- My Journey to and Life with the Yaruros. -

Contact with the Yaruros is not easy. No one ever knows near what water hole or at what point on the river these nomads may be found. Several centuries of maltreatment have made them shy and suspicious of strangers and particularly of all "Racionales". Primitive a nd loosely organized, they could not and cannot today offer any effective resistance to civilized groups which may want to exploit them. At the time of my visit everyone along our route was indignant over the treatment that about 150 Yaruros had received at the hands of unknown local "jefes civiles" about a month before. They were seized and matcheted to death, reducing the total population of this tribe (excluding bands that may be hidden along the Sinaruco River) to one-half. My presence in their midst naturally aroused fears that some fresh calamity was about to befall them.

In the rainy season there is only one way of penetrating the llanos of Apure, and that is by boat. From the Orinoco one can sail or paddle up the five rivers: the Apure, Arauca, Capanaparo, Sinaruco and the Meta. In the dry season it is possible to make one's way southward from Caracas by way of Ortiz, Calabozo San Fernando de Apure, to San Juan de Payara by automobile, and then on horseback to Cunaviche and beyond. Beginning our journey from Caracas at the end of January we followed the latter route.

San Juan de Payara and Cunaviche are ancient colonial mission villages and the farthest outposts of civilization in the llanos. There are no missions there now. Their populations are typically llanero, that is, civilized mixed bloods. We rode southward across the dry and sandy plains, over which roam herds of wild cattle and horses. Mirages, which amazed the widely traveled Humboldt were frequent. In the treeless plains forests were suspended in the sky, horses ran through the air, and great clear lakes stretched out before us. But water was scarce, and had we not been guided by men who knew every square inch of the ground we should have suffered for lack of it. We picked up our guides in relays on the way, a merry, capable lot, with much Indian blood in their veins, conscious of being free men of the llanos whom no dictator nor army has been able to tame. At night, by the harp and rattle, music which reflected Indian, Spanish and Negro influences. Our meager baggage was carried by an unwilling bull. Using a common cowboy expedient, we tied its nose to the guide's horse's tail and the bull was literally dragged all the way to El Buron.

We made our first contact with the Yaruros at El Buron, a ranch owned by Don Manuel Hurtado. Don Manuel, like most of the native llaneros, is ympathetic to the Yaruros, and keeps on friendly terms with them. With his help and that of his household, particularly a young woman called Maria, we attempted to establish friendly relations with the Yaruros. In the llanos human beings are not plentiful, and consequently, it doesn't occur to them to erect social barriers that would tend to keep various groups apart.

There was not much about the camp of the Yaruros to interest the casual glance. There were present about a dozen women, eight men, and some children. The extreme poverty and simplicity of the camp were its outstading features. There were no houses, nor shelters of any sort; only a few old baskets, a few sticks, a few rags, calabashes and water jars, and a few seminaked human beings lying half buried in the sand under the shade of thinly leafed branches thrust in to the ground. Several fires were burning, and over them there were pots containing turtle eggs. Several large turtle and small crocodiles were broiling over a fire. The shells of the turles and the hides of the crocodiles had not been removed, and for a moment we thought that they were being cooked alive, but soon discovered that they had been killed before being placed over the fire. There was little else to be seen. It was easy to understand the reaction of the casual traveler who, upon coming in contact with a primitive group, stops, looks, and goes away quickly with the impression that there is nothing there more than the glance takes in.

On approaching the camp, Pedro, the guide, shouted words of greeting in Yaruro, "kerami" (brother in law). He patted some of them on the back, asked after their health in Spanish, called everyone brother or sister-in-law, and tried to make himself generally agreeable. Maria busied herself with the women. The Yaruros' only response to their demonstrations of friendship was to extend their arms half-heartedly, in a llanero gesture of greeting, and to answer their questions monosyllabically.

In spite of our friendly overtures they would not accept me as friend or guest. They remained reserved and aloof. The young man pointed out as the headman resisted my attempt to draw him into conversation. The Yaruros watched us closely, taking in our least movement, and only averted their gazes when we looked directly at them. If one has never come in contact with South American

primitives before, such a reception is decidedly disheartening.

An accident relieved some of thetension. I picked up a bow. Choosing the remnants of an old basket about 50 feet away for a target, I took careful aim and shot the arrow. I missed by more than 10 feet. The eyes watching me lighted with amusement and contempt, for it was inconceivable to them that anyone could exist in this world without knowing how to shoot a bow better than that. I shot again and this time I came within 6 inches of hitting my mark, a feat which aroused some interest. I placed another arrow on the bow, raised it, pulled back the string, as far back as my ear, and then, with a loud snap, the bow broke. Laughter greeted this exploit, not so much directed at me as at the owner of the bow who had spent several days fashioning it. He was adequately compensated but that did not remove his feeling of resentment.

