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Ache

ETHNONYMS: Axe, Guayagui, Guayaki

Orientation

Identification. The Ache are a South American native population of hunter-gatherers that has lived in eastern Paraguay since at least the first Jesuit missionary reports in the 1600s. They were referred to as "Guayaki" in historic and ethnographic reports before the 1960s, when the first currently living bands were contacted. Because they refer to themselves as "Ache," this label has been adopted in most subsequent ethnographic reports.

Location. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Ache apparently roamed much of the forest in eastern Paraguay between the Guaira waterfall on the upper Paraná River, to just north of the present-day city of Encarnación. They were concentrated particularly in the low mountain ranges stretching from the Cordilla de San Rafael in the south to the Mbaracayu range in the north, and along the right bank of the middle stretches of the Paraná River. In the twentieth century, four major groupings of Ache ranged from the Ñacunday River and the Yvytyruzu foothills in the south to the Mbaracayu range in the north.

Demography. Four groupings of Ache were contacted in the second half of the twentieth century. These groups are designated by the regions they occupied at contact and the respective populations at contact can be estimated as follows: Northern Ache, about 650 individuals; Yