of the Wapichanna, as is shown in

their warfare and for many many years the Wapichanna lived in abject dread and fear of the Macussi, or their emissaries the Kenaima. On this account no Wapichanna man or woman would go out of sight of his own home unless he had a companion. To travel alone meant almost certain death, but with a companion of some sort - even a toddling child - meant safety. Every Wapishanna house at one time was built by preference on a stony rising or hill. The idea underlying this was that the approaching Macussi or Kenaima with his eyes glued on the door of the hut of his prospective victim would step on the sharp edge of a stone when his gasp of pain would warn the villagers (or the dogs) and thus give them a chance to fight. There is no doubt of the Macussi being the Kenaima. The Wapichanna were friendly with all other tribes - Taruma, WaiWai, Powisianna and others and only feared those to the North - the Macussi.

I was returning from the coast by boat - Wapichanna crew - and had been accompanied from Rockstone to Potaro Mouth ~~by~~ by another boat - Macussi crew - which was carrying a new Missionary just arrived from England to the Eupokarri Anglican Mission. The Missionary and I got on all right since being an old hand at bushlife I could help considerably but our crews didn't fit and I pushed on ahead at Potaro Mouth. The Missionary and Macussi Captain asked me to tell the Macussi as I passed through their territory to expect the mission boat a few days after my passing ~~up~~. Ascending the Rupununi River we found it necessary to camp at a place called Masara for the night. We found a couple of hundred Macussi camped there already, and as there was no other suitable ground for some miles ~~for~~ for a camp owing to the low lying swampy country around we had no choice but to camp on the opposite bank of the river about half a mile below. ~~Eupokarri~~ Eupokarri Mission had been leaderless for some months, the Missionary in charge being away on holiday, and the Mission boat was expected any day according to the Indian way of calculating or their secret information over the mysterious, but most effective grape vine telegraph. We had scarcely landed when a group of Macussi were on the opposite bank shouting "Have you seen the Mission boat? When will it arrive? Have they much trade goods on board? Is the boat deep in the water with cargo?" We answered to the best of our ability and after some of the customary Macussi back-chat got quite of their shouts and managed to sleep.

Next morning in passing their camp we ran the fire of a stream of most uncomplimentary remarks as to our personal appearance and general behaviour. Our boat was much larger than their Mission one and admittedly was loaded to the gunwales with trade goods for the Wapichanna. The Macussi were jealous and justly furious ~~but~~ <sup>and</sup> my crew were shivering in their laps with fear. Suddenly one woman dashed down the bank, wading mid-waist into the creek, with a calabash of cassiri held in her hands, and shouting a volley of vituperative. Every man of my crew dropped their paddles. "What's wrong now?" I enquired. My Captain who knew a certain amount of Macussi language replied "This woman says that if we don't stop and drink her cassiri beer, not one of us will ever pass through Macussi country again, and that we and our families will die the most awful deaths before Rain falls again." I said "No, we go ahead" The Captain replied "Boss, think of my two little toddling children at home of whom you yourself are so fond. Must they die? No! we drink the cassiri." We had now drifted downstream to where the woman stood, armpit deep in the river, and the Captain reached out for the calabash. This was passed round every one - even myself - and when emptied, handed back and we went ahead.

Now, I had one Indian called Thomas aboard who had been having fever on the way up from town, but was all right again and was now paddling. Two days later Thomas went down ill again and do what I like Thomas got worse. Medicine had no effect and after a couple of days illness he died and was buried in the middle of the Kanuku Mountains. Every man in that crew swore his death was due to Kenaima. From that day onward no Wapichanna would have camped at Masara even if you'd given him his weight of gold, and in deference to their wishes I have had to creep past the landing in the dead of night.

The foregoing depicts the mental attitude of the Wapichanna ~~toward~~ towards the Macussi. Yet at every festival it is the songs of the Macussi that are invariably sung. That the Wapichanna have never produced a composer or a poet is the excuse generally given. The hatred, maybe the fear, of the Macussi is apparently (outwardly at least) gradually dying down, but just because the Macussi songs are sung by the Wapichanna, erroneous deductions may be made by passing observers in a

few years time just as in the past, observations have been made regarding Wapichanna being of Arawakan Stock, without, I am afraid, any real definite reasons.

The Macussi during several decades of the 19th century must have received a fair amount of overseas goods as wages & various payments for services, food etc. from the Fort at the Pirara. The Wapichanna had no work being done in their district and only a tiny supply of goods when an occasional scientific expedition entered from outside. To get such a supply there were two alternatives: either to go to the coast themselves or foster intertribal trade through middlemen with the Macussi.

Apparently they chose the former alternative, but it must have been sheer desperation that made them descend through Macussi country where every man was a possible enemy and where every stone or hill was the home of Kenaima. Once you had run the gauntlet successfully you became more or less "salted", although by no means completely immune to the numerous evil influences in the District. Up till 1915, when I made a change in my river transport, the young braves making his first trip to town had a very trying time. The imaginary and invisible Kenaima lurking everywhere had to be exorcised. This was done by dropping red pepper or tobacco juice into their eyes - a most painful proceeding. As this had to be done at least a dozen or twenty times per day. I have seen these poor lads eyes so bloodshot and swollen that they could scarcely see. One particular mountain was called "The Mountain that Kills the Eyes", and when first sighted all hands - captain, old men or boys - had to drop pepper juice in their eyes.

In 1900 there were some 15 or 20 Wapichanna who were steersmen or boat captains - men who had made the trip to Georgetown often enough to memorize a couple of hundred miles of rivers constantly interrupted by hundreds of islands and scores of dangerous falls and rapids. An equal number of men with limited experience were available as bowmen. These men went to Bartica on their own account carrying hammock, tame animals, and birds for sale and ready to offer their services as huntsmen to anyone on the mining or timber grants.

A colony of Wapichanna had settled down opposite Bartica many years previously, so that such Wapichanna who came down had friends to go to on arrival for advice and assistance. In 1900 this colony numbered some 12 or 15 grown men with families, probably some 60 to 80 people all told. Another small village of Wapichanna - about 20 in all - lived at Murawa Creek about half way up the Essequibo to the Rupununi Mouth and another small village - not more than 12 - lived at the Rupununi Mouth itself. Thus the Wapichanna from up country had 3 stations en route to the coast where they could leave sick men or obtain certain supplies. Nearly every year ~~or~~ also the people from one or other different villages would make a trip to the Wapichanna country to visit relatives, do a little trade, bring back some members of the Wapichanna tribe and induce a few young people to go down to work. It is worth noting that such an expedition invariably ascended the Rewa and Quitaro Rivers - both rapid running rivers - in preference to the placid stagnant Rupununi River. The trip was generally made in the early part of the year when the turtles were laying on the sand banks and which gave them a supply of easily found food, as also a delicacy ( to them ) not obtainable around Bartica.

These colonies of Wapichanna have long since died out - that at the Rupununi Mouth through the death of the headman and the subsequent return of the family to the savannahs; that at Murawa Creek also through death although in 1928 two Wapichanna men and their respective families still were residing in that Creek; that opposite Bartica either from death or absorption by the surrounding tribes. The opening of the railway between Rockstone and Wismar provided a faster and safer way to town for both cargo and passengers. The increase during the 1890's of traders in the Wapichanna country with increased volume of barter for hammocks, etc. and as payment for labour practically supplied the Wapichanna demand for goods, hence fewer native boats went down to town - a good 2 months journey for little or nothing whereas they could procure quite as much barter by working for some trader for a like period. Still each year when I sent down boats with goods each rainy season, the men used to beg me to allow them to discharge at Rockstone and then proceed on to Bartica to spend a week or so with their relatives living there. A nasty accident in one of the large falls below Rockstone to a native Wapichanna boat when they lost everything except their lives, put a complete stop

to those visits. It is almost the only accident on record to a purely aboriginal crew travelling in their own boat in their own way. Since then the Wapichanna have had no further connection with relations at Bartica (somewhere about 1909) and I suppose the colony has disappeared.

The alternative method of securing necessary supplies was through the medium of go-betweens or middlemen. The Wapichanna tribe always have had more women than men, polygamy was a fairly common practice - and every encouragement was given to certain women to acquire a husband of a neighbouring tribe. The go-betweens for the Macussi tribe were 3 in number; two lived in the Kanuku Mountains on the Rupununi River - at Mapara Creek and MuroiWau respectively. Neither of these men spoke good Wapichanna and never to my knowledge paid a visit to the Wapichanna country. The families and friends of their Wapichanna <sup>WIVES</sup> owners used to go down river hunting and fishing, paying a visit and doing such trade as was possible. These visits used to provide the Wapichanna with amusements for weeks afterwards. The Wapichanna have certain words that differ slightly when used by a woman or a man. For instance the word "Baisamasa" is a man's word meaning agreement or something like "All Right" but the woman's word with the same meaning is "Baisamainyah". These go-betweens would go on using the women's term and I've often seen my boys sitting goggle-eyed with suppressed merriment at the mistake. They didn't dare laugh outright as that would have been an offense to their Macussi hosts - maybe to be followed by a visit of the Kenaima as a result, so they had simply to bottle up their feelings - blood pressure had not yet been invented. They wouldn't be half a mile from the house on their way back when every boy would be rolling on the forest floor in uncontrollable mirth and laughter.

The other middleman was a Macussi called Brummel who for some years was allowed to live in the small hills just to the west of the WETCHABAI of to-day. This was too near Wapichanna country and about 1895 Brummel was induced to leave the place and retire inside the Kanaku Mountains on the head of the SAURAB WAU (creek) from which he conducted a very little trade.

The Wapichanna had go-betweens also for trade with the TARUMA and WAIWAI Tribes. Two pure Taruma brothers were given Wapichanna wives, but as there was no active feud with these two tribes nor any fear of their sending Kenaima to harm people, the Taruma brothers were given territory on Wapichanna country and lived unmolested or feared until they died when their families were absorbed by marriage amongst the Wapichanna. Both men acted as go-between for both the TARUMA and WaiWai Tribes as they could speak all three languages with equal fluency.

The Taruma and WaiWai excelled in the manufacture of cassava grater and the training of hunting dogs. The Wapichanna could not and did not even attempt to make a cassava grater for some unknown reason hence there was a considerable trade in these articles - some 30 to 50 being bought by corial and overland journey each year by these two native traders. Graters are an absolute necessity for any Indian to reduce cassava roots to a pulp when it can be cooked in various forms. The Taruma and WaiWai tribes were practically dependant on the Wapichanna for the indispensable tools of iron - axes, cutlasses, knives and fish-hooks - for every day use, and beads were also in great demand amongst the ladies for bodily adornment and artificial charm, like the lipstick of to-day amongst ourselves. A very tiny amount of hardware of French manufacture trickled in from Cayenne through the medium of the Bush Negroes and some dozen aboriginal tribes scattered vaguely through nearly 1,000 miles of colossal, almost trackless forest.

The Taruma and WaiWai thus were 95% dependant on the Wapichanna for all supplies of overseas goods, but even with all possible industry combined with the long distance overland in parts and by corial, they never had more than a bare minimum of supplies. On my first visit amongst the WaiWai I saw them removing cassava bark, gutting and scaling fish and other household duties with knives made of chipped stone and in 1914 when with Professor William Curtis, Farabee and Dr. Church (both Americans) we assisted in painting a large Wai Wai field where the digging of the earth was done almost exclusively with sharpened pointed stick in place of hoes, of which the whole tribe possessed only two very indifferent specimens. The WaiWai in turn had to supply whatever hardware they could spare to the MAIPIDIEN, PARIKUTA, SHELEW and BONE Tribes who were their immediate neighbours some 100 miles farther into the

Names  
"Schell" just above Mapara mouth on left bank  
"Schoner" at Maroi Wau. Left bank.

TARUMA

forests, hence just as soon as they got supplies, their less fortunate neighbours were begging for anything they could get. Since no Indian (in those days) dared refuse a decided request - they are real practical Communists and to horde or "be greedy" as they expressed it was a cardinal sin (even more so than stealing). Of course the owner could ask the moon by way of a return for any article desired, and the hard-up one would answer "You shall have it when I see you the next time".

No Indian ever gave anything for nothing in these days: food and drink excepted which was given freely by their rules of hospitality and everything of native or overseas manufacture had a value placed on it which was entirely dependant on the owner's immediate necessity. This led to some curious requests. I remember a woman laying an empty basket in front of me saying "Boss, I started from home with that basket full of bananas, but I've been delayed on the way and they went rotten. I want a small knife in payment". Well she got it on Solomon's axiom of throwing bread on the water. On another occasion a man brought me in a lovely stone axe which any American Museum would gladly give \$10 for. The man only asked two terrier bells - cost 1 cent each - of which all Indians were extremely fond. Another time a man brought me in a beautiful steer. "I want a false tooth put it here" (showing me an empty cavity) "Is one steer sufficient payment". I was clean bowled and frankly told him so.

X The Tarumas located entirely on the headwaters of the Essequibo had been a large tribe. They lived in huge communal houses each of which sheltered nearly 100 people, but about the beginning of the present century, disease of some unknown nature decimated the tribe and the chief "Kush<sup>r</sup>" - Bushholder - gave orders for the various families to scatter, each married man to build his own small house. In 1906 I saw the last communal house abandoned, but not yet destroyed - and it was about the finest aboriginal house I have ever seen. It was not only sturdily built, but much artistry had been put into the careful pleating of the palm leaves that composed its roof and sides as also the decorations - geometric paintings - of the 50 feet central pole of this circular house. When dispersed the Tarumas were unable to evolve small houses with any degree of artistry or comfort and their subsequent homes were mere shacks and often open-sided shelters.

In 1905 the Tarumas numbered just over 150 souls - men, women and children, held together by an old Chief. They lived almost exclusively on fish of which they had a super-abundance in the large rivers running past their doors. They made splendid corials, equal to the best on the coast in which they caught all the fish required. Every man and most of the boys had their own corial and when they went fishing they went alone. Each man took his own direction; each took a different bait and size of hook to make more certain of a supply and variety. They did little land hunting and had no trails leading far into the forest. They would only make a detour on land in the immediate vicinity of their homes in search of game. The Taruma country carried more Maipuri (Bushcow) to the square mile than any district I have seen. Maipuri have a habit of excreting principally in water in the early hours of daylight and the banks of the Essequibo were frequently cut into 4 - 6 feet deep channels by the feet of these Maipuri over a number of years as each morning they came down to do their morning toilet. Periodically when all else failed, some 4 or 5 Taruma would set out at dawn in their corials to shoot a Maipuri. Their only weapons were bows and arrows. The arrow for Maipuri was made from bamboo, a 2 inch wide and 12 inch long head attached to the ordinary shaft. This was more like a spear and as a rule was only fired at close quarters as the heavy head affected the trajectory. This bamboo arrow caused frightful wounds as it mushrooms readily on striking a bone. Such arrows were also covered one third of their length by a very potent variety of URALI poison, hence it was an easy matter to ~~kill~~ kill a Maipuri, yet I have only once seen them shoot one.

The Taruma manufacture a variety of Urali which they call Makabur. It appears to be equally as deadly as the more popular one made around Roraima and they make it in quantities principally for sale to the forest Indians far to the South in the forests of Brazil. I have seen the Urali in calabashfuls each holding say 4 ozs. of dried poison, thus giving them an ideal weapon for hunting by land and I never was able to fathom just why they did so little, especially as so much game exists.

The Taruma were the dirtiest and most dowdy and also the poorest tribe I have ever met; probably due to the lack of any native

manufacture (except Makabur which found little sale and poor returns) and more so due to geographical position by which they were forced to act as middlemen between the tribes both to the North and South. Overseas supplies only came in from the North, generally soon after the close of the rainy season. The tribes from the South timed their visits a couple of months later when they invariably made the Taruma hand over every article of outside manufacture. This, of course, was tribal etiquette and the Taruma had to live with a minimum of such goods.

Disease continued to decimate the Taruma and a number of families immigrated to Wapichanna country and others were merged amongst the WaiWai. At my last visit - 1914 - the total population in the tribe proper was only 52 all told.

At the beginning of this century a considerable number of WaiWai were located inside our Colony along the ultimate creeks that form the Essequibo. Neither they nor the Taruma have any fear of Kenaima or evil spirits, but the death rate had become heavy as had that of the Taruma from disease and they gradually abandoned the locality. In 1905 there were still several fields in cultivation and a couple of abandoned villages, but the whole population had migrated over 100 miles to the South and were established in good houses with large new fields. Periodic visits were made to those of fields in our Colony to reap what was left in the way of produce and three years later the houses and garden had reverted to jungle.

In 1900 there was a large tract of land in Wapichanna country which was a strict No Man's Land. An arc drawn from the "Point of the Mountains" - about half way between the Takutu and Rupununi Rivers - thence to TUPTUPIALLI Mountain; SIRIRI Mountain and on to where the Sand Creek joins the Takutu enclosed this area and was roughly that which the Makusi used to ravage in their wars and which also formed the border roughly of their deepest penetration into Wapichanna territory. Into this area only the bravest or most foolhardy Wapichanna dare to venture even to fish or hunt although the country was well stocked with deer and the small creeks alive with fish.

For some reason - probably the same - few if any Macussi entered the area <sup>except</sup> also Brummel - the recognised middleman - when he left Wapichanna country about 1895, went to live well inside the Kanakus. There were a number of Macussi villages on the Wapichanna watershed side of these mountains, but not one single house on the actual savannahs below. These villages were all connected with good trails and it was possible to cross the range as I have done, at several points by trail, as also for the full length of the mountains from their end close to the Takutu right through to MuroiWau on the Rupununi. Inside this No Man's Land there was not one single trail anywhere and the pioneer took the straightest line between two well known points when travelling.

In the early 90's a Wapichanna called Ambrose decided to reside at the Bush Islands near the junction of the Takutu - SawarraWau, inside this uninhabited area. Mr. Melville, with a view to fostering trade with Brazil built a house near the mouth of this latter creek but inside Macussi country proper and he induced two or three Wapichanna families who had recently immigrated from Brazil to make their homes there as it was an ideal spot in every way. The settlement was never a success; even those paid by Melville to reside there refused to stay and the place was completely abandoned about 1902.

Ambrose's village consisted of one house only - his own. Some distance away - 3 miles - was another small village known as BAI TUN, where two families resided. In the late 90's Ambrose was appointed by our Government through the Commissioner, the late Michael McTurk, C.M.G. as Chief of the whole Wapichanna Tribe. As Chief Ambrose began to think he was very important and he tried every effort to increase the population in his immediate vicinity. He got some of those in the Melville settlement to cross the SawarraWau and he got a number of dissatisfied Wapichanna to come over from Brazil, Ambrose had three wives and a correspondingly large family, who as they grew up were married to Wapichanna from Brazil and whom Ambrose insisted should live near him as Chief (i.e. within a few miles). Eventually, at his best, I don't think there were more than 10 families in Ambrose's vicinity. Ambrose had a strong strong leaning towards Brazil, but unfortunately his

pickups from there were nearly all thorough-going scamps - cattle thieves etc. - whom the Brazilians were only too glad to see that the last of. Long before Ambrose died his villages had a notorious reputation in the tribe as the laziest, most shiftless men in the whole Wapichanna country and who made their livelihood by petty larceny and cattle stealing or killing. This reputation still clings (deservedly as far as I can make out) to those resident around what is still known as "Ambrose's District".

Although Ambrose was "official" Chief he never held any sway over the Wapichanna tribe. Actually the tribe lived in fear of him to a considerable extent due to his living in close contact with the Macussi, and shunned him and his whenever possible. He did a little trade ~~worth~~ with the English Traders established on the Rupununi River, but only for such things as he could not get in Brazil. He was such a poor payer-up of such debts that this trade shrunk to almost nothing.

Ambrose was not a man of personality, and definitely not of the stuff that make Chiefs. The actual Chief was a man called Johnston - a man of great personality, force of character and fiery temper. Ambrose and Johnson soon clashed when Ambrose was told in no uncertain terms to stick to his own little village and leave the rest of the tribe alone and he had sufficient sense to realise it was wise for him to do so.

In 1900 Johnston was a middle-aged man - probably in his early 30's. He had already made enough trips to Georgetown to be able to act as Captain of a boat and crew. He knew a little English - just enough to help out the tenderfoot with no Wapichanna. He had been tacitly accepted as Chief of the Tribe through ~~his~~ sheer force of character, personality and common sense. The traders realised this and encouraged him by referring every dispute or other trouble that arose to him for his decision and action. In these days ~~he~~ was perfectly fair and I have known him force a welshing employer <sup>to</sup> pay up proper payment to his employees. Johnston was extremely active and his knowledge of the doings of the tribe even to its most distant fringe 100 miles or more away was almost uncanny at times. A crime committed in any village soon found Johnston on the spot to investigate. Government had invested him with the rank of Rural Constable and Johnston went off on such duty in his ~~efficient~~ <sup>OFFICIAL</sup> cap and R.C. badge on his arm and an ordinary baton. This later came in handy for enforcing decisions occasionally and I have known of a few nice cuts on ~~some~~ recalcitrant heads as a result. The tribe bore no malice and I have never known a Wapichanna ever to complain of Johnston's decisions or methods of enforcing them.

One Wapichanna who arrived to settle from Brazil had the reputation of being a medicine man or peiman. As is customary with the charlatans of this profession, this man, to enhance his reputation and to ensure a prompt payment for his services, began to claim his supernatural powers as having been <sup>the</sup> cause of several deaths in the tribe. Johnston at first took this as "hot air" but the claims became too strong and were terrorising the tribe, so it wasn't long before Johnston appeared in the fellow's village. He gave the peiman a thorough lecture in front of a large village on how to live properly and then gave the fellow a thorough hammering, so much so that the poor victim - a very powerful man was unconscious for some hours. Next morning the peiman had fully recovered and apparently bore no malice. On leaving, Johnston again urged him to reform and lead the life of a decent member of the tribe and ended by warning him that if there were any more deaths attributed to his evil influences, he (the peiman) would certainly die also according to tribal <sup>CUSTOM</sup> ~~eye~~ of an eye for an eye.

For a couple of years that peiman was the proverbial "good as gold". During this period he had to try to work to make a living, a complete reversal of peiman principles ~~of~~ their ability to live on the fat of the land like Kings by the easy practise of a few passes with the hands over a sick person or the shouting of some completely uncomprehensible gibberish. The temptation was too much for the peiman and he again resumed his nefarious tactics, at first with no apparent action from Johnston. Soon, however, a rather pathetic case occurred and the peiman boldly boasted he had been the cause of death.

The relatives of the deceased promptly appeared before Johnston with their complaint. He already through his own channels and methods knew what had happened, probably over the grape vine telegraph of

sent

telepathy. Johnston at once sent messengers off to the peiman saying: "I warned you previously. Now you pack and leave for Brazil at once never to return, as in two days time I shall let the relatives of your last victim leave my house to shoot you." The peiman turned to his favourite wife saying: "You have heard. Pack for a short 4-5 days journey and come - only you and your children". In an hour the peiman was on the road but instead of heading for Brazil he took the road for Johnston's village. They went slowly along the road hunting and fishing en route; until on the last night they camped at a small stream a few miles away. He started at sunup and an hour later saw 4 or 5 men enter a large swamp ahead. Selecting a nice shady tree he turned to his wife. "I go on alone from here to meet them. Here is my gun for the oldest boy and my knife for the younger. When all is over come and bury me and then return to your father." Unarmed he advanced to the centre of the swamp where a succession of shots broke the mornings quiet. An hour later the woman now a widow went down the swamp to perform the last rites.

This woman I knew well. She was the daughter of one of my oldest and best men. She was a hard worker herself and constantly bringing in hammocks, etc. for sale or in payment of advances. She did everything she could to get her husband to forsake his evil ways without any result. Subsequently she told me of the gruesome execution with the tears streaming down her face. "As a peiman he was evil more than anyone I have ever known causing infinite pain and sorrow to myself and all our tribe, but he was my husband, Boss, mine ! Mine !! MINE !!!" and "dropping on her knees to gather her two bairns into her arms, with bowed head she sobbed, "the father of my little children".

Government took no action in this case as the Commissioner rightly considered the execution had been carried through according to strict tribal etiquette and law under the direct order of the undoubted Supreme Chief of the Wapichanna and only after grave provocation; a previous warning and the alternative of a free escape to Brazil - the man's original home.

Johnston each year made one tour of every village of his tribe during which he straightened out matrimonial tangles and various other domestic worries. In later years he was loaned a horse for this purpose and Government eventually granted \$50 per annum as an honorarium to the official Chief (Ambrose) but the Commissioner used to split it in two as Ambrose did absolutely nothing. At Ambrose's death this sum lapsed to Johnston but he was never made Chief officially and so never held the Silver Insignia of Office, *as Ambrose had*

Insignia meant nothing either to Johnston or the tribe. Johnston simply was Chief and that was that. His influence with the tribe was enormous and invariably for good. Tribal law, except for a few trifling differences, might have been modelled on the Ten Commandments and in some respects the Bible and such tenets filled English custom and law admirably. All that Johnston had to do was to merely insist that the Wapichanna tribe be true to their own culture and oral teachings such as, *most* each evenings, were given in every household of the Tribe. Everyone held Johnston in very high respect, *in* almost reverence. I have been in a hut where Johnston was hearing a case; the hut would be crowded and conversation general during the giving of evidence, but the second Johnston began to give his findings someone invariably sprang up saying: "Silence, there, the Chief is speaking", and silence it was. You could have heard a pin drop.

When Johnston died, new influences were at work in the tribe and the White Man in haste as usual, could not wait till the Wapichanna would appoint some new Chief or rather till some Indian possessed of the necessary qualifications could enforce his personality over the whole tribe. Petty chiefs were appointed in nearly every village by the Missionaries on a show of hands by the villagers. Most of these petty chiefs were merely cheeky louts of twenty years or so who made themselves agreeable to the Missionary, tongue in cheek, as a means of getting any pickings that were going. A show of hands is easily procured, as it is something absolutely unknown in Indian practise, but, with his inherent desire to please, done with apparent willingness and understanding, since it presumably was what was expected of them. Any meeting amongst ourselves can at once appoint a Chairman, but it is hopeless to appoint a Chief to any aboriginal Indian Tribe on any principle at such speed and any such attempts have always ended in complete failure. A genuine

rising Chief is generally a disruptive influence in a Tribe. He demands obedience first in his own hut; this is extended to include his village and then he begins to influence other villages as his personality will always command followers outside, who prefer giving him allegiance to the accepted head of their own village, a proceeding that causes much jealousy and not infrequently considerable quarrelling.

The only way for any outsider to appoint a Chief is by careful observation, unbiased by any personal leanings, likes or dislikes, and gentle encouragement - both to be extended over a period of years. Find the man who can grasp any situation, give his orders with the least amount of fuss, and which are carried out with a minimum of friction and a maximum of ease and speed. Encourage him by giving some small responsibility which will enhance his own self-reliance and respect, but don't expect him to do things your way. The view points, methods and ways of the aboriginal Indian, in material matters are as far removed and different from those of the White (or civilized) man as the North and South Poles. He won't do things your way, but at the end of say a year he has more or less got the same results, thus saving you considerable bother and perspiration. Encourage such a headman in every village and if you have the necessary powers of observation you will soon note the man who is suitable for a Section Leader and the ultimate Chief. For goodness sake, however, don't walk into any village and appoint some agreeable, amusing, smiling chatterbox as a Headman or prospective Chief by a show of hands. That is equivalent to walking down a line of recruits to select someone with a good appearance and smiling face and appoint him to be Commander in Chief of the Forces to conduct an active War on a large Front.