That evening we visited the camp. The camp fires were low, so we were scarcely able to see our way about. Pedro and Maria sang out cheery greetings, while we picked our way between scarcely distinguishable groups of humanity and piles of debris. A few grunts and a few indifeerent gestures of greeting were the only acknowledgements of our presence. Even the distribution of several yards of tobacco failed to melt their reserve. They did, however, put up a hammock for me. They preferred to lie half buried in the sand, both for warmth and for protection from the mosquitoes.

Some of the bolder young men asked for rum. I had none with me. All along the road I had been told that rum was the only means of inducing the Indians to dancem but an ethnologist's work cannot be based on such an approach.

Through the diplomatic efforts of Maria, the Yaruros consented to sing, and dance a little. I was able to arouse their interest ~~in~~ with my flashlight, and to arouse their modesty and bewilderement when I flashed it upon them. My compass also drew an excited jabbering circle about me. But I was not able to engage them in conversation, and finally left them about midnight with the satifaction that at least there had been no friction.

On the following day I sent them a pig, and later in the day again visited them. They were still shy and supicious of me, but permitted me to go about camp examining their artifacts.

There was not much to be done in this camp. The group was in a wretched state, still in mourning for their dead, living in fear of some fresh calamity, and although they were suffering hunger, too miserable to try to go back to the river where, at least, they would find food. Tribal customs prevented my engaging the

old women in conversation and the men were too young and much affected by llanero culture to tell me about their own people. Their advice, which I took, was to go farther south where we would find other Yaryro bands among whom I could find old men who could answer my questions.

I prevailed upon the leader of the band, Esteban, to accompany me. He was reluctant to go, not wanting to be separated from his young wife, and perhaps was afraid to trust himself alone with me. However, his desire for cloth and a mosquito netting was stronger than his fear. Esteban proved a loyal and faifhful companion.

We found the next band encamped on a beach by the Canaparo River. Here they were temporarily in the employ of a llanero engaged in building a house For several days I had no more success with them than I had had with the other band, so during that time we studied whatever was on the surface. However, I was not doing all the studying. The Yaruros were watching me closely and weighing my statements carefully. During this time Esteban was busy building up my reputation. What impressed them most was tha I did not ask for their women, and that all I wanted to do was to talk with them about themselves.

One night their attitude suddenly changed. I had been sitting for hours on the sands in the midst of these people, waiting for them to give me a sign of friendliness, but they were silent and apparently resentful of my presence. Acting on a sudden impulse, I asked one of the men sitting near me for a gourd rattle. There followed a discussion among the men, and finally they decided to give me one. Without much heart, and no will, I began to sing a song of the Bororos of Brazil, accompanying myself with the rattle. It was the song of another tribe, and I sang it badly; but my unwilling hosts were listening, recognizing the musical pattern as being akin to theirs. I sang another when I had finished the first, and then still another, not failing to notice at he same time that they were listening carefully, and passing comments to one another. When my repertoire was exhausted, I placed the rattle on the sands and smoked in silence. Nothing was said for some time. Then a hand reached for the rattle and a voice said in Spanish:

"Ahora canto yo". (Now I will sing).

The speaker sat on the sands, facing east He began a song, the melody of which sounded as wild as the medley brought to us by the wind. His people

joined us and, sitting behind him in a semicircle, took up the chorus at the end of every stanza. The song was first a murmur and then a shout, but maintained its steady rhythm. When the moon brightened the tropical night with its colorless light, sharpening the many shadows and turning the waving palm leaves into quivering ribbons of silver, the Yaruros forgot all about the stranger in their midst. As though on a prearranged signal, they arose and began to dance, as they sand, around a pole. Women danced as well as men, and the children joined in too. They danced all night, and it was not until the sun rose above the hills of Guiana that they stopped to seek an hour or two of sleep before setting off on the daily task of hunting their dinner.

By morning

During the day I noticed that their fear of me had disappeared, but it was not until that evening that I discovered the reason for the change. I gathered a confused tale that the one who had led the singing was a shaman. My singing and gourd rattling had indicated to him that I was a shaman also, since only the shamans use the rattle among the Yaruros. Furthermore, he had asked the Yaruro gods who I was, and the gods, as well as the spirits of the dead Yaruros living with the mother goddess Kuma, had instructed him to tell theseprimitive hunters that I was different from the "Racionales" (name applied to the "civilized" llaneros) and, as evidenced by my singing, that I intended no harm to them; in short, that I was a Pumeh, one of Kuma's people, and lived very close to her land.

From the recital of the night's performance, I gathered that the Yaruro's universe is presided over by a female being called Kuma, who lives in the west and who waits for the living Yaruros to return to her land; that in some fashion the water snake and the jaguar are considered to be their ancestorial relatives, that once upon a time the Yaruros were very many and now very few; that the Yaruros had been visited with great calamities the preceeding year, and many of their people had died through sickness and other destructive forces.

Also, I learned that, though I could gather inklings of a rich spiritual culture and a good cross section of the material phases from this band, I had to go farther down river to meet the spiritual leaders of the remnants of this race if I wanted to reach the heart of the Yaruros' religion, cosmology, mythology and ethics.

In all of the primitive groups with which I have come in contact, certain individuals are recognized as the leaders and authorities, especially on such matters as religion and social organization. The younger people hesitate and often refuse to discuss such amtters altogether, but age alone is not enough to qualify

an individual as the mouthpiece of the group. The Yaruros were no exception. As soon as they grasped that I wanted to know a great deal about their history and culture they urged me to talk to "Landaeta", their leader and great "musico" or shaman. He, with his family, was hunting on the lower Canaparo. They offered to guide me to him. Accordingly, we journeyed downstream by moonlight to avoid the heat of the day, and as I subsequently discovered, to avoid meeting with crocodile hunters.

About noon the next day we sighted several empy canoes drawn up on the bank, and I knew that there must be more Yaruros nearby. We landed on the sandy beach and awaited their return. They came early in the afternoon, the men carrying turtles and crocodiles slung on poles, the women with baskets filled with changuango, leaning forward as they walked, looking not unlike grotesque apes under their heavy loads; and also, the little children carrying their share of food, straggling behind. Upon seeing me they were frightened, but did not run away.

My Yaruro paddlers acted the part of mediators perfectly, for soon afterwards we were all embarked and moving downstream to join the main body of Landaeta's band which, I was told, was encamped several miles downstream. Their good humor almost amounted to gaiety. The three canoes moved steadily down the river, the men paddling hard, and the women sitting quietly and casting shy inquisitive glances in my direction.

We found Landaeta and his people on a large exposed wind-swept beach. There was the white sand, the strong wind blowing from the east raising it into dust clouds, and the intense glare from river and sand; a few water jars, a few baskets, several refuse heaps with buzzards feeding at them, canoes drawn up on the beach, and some captive turtles; and a fes human beings were sitting or lying in the midst of all this, and exposed to all of the elements.

Among primitive people news travels rapidly. Landaeta, in this case, received me with the air of one who was expecting a visitor and it turned cut that my reputation had preceeded me. Not only did he know that I was in the country, but also why I was there. He was expecting me in order to teach me his ways and the ways of his people, and to learn my ways and the ways of my people. To him I was a shaman, no different than himself, who knew their mother goddess intimately and who was perhaps related to the gods themselves. He asked me for pictured of Kuma and Kuma's land. I soon discovered that he was under the illusion that in some way I was on intimate terms with the Yaruro's god.

A little to one side a branch was planted in the sand, and lying in its

thin shade a girl was waiting to die. She was burning with fever and delirious. Her people were hovering over her, without being able to alleviate her sufferings or to help her to the end of life. Her malady was a new one to them, passed on by the newcomers to their world, and therefore they had no remedy for it.

The sick girl was Landaeta's daughter and as one physician to another, he came to me requesting that I save his daughter from death. Being neither physician, magician nor priest, I responded to his plea the best way I could. Lest I be drawn into a situation of attempting to cure a sick person without adequate knowledge of the sickness or its remedy, I moved off the same day to seek other Yarurros; but only after Landaeta had promised that he would commence his journey in the cool of the evening and rejoin me several days later.

It has often been said that to accept the promise of a primitive Indian is to abandon all though of its being remembered. Perhaps it would seem that I put too much faith and trust in my friends in sitting down to wait for them to join me. But a promise made and accepted without coercion is to the Indian one that has to be kept; and, as in many other cases, of my experience with primitive people, this one was kept.