BRUMMEL The breakdown of the antipathy or fear of the Wapichanna for the Macussi came about very naturally although very slowly, through the introduction of balata bleeding in 1903, amongst the former Indians. Of course Indians had to be trained and the more teachers meant more Indians learning the trade. Duncan MacDonald, one of the most successful men in handling negro labour I have ever seen, was perfectly helpless with Indians; so much so that no Wapichanna would work with him. Anxious to do something during the wet season he decided to help train bleeders. Now the Macussi - Wapichanna middlemen<sup>at</sup> had three able-bodied sons with relatives on their mothers' side in Wapichanna country. Mac made arrangements with these relatives and they gave consent for these three men (not to be accompanied or even visited by a single Macussi relative) to occupy and work in a certain area of forest, but quite apart from any Wapichanna working place. These three men worked for two successive years but they had a miserable time marooned in unknown forest, ostracised and not a single soul to speak to except themselves for fully three months. Mac was far from satisfied and decided to stop bleeding altogether. His men were even more dissatisfied but they must get work to earn necessary supplies. The eldest son, a man of considerable personality proposed<sup>to</sup> he should bleed balata in the Kanakus around his own village. He was now an expert bleeder and he proposed to engage ten Macussi in all and superintend their training under a periodic visit of inspection from his employers' superintendent.

before nightfall The trouble was getting tools, etc. to the Macussi, the receipt of and payment for their Balata. After some discussion the Wapichanna agreed to allow one day, set by the moon, in the month of March when the Macussi - men only - could come to DadaNawa for supplies and another day in October when they would hand in Balata and receive their payment. At first the Macussi had to enter Wapichanna territory proper at dawn, conduct their business and be back in their own territory - to No Man's Land mentioned previously<sup>at</sup>. No Wapichanna crossed the line of the Macussi March that day, but a few well armed men were stationed at strategic points expecting the worst.

Nothing untoward happened however, although these rules had to be strictly adhered to for quite a number of years. Brummel, the trading medium, built himself a house on the savannahs just clear of the mountains as a depot for balata and as a camp for his sons and other workmen and as an intermediate stage on the long trek to DadaNawa. Gradually this single house became a village of pure Macussi as more of the workmen built huts and homes until it became a large village known as Shulianeb or the 'Macussi Village' (about 1910-1912). By 1920 prejudice against the Macussi had dwindled till they could pay a visit to DadaNawa at any season, a little trade was done in cattle between

the tribes, but no Macussi was welcome even then. They were tolerated with limits or where they went or what they did.

*to my station at*  
Alfred, Brummel's eldest son, was a man of great common sense and force of character. He took full charge of the Macussi in their visits to DadaNawa; saw to it that not even a careless child infringed the rules; taught and dragooned his men in the work in the forest. He was soon the Headsman of his own village and extended his influence as men from other villages began to work. Living in a cul-de-sac and separated from the main body of his tribe by the rugged forested Kanaku Mountains his area and sphere was geographically limited, but he became a Sectional Chief and held sway round the point of the mountains and as far North as the Moco Moco. He was the one man in the Macussi Tribe that I knew who could, as he probably would, have become a really beneficial Supreme Chief to his tribe in succession to John Bull. Unfortunately he died at a comparatively early age - not more than 40 years old - and such men as have been appointed (?) since appear to have been failures.

In the last century the Wapichanna were by no means pampered; they had no employers in their own district and were forced to go to the coast if they wanted to work at all. They must have been brave men to pass through the territory of their admitted enemies to do this, but needs must when the necessity drives, and as a result became excellent boat-builders and capable river hands and ste<sup>ERs</sup>-men. It was probably only one or at most two boats per annum who made the journey and as the united wages from such labour of such were unable to supply the demand for supplies, other means had to be evolved. Naturally these labourers on their return home wanted some sort of payment from such barter goods as they brought back, consequently every village and household had to work at some marketable craft in their own homes.

No trader is a philanthropist; he has to purchase his barter, pay all transport, make allowance for deterioration or loss of goods, bad debts and above all make a living of some sort. The public often descry the trader as harsh, grasping and mean in the extreme, but capitalise his risks, his time and work and he is a lucky man if he does more than make a bare existence. No trader will exist long if he robs a tribe and the generous one will soon be bankrupt. The successful trader must be fair; giving some recognised quid pro quo for everything he handles. Harshness in demanding a standard of size and quality of the manufactured Indian articles which he buys is good since it eliminates slovenly or deteriorating standards of craftsmanship.

The geographical situation and circumstances beyond their control, forced the Wapichanna to be industrious and hard-working with a high degree of artistry and high standard of quality in such Arts and Crafts as were sold in order to secure necessary supplies once they had left the Stone Age behind. Their hammocks for instance were far the best that were made in the Colony, carrying a high standard in design, variation, finish and general manufacture. This when capitalised meant only a couple of shillings more in payment to the makers, but even that small amount represented an extra article of barter - a tiny mirror, a small knife or a few fish hooks.