That the feeling of suspicion had not diaappeared completey was proven by the attitude of another hunting group which I visited. I went alone among them, and unarmed. On my arrival in a canoe, carrying no equipment, they sullenly warmed me to keep away from them and their camp. However, good will is never unproductive, and when they saw that I merely squatted on the sands, shared my tobacco with them, said nothing, and then cheerfully paddled away, their hearts must have melted, for several days later they too had joined my band of friends, later becoming among those most deeply attached to me.

We camped on a large wind-swept beach on the Capanaparo and waited there for Landaeta. While waiting I made visits about the country, seeking out Yaruros wherever I could find them. In one nearby group I noticed that unlike most of the Yaruros, these had built permanent shelters, constructed similarly to the houses of the ranchers. However, there was one significant differente. With true Indian logic, they had left the walls open at the bottom, so that the wind could sweep through the house and keep it cool and free from insects.

One morning we embarked to visit a group led by Pablo Reyes, being on an island in the Orinoco, at the mouth of the Capanaparo. Pablo Reyes had been described to us as a very old and very wise man. Borrowing a small dugout, we set out to visit him, traveling mostly by night. On our way we saw and heard a great deal

of animal and bird life, for the lower part of the river was less hunted by the Yaruros than the upper part. On the banks we saw numerous tracks of cats, we saw many capibaros or "chiguires" and we were often serenaded by the roar of the howlers.

Our entrance into the Orinoco was dramatic. We were catapulted out of the swift waters of the mouth of the Capanaparo and staggered about among the powerful cross currents and eddies at the confluence of the two rivers. The east wind made travel no easier, as it was blowing a gale. On the far side of the Orinoco were the hilss of Guiana, rough and jagged, with gnarled begetation, and dark patches of jungle growth. There were several islands of odd shape, and one of them, about halfway across the Orinoco, was the Linda Bara, to which we made our way.

Encamped on this island we found Pablo Reyes' band and a number of "Racionales", that is, "civilized," Venezuelans of the llanos, who during the dry season take to living like the Indians, except that they clutter their shelters with civilized equipment. The result is that their houses are infested with parasites of all kinds. However, they too live upon crocodiles, turtles, and the eggs of the latter.

This portion of the Orinoco is, in late March and early April, the gathering ground of both Indians and Racionales. The region teems with turtles. By common agreement, stretches of the beaches where the turtles are known to gather in large numbers are not hunted until April, at which time the people dig up thousands and thousands of newly laid eggs out of which they make an oil for export. The center of this commerce is the little settlement of La Urbana, originally a Capuchin mission established about 1750.

Like Landaeta, Pablo Reyes had also learned of my coming, and was ready for me. He too is a shaman, and delights in speaking to a sympathetic listener about religious themes, of his conception of the universe, his understanding of life and death, of the history of his people and their future, of morality, and of justice. Likewise he was anxious to hear what message I had to bring from my people in respect to these things. So, sitting under the shelter of some branches, we talked. As we talked, we both worked. Pablo Reyes kept his hands occupied making string, fixing bows and arrows and I, when not busy writing, pretended to carve little figures out of wood. The childr n played about us and Pablo's three wives kept shyly in the background, though listening carefully to what we said and often throwing inquisitive glances in our direction.

Profiting by our proximity to Guiana, I decided to visit Urbana where I could buy some good for my friends and at the same time gather information about archaeology. The wind blew so hard it proved necessary to drag the canoe along the shore of the

island until we found the best place for a crossing. The sand was raised in clouds and our bodies were peppered with it so that we were forced to cover up closely! It finally proved impossible to continue and we were forced to stop and camp in the open with our backs to the wind and no shelter except what we could get from our hammocks. But holding them up was a s much a hardship as to be bombarded by sand. We made one attempt to cross the Orinoco in the afternoon but we were forced to give it up. Finally, late in the afternoon, putting our trust in "God and the Virgin", as the Venezuelan canoemen say, we launched the canoe and reached La Urbana about midnight. Our stay there was necessarily short and we hastened back to Linda Bara the following day, but I gathered enough from the examination of collections at the Salesian Mission to determine that the archaeology on that side of the Orinoco is quite different from that of the llanos.

At sunset as we were approaching the island we saw an army of bats in flight. The bats were coming as a cloud out of a Guiana hill in the far distance, and flew directly over us, and across to the other shore of the river, disappearing into the forest. We watched this vast army for about 15 minutes and then continued on our way, not because we had seen the last of the bats, but because time was short. I was told by my guide that this daily flight of the bats from the hills of Guiana across the Orinoco generally lasts two hours. How many thousands of them live in this cave and fly daily to forage for food in the forest is a matter of conjecture. The bat, so plentiful in this region, seems to have inspired the ancient potters of the llanos to use the head as a motif of decoration.