*deceases had*  
The De Roy traders made one trip per annum to Georgetown with a flotilla of not less than four boats, all full of the years results: hammocks, basketry, bows and arrows, deer, hog, accouri and other animal teeth necklaces, featherwork and a large variety of other Indian curios. There would also be crates of various animals and birds tamed by the Indian as also a number of long spars arranged in these boats something after of the style of the modern chicken roosting place, along which scores of tamed parrots and macaws would be tethered. There were photos in existence of the De Roy Expeditions arriving in Civilization which showed clearly the extent of his operations and the industry of the Wapichanna. On arriving in town the De Roys would spend at least a couple of months selling such goods as he had bought down from door to door by means of hucksters on a commission basis. This excluded excess profits on the part of middlemen and on many occasions secured fancy prices for some article from some purchaser to whom they were able to its process of manufacture and the extreme rarity (all were that of course) of the article. *curio.*

The De Roys had the advantage of having many relations living in Georgetown, who were delighted to have such an interesting couple come to stay, as if nothing else they had a find of unique stories to tell

of adventure and romance up country. The overseas trader had perforce to go to a Hotel; pay his own way there and also make, at least, provision to feed his Indian boathands while they were in Town. Consequently, such a trader sold his goods and purchased necessary supplies just as fast as he could, since his daily expenses in town <sup>etc</sup> were quietly eating into his slender profits - if any - as the result of a years' hard work. Many shops were ready to do business for hammocks at their price fixed in two ways :- they would make a cash bid for all the hammocks generally between \$2.75 and \$3.25 per hammock irrespective of quality, or they put them on the scale and paid 64 cents to 72 cents per lb. on the gross weight. Hammocks would run to 3 to 5 lbs in weight, so that prices by either method worked out about equal. The retail price of such hammocks was \$15 for the worst grade and \$15 to \$20 for good ones, an exorbitant profit for which the shop-keeper could wait six months or more whereas the poor trader had no alternative but to sell quick and get back up country.

In these days no person left to go into the bush without carrying as good a cotton hammock to sleep in as he could afford. Every prospector pork-knocker, miner or ~~trailer~~ <sup>RIVER</sup> hand no matter what his race, colour or status, used these Indian hammocks exclusively. The modern "jackass" (made from a rice or sugar bag) or hammocks made from imported machine spun cotton twine had not yet been invented.

A good well-made Wapichanna hammock requires from 5,000 to 10,000 yards of 2 ply cotton yarn according to size and pattern and fineness of the component threads. This meant the spinning of some 10,000 to 20,000 yards of single ply thread: in the case of the very best hammocks 3 ply yarn was used which means an additional third to this yardage., hence a woman might spin as much as 30,000 yards of thread to make one large best quality hammock. Spinning was done by hand using a centrally loaded spindle with a wooden hook at the upper end to catch the raw cotton. This was made to rotate by friction between the open palm along the bare thigh and a maximum length of some 30 inches could only be spun at one time before that portion of finished thread had to be wound on to the body of the spindle. Think of the hundreds of hours of monotonous work spent by a woman in spinning even the <sup>MINIMUM</sup> ~~maximum~~ amount - say 10,000 yards - of fine cotton thread to make a single hammock to which has to be added another 10 days in the weaving the ultimate product - which would have to be sold for \$3, C.I.F. Georgetown, this last being no mean consideration when the distance is considered and the dangers of loss in the bad falls that obstruct the rivers. Unfortunately, the finest and most artistic hammocks were the lightest in weight owing to the thinness of the 2 or 3 ply yarn used, and such when sold by weight on the scale rarely brought \$2.50. A hammock made from thick badly spun yarn would weigh a pound or two more than the really good varieties yet would actually fetch a higher price, in spite of obviously inferior workmanship.

In the early years of this century there were three traders operating amongst the Wapichanna, each handling close on 300 hammocks. A man in the Georgetown Market known to the Indians as Manni Turatum was always ready to advance the Wapichanna for hammocks, curios, etc., against their probable return a year or 5 years later and every boat going to town carried some payment for this man. Some Wapichanna dealt with him exclusively and would go down periodically in their own boat to pay him off and purchase new supplies of goods. Each Indian who went down as a boathand with a trader made a point of carrying at least one hammock for sale. Therefore the annual output of hammocks amongst the Wapichanna which found their way into various trade channels would not have been far short of 1,000 apart from those in steady use by the tribe themselves.

In those days the girls were taught to spin at a very early age and many a proud mother has shown me a half filled spindle of very indifferent thread, the first attempt of a shy little sloe-eyed maid of not more than four years, who, finger in mouth, would be hauled forward to hear the complimentary on the attempt. Practice makes perfect and most girls before the age of 12 had already spun sufficient yarn to make a hammock. Many of the young girls were married soon after puberty when they were supposed to be sufficiently expert in hammock making and all household duties to be able to care adequately for a family of her own.

The Wapichanna women were extraordinarily industrious in spinning cotton yarn since some 90% of the tribe's revenue came at that time from the sale of hammocks. Every spare moment of their day and a good part of the night found them spinning much as we see knitting done during War

This Portuguese - Manoel Pereira by name - had a general stall in the Georgetown Market. He was known as a great friend of all Indians, & dealt most fairly with them. He was known over the entire hinterland solely as Manni Turatum.

Remarks

time at home. It was taken up between attendance of some urgent household duty; they would stick it in the belt of their bead lap during short interruptions, on the way to the fields or a visit to neighbours they would spin as they walked along. They sat spinning by the flickering fire light in the early evening listening to the adventures of the day as told by the various men in the hut or when the tribal myths were being recited. Should any woman wake in the night as was quite frequent she would blow up the fire and start spinning; and all were supposed to spin for an hour or so just before daybreak. In a large house it was seldom when you could not find some woman busy spinning.