When we reached Pablo Reyes the next day we found there several other Yaruro families, relatives of Pablo, encamped with him. We talked some more, then departed several days later in order to return to Landaeta, who proved to be my best informant.

Without the aid of the Yaruros the crossing of the Orinoco would have been impossible. They are expert canoeists and safely ferried our baggage to the other side. Believing that I could handle a canoe, for by this time according to the Yaruros there wasn't anything that I could not do, since their gods had told them that I was one of the, I was asked to cross in an empty canoe, with the help of a 12-year-old boy. The canoe had several gaping holes in stern and bow about 10 inches in diameter. With serious misgivings, I embarked with the youngster paddling in the bow. Cross-currents, winds, and whirlpools made the half hour a very exciting one. Several times I gave up hope of crossing safely or of returning to our starting point, only to be encouraged by the laughter of my young companion who, when we were

in extreme danger, would turn and grin happily at me. However, we crossed safely and soon afterwards we hoisted sail, which consisted of my mosquito net tied to an improvised mast, and with the east wind behind us and with gunwales even in the water, we went flying up the Capanaparo. Our sailing was far from being monotonous, for every few minutes it was necessary to use strength and skill to keep the canoe upright. Three days later we reached Landaeta's camp.

The trip to Urbana had been exciting and interesting, but I brought back with me ulvers on my feet which incapacitated me for the rest of my stay with the Yaruros. My feet, swollen to immense proportions and with open sores, refused to support my body, and I was forced to forego any further trips, short or long. My life consisted from now on, for about six weeks, of lying on the sand or in a hammock, surrounded by my affectionate friends, talking about the universe, the Yaruros and their ideas.

In order to make it possible for Landaeta and his people to stay with me on this particular beach rather than move about in search of food, I turned over all of my food stock to them, which was consumed in two days, and thereafter they shared equally with me the products of the hunt. From that day on, I was completely in their care and Landaeta never left me. The burden of hunting fell on the younger men who went out every morning in search of crocodiles and turtles, of honey, palm nuts, roots and fish. My illness was of great concern to the Yaruros. They did what they could to make me comfortable and they went to special trouble to bring titbits such as honey and nuts Landaeta and a woman shaman sang over me often, This illness was a fortunate event in a way, for it permitted an uninterrupted intimacy between us.

There is a sharp contrast between the simple primitive material culture of the Yaruros and the wealth and poetic intensity of the spiritual. The casual visitor would see merely a naked people lying up and down the rivers in their canoes, or lying on the sand, feasting on crocodile or turtle. He would see stolid fixed faces, uncommunicative, affrighted. But if this traveler were to stay he would discover that from sundown to sunrise the Yaruro lives in an intensive romantic world which he cannot and rarely would care to share with anyone else.

We returned from the trip to La Urbana at sundown when bars of yellow, blue and white light streaked the western sky. The Yaruros were sitting on the sands watching this phenomenon with a certain rapture. They sat quietly and in silence facing the west until the light had faded and merged into a subdued golden glow. Then Landaeta came and greeted me affectionately. He spoke of what we had

seen in the western sky, explaining that it represented a greeting from the mother goddess Kuma, to her children the Yaruros and to me. The other men came also, and the women too put their arms about me, but the latter kept their faces averted as is proper in Yaruro culture. We settled ourselves on the sands. Small fires were burning with remnants of turtles and crocodiles broiling over them. The sands glistened in the moonlight that soon came upon us. Araguato monkeys roared in the distance. An occasional bird sang. Insects hummed. Toninos frolicking in the water came up to blow lustily. And Landaeta explained that these animals were also children of Kuma and that everyone in Kuma's world was glad that I had returned.

We smoked and Landaeta talked, recounting what his gods had told him about me; that now I was one of their family, and he affectionately called me "adjimai oteh" (elder brother), which became the standard form of address by all of his people. In return I was asked to call them little brother and little sister.

At a point Landaeta rose and walked away into the darkness. His son and nephew followed him soon after wards. He returned after an absence of half an hours, wearing his shaman's ceremonial cap and breechclout. He went to sit on the clearn white sands to the east of the camp, where he remained still and quiet for a long time. His wife went to him with a lighted cigarette. He smoked this in silence and alone. Finally he made a sign and his son and nephew rose immediately to plant a pole a few feet in front of him, and then retired again into the darkness. After some time Landaeta rose, and facing the east in front of the pole, continued to smoke in silence. It seemed a long time before he began to sing, softly and hesitantly, which time was measured by the rising of the stars. After he had finished two songs his wife approached him again, thrusting into the ground, close to the pole, a stick from which hung a small basket. Landaeta continued standing, facing the east and singing, pausing briefly between songs. His nephew went to stand behind him; his son went forward to stand at the left shoulder of his cousin. These two boys joined in the singing, repeating Landaeta's song stanza after stanza. A few women, led by Landaeta's wife and daughter, went to stand at his right side and joined the boys in answering the songs of the shaman. They stood there in front of the pole singing until the Southern Cross hung high in the sky. Then Landaeta's wife took a gourd rattle from the basket and gave it to her husband, who immediately began to shake it, its liquid tones blending harmoniously with the voices. The singers became more animated when they heard

the rattle, and soon they began to dance, jerking the body forward and backward, rhythmically and in unison. At times Landaeta would shake his rattle violently and his voice would betray his deep excitement. His wife from time to time would give a lighted cigarette to him, holding it to his mouth until it was consumed. At midnight the shaking of the rattle became more frequent and more violent and finally, in the middle of one song, everyone began to move around the pole. The women put their right hands on the shoulder of the one ahead, and soon were running and stamping the right foot as they did so. The men formed an inner circle, dancing one behind the other. At the end of each song they paused for a moment lined up in their original positions. As the night wore on, both singing and dancing became more and more animated until the shaman appeared to be in a frenzy. His voice rose in pitch, his rhythm was fater and more strongly accentuated, and all sang with greater feeling. The shaman danced in jerky movements, bending and twisting his body, half spinning about, first one way then the other, until he seemed to be quivering all over. The dance around the pole became almost a mad run, made more difficult by the soft sands and the complex movements of the body. The men would leap high and as the right foot was stamped in unison, a resonant beat was produced that seemed to blend with the pulsating roar of the howlers brought to us by the wind, and marked off by the rich rattling of the gourd and the choral singing. In the morning hours the wind rose again, blew more violently and the roar of the monkeys became stronger, and the Yaruros sang passionately. It was then, when the morning star was already high, and dawn lighted the eastern horizon, that they stopped.

The sun awoke me, and though I had slept barely two hours I felt quite refreshed. I sat up to look about me. There was the vas stretch of sand, the fringe of jungle and the sparkling river. My Yaruros were sleeping half buried in the sand, behind basketry to shelter themselves from the wind. The vultures were already at the piles of refuse, feasting on crocodiles and turtles. Soón the sun awoke my friends, and they too sat up to gaze quietly at the western sky, where they believe their gods live. It was only when the sun began to burn our bodies that they approached me to chat. They expressed their concern over my illness and soon busied themselves to make me as comfortable as possible. While I distributed among them a few presents bought for them in Urbana, and turned all of the food over to Landaeta, the younger men were busy building a sun shelter, an arbor of the sweet-smelling guava bush, though for themselves they had only a thin shade. From now on, I was completely in their care, and they were careful

nurses and tender friends The best of the hunt was mine, and even the women, delighted in taking care of my clothing, and in bringing me delicacies.

They were glad to see me, and the women shamans soon began their chants while the men surrounded me and told me in their own language and in broken Spanish what had occurred the previous night. Men are prohibited from singing during the day, but the women sit in swinging hammocks and chant their songs. I learned, too, that Landaeta's daughter had not died, for there she was, grateful and shyly looking at me, completely well. They attributed her cure to me, though I was not at all responsible for it. During the night, they told me, the gods had come among us, and told them that I, too, was one of Kuma's children, and again they insisted that I was related to them.

I learned that Puaná and Itciai are cocreators with Kuma, the mother goddess, and they are directly responsible for the actual creation of the world. Hatchawa, in the form of a little boy, is another god who has given mankind fire, the bow and arrow, and many other blessings. Now, when the shaman sings at night his soul leaves his body and travels to the land of Kuma, leaving his body behind. The gods may come then, enter his body in the form of songs, and transmit their messages to the Yaruros. They had come the night before to greet me and to reassure my friends of my goodness and my own powers of shamanism.

We sat, smoked and talked all day. In the afternoon we feasted on crocodile, turtle eggs, wild roots, palm nuts and honey. Finishing our dinner, we sat quietly facing the west, watching the skies. As the sun set low again, rays of gold, blue, and white shot into the sky from the horizon, and my friends rejoiced at this certain greeting of Kuma to us.