The low price for best hammocks, in fact for any hammock, tended to lower both quality and size of these articles as why should they bother to make them when they got as much, if not more, for inferior grades. Indians are no fools and they saw much inferior Macussi hammocks selling at the same price as their very best, so why should they not reduce the size yet increase the weight by spinning coarser thread. The introduction of the balata industry which gave more trade goods to a man for some three or four months works than the results of his entire female relations producing hammocks in one year removed the stimulus of necessity also, hence hammocks grew smaller in size and fewer in numbers as time went on. I doubt if any Wapichanna hammock made to-day would measure up to the De Roy standard in size - the woven centre square of which would run about 7 ft. long and 7 ft. wide. The general use of the "jackass" amongst the <sup>coastal</sup> labouring classes <sup>of AS</sup> hammocks, among the better class bushmen, made from American Sail Twine has reduced the demand on the coast for Indian hammocks to nil and I doubt if 100 are brought down for sale in town in any one year. Yet the pride of craft and workmanship is inherent amongst the Wapichanna and in spite of every discouragement on the part of the outside world, they can and still do produce a number - for themselves, or under proper encouragement - of their old time beautifully spun, beautifully woven hammocks, even if of smaller size. The Wapichanna have long been and still are by far the most industrious and hardworking, the best supplied and richest tribe in the Colony.

*for hammocks*

It may be of interest to mention the influence of some of these tribes on some of the place-names of the Colony. "Gold Fall", a dangerous fall in the middle reaches of the Essequibo River is the literal translation of the Atorod-Wapichanna word "KARAKURI" or "KALAKUL" by which the fall has always been known: a name that occurs in several other aboriginal Indian languages whose territory lies far to the South of the Amazon. No gold of any value has, so far as is known, ever been found near the fall although, misled by the name, numbers of expeditions have explored the vicinity.

The Wapichanna name for water and rain is in both cases the word "WIN", i.e. "Wunannai Win" - "bring water"; "Watina win" - "Coming Rain" or "Rain is coming". On this the wise have built a theory that the name is the same as is said to be found amongst many other tribes in the Guianas the "Winni" which is the terminal sound more or less of many of our rivers. "Win" is however restricted to water and rain only and in no case do I know an Atorod-Wapichanna creek ending in such a sound. If they must add anything it would naturally be their own word "WAU" which means "Creek", i.e. Kat - Sand; Wau - Creek giving "KatWau" marked on many maps as "Katawow Creek" - a useless distortion and double use of the expression creek. There are hundreds of creeks in Wapichanna country ending in "WAU" but not one in "WIN" although it is often not necessary to add the terminal sound where the creek is well known and bears a distinctive name of its own. The word "MARUI" is the name of a certain fish and you must speak of MaruiWau to distinguish the creek from the fish itself.

But the Atorod-Wapichanna had another word, *il* (pronounced as the ee in eel or steel) which has a variety of meanings - juice, soup or milk. Hence MAN = pineapple and *i* the expressed juice = pineapple juice; Kair = pot and *i* the water or soup of anything boiled for food (meat, birds, fish) in a pot giving Kair-*i*, soup; Tapiir Dini means cow milk as Tapiir = cow; Din = udder or breast and *i* = milk. When the sound *i* is used for milk it covers every known animal and human variety and can be used also for some birds which feed their young by regurgitation.

Now on the headwaters of the Rupununi River there grows a small shrub along its banks on some of the higher, wooded islands, as they are

called, which was known as Rupunun by the Atorads. These islands are of a higher elevation than the surrounding country, maybe a matter of feet only, but at the close of the rainy season there will be found a certain amount of seepage at their base which can be plainly seen as it makes its way over the underlying gneis or granite rocks to the creek proper. To the Atorads the river was Rupunun-i- the identical pronunciation of modern days. Indifferently educated Wapichanna may speak of RUPUNUN WAU (never Rupununi Wau) but those are only those who haven't been to an University.

Another place name is Demerara. The Atorads in their visits to the coast for salt and other necessities found considerable unforested areas, not the wide rolling savannahs of their own territory but marshy or swampy grass lands, on the higher and drier parts of which grew the Sandpaper Tree. This is the predominant tree in the open savannahs in the Rupununi and is known by the name "EMENYAR". In modern days the Colony's capital is known by its proper name but in the early part of this century Georgetown was invariably called "EMENYAR" and the Demerara River as "EMENYARA WAU". The old Indians have often told me their reason for calling the place by this name. Would you consider it a too violent stretch of the imagination to suggest that some careless cartographer through indifferent hearing or a slip of the pen managed to convert "EMENYARA" into DEMERARA.

The Taruma use of the letter z in quite a number of words in their language, a sound that the surrounding tribes cannot pronounce except by prefixing another letter E when the result is something like ESSE. The Taruma have a ~~waxxi~~ word ZI meaning Haiawa Tree, which is found in great abundance in many parts of the lower Essequibo where there are the well known "Haia~~x~~a Falls" etc. The Taruma use the word "KIDJO" to signify a river or creek and the river on whose banks they reside (the Essequibo) is invariably called "ZIKIDJO" or as pronounced by "indifferent scholars" and the members of other tribes "ESSEKIDJO", a very close similarity to our ESSEQUEBO.

Many rivers in South America are known by one name at their mouth but by one entirely different in their higher reaches. The frontier river called the "Takutu" is known and called by that name from its mouth up to where it splits in two when the two component branches become the WATTU WAU (Carrion crow creek) and the PUDA WAU (Black creek). No other aboriginal Indian Tribe call the Essequibo by anything approaching that sound, yet the very tribe who inhabit its higher reaches have an almost identical name, whereas, by all precedent they should use a different word. There are however numerous indications that the Taruma once inhabited the lower Essequibo probably the actual coast, but fled before civilization, its cruelties and indignities or the dreaded Caribs. These indications are their super-excellent corials, their myths and traditions (carrying a horror of the lower Essequibo) and a number of words in their language by which they call various articles of overseas origin - names completely different from their surrounding tribes.