Darkness came upon us, and in anticipation of a long night of singing and dancing - I could sing but could not dance, since I could not stand up - I lay on the sands to rest before the beginning of the ceremonies, but the skies interested the Yaruros and they came to tell me what they read there. The brightness of the stars and the changing formations held a deep fascination for them. I understood but little of it, for their Spanish was too broken, and I was unfamiliar with Yaruro. So we spent the evening in quiet conversation and amity, conscious of the soft voices of the women in the background, children, laughter, and always the throbbing roar of the distant bands of howlers which was brought to us by the wind. To the Yaruros the howlers were formerly men.

Landaeta relayed to me questions uppermost in his wife's mind. Did I have a wife in my own country? Did I have any children? Why had they not come

with me? Once in Brazil I had been asked similar questions by another naked primitive fold, and I had answered truthfully that I had neither wife nor children. I remember their confusion and amazement. In their eyes I was a great man, and therefore I should have had many wives and many children. It is certain that they really never believed or understood my answer. So, in this case, not wanting to make extensive explanations about our civilization, which not only does not insist that men and women marry, but even makes it very difficult for them to do so, I lied, answering that I was married and had one son. Of course I had to describe both wife and boy to the inquisitive women. They wanted to know if her skin was the same color as mine, and her hair as white as mine, and what did she wear on her body? Also, they made me promise that some day I would bring my wife and boy to them, so that the women who, because of social taboos, could not converse directly with me, would be able to do so with my wife.

As we talked of these things, falling stars played in the heavens, "messengers of Kuma" according to the Yaruros, the big dipper swung higher, and the southern crosses began their journeys. For a while, the wind died down and the monkeys were heard no more. Always responsive to the world in which they live, the Yaruros became silent and still. And then, as the moon rose above the hills of Guiana, Landaeta disappeared in the darkness to return later and begin singing.

Unlike our own religious ceremonies, there was no attempt at creating artificial seriousness. The children played about noisily under the very nose of the shaman without reproof, and the adults talked happily. The imminent communion with the gods was an event of festive proportions and no restraint were put on normal and natural behavior before joyous events.

There was no dancing on this night, in deference to me, for I could not participate in it, but we sat in a semicircle and sang after the shaman.

Itciai arrived and I was helped to sit close to the shaman. Apparently Itciai was talking about me, referred to as "the Man". I lighted a cigarette and held it to the shaman's mouth. Without interruption of the song It was smoked in the shamanistic manner, or rather spirit style, and Itciai began to explain who I was He said that he knew me well, that I had visited Kuma's land many times, that I was a shaman; that my family was well, that my wife was waiting for me, and that my son was so anxious he began to fear that I was dead. He said that there was something big being saved for me in my country. I was a good man, and a man like the Yaruros; that he was glad I liked the Yaruros so

much, and that he was glad I was living with them. I had nothing to fear, since on my death I would go to Kuma land. Itciai was saving for me a beautiful large horse to ride in the land of the gods.

During this long discourse about me from Itciai, which lasted about an hours, and which was translated to me only in fragmentary fashion, the shaman often, at the beginning of a new thought, would shake the rattle violently before my face, and continue the same frenzied tone and shaking throughout. The people sang lustily, with feeling likewise, a great compliment to me.

Itciai had something to say about the Yaruros in general, namely, that they were doomed to die, but that a better world and life awaits them with Kuma. They will have houses and cattle, clothing, tobacco and all food; they will be born again there, young and strong. This world will come to an end because the Yaruros are being killed off.

Later Hatchawa came. I had a cigarette ready for him. He appreciated it and asked the shaman why I didn't drink of the shaman's drink. He urged me to drink it. I was a Yaruro. He also acknowledge my acquaintance in my own country and in Kuma's,and expressed deep affection for me. He brought good news of my family, saying to hurry back to my wife since she had been waiting for me with much love for a long time. He got another cigarette and I was embraced several times.

jaguar god
the great snake god

The next to come was the father of one of the Yaruro men, and as soon as I heard of it I offered a cigarette. It was properly acknowledged and the people were told by the spirit that indeed I knew a great deal, since I had cigarettes ready to greet the spirits. ~~At~~ About 3 o'clock in the morning came the god Puaná, expressly to greet me. He said that I lived in another land which he hinself had made and that he was glad I had come to visit this land. He received three or four cigarettes. He described my land as being like that of Kuma, high and beautiful. He gave me further news of my family and said that he was keeping for me much cattle and many horses in the land of Kuma.

Puaná was greeted with happy laughter and general approval, the reception as demonstrated by the quality of the frenzied singing. Puaná stayed with us for about and hour and a half, talking most of that time about me.

And finally at about 5o'clock Kuma herself came to visit me and, like Hatchawa, urged me to drink of the shaman's drink. I had to drink a gourd full of it, since it was held to my lips until I finished it. She gave me messages

similar to the others. Finally other Yaruros came, and the shaman eventually returned, being greeted with affection by all. We stopped when the sun rose and began another day of primitive life. We had danced and sung almost continuoisly for 36 hours.

This was my reception among the Yaruros after my return from La Urbana. We talked day and night about religion and about the world in which we lived. I learned that a mother-in-law and son-in-law must never look upon each other and never talk to each other, though they must be careful to do each other service; that a man must marry his first cousin and that socially he is under obligation to his maternal uncle who later becomes his father-in-law. Under Landaeta's tutelage the material in this report was compiled. In a sense, therefore, this is his report.

One day I announced to Landaeta that I would have to leave in the near future, giving as a reason that my wife and child needed me at home. Actually, there were other considerations, my physical condition was becoming worse, though the sores on my feet were a little better,and for the time being I had quietly exhausted the possibilities of obtaining fresh material from my friends. After all, we had been in contact with each other for six weeks, the major portion of it living communely and conversing with the shaman continuously day after day, sometimes even from sunrise to sunrise. My daily schedule consisted of rising at sunrise, drinking a little coffee sometimes brought to me by Landaeta, and immediately plunging into discussions of religious themes. This would last up to ten o'clock whe Landaeta would withdraw and busy himself making string or carving gourds for several hours. During this period I would seek clarification of some points from whomsoever was present, or work on social organization or on genealogy. In the early afternoon Landaeta would be back with new material, new ideas having thought over what he had said, what I had said, and what still needed to be said. This would continue until sundown.

Then there was a short intermission for dinner, but soon afterwards I was hurried over to the eastern edge of the camp, where Landaeta and his people sat after dinner, and there we would sit while the women made cigars for us, talking about mythology, religion and general philosophical concepts. These discussions would last until 10 or 11 o'clock, and often much later, and not rarely shamanistic performances would be given which would last until sunrise. Therefore there was an intense exchange of ideas for realitvely long times with no rest.

The time came when Landaeta became a little restless. He was not accustomed to camping on one spit for more than two or three days, at a time and he himself had done no hunting since I had joined them. Besides, the men and women had to forage father and farther away for food. If my physical condition had permitted, it would have been well to continue living with them, moving from place to place, as is normal.

However, I knew I had to return to civilization quickly. The effect of my announcement on my hosts was interesting and touching. It will be recalled that I had appeared in their midst as a stranger and a potential enemy and it was through a fortuitous event that I was accepted by them, not only as a friend, but as a relative who worshipped the same gods. Since then I had actually been given an affectionate place in their emotional lives and they were sorry to see me go. They understood the reasons that were making it urgent for me to leave, especially understandable was the fact that my"Wife and child" who had not seen me for many months were waiting for me to return. Nevertheless, they expressed sorrow, a certain amount of listlessness began to appear and they would come to me and sit by my side, telling me that they would be a rather lonesome people after I had gone, that they liked to talk about religious matters, and that when I would no longer be there with them they would have no one to talk things over with. This attitude affected the men and women in a very curious way. We had very little food in the camp, but still they would not go out and gather fresh quantities. And when I urged them to do so they answered that the knowledge of my coming departure made them very sad, and consequently they did not have the proper spirit to gather food, or even to eat.

These people have very little in the way of excess goods. Each family has a few baskets, perhaps a water jar, a mat or two, scraps of clothing and their tools, nothing more. And these generally were in very poor condition from long use. Knowing that I wanted to take back with me some of these things, they became busy weaving hammocks, making basketry and even pottery, so that I would take back to my "wife and child" objects new and well-made. This reaction on their part was spontaneous and they all expressed the idea that I should take back with me only new, well-made articles to remember them by; so for about a week before my departure there was intense activity around camp.

The day of my departure finally arrived and I said good-bye. There was no ceremonial wailing as had attended my departure from the Yawalapiti village in Brazil; but the very silence was expressive of the mutural sorrow at our parting

Landaeta loaded me and my baggage in a canoe and we drifted slowly away, leaving on the vast beach a few human beings alone in a strange world, but not lonesome, since they live with their gods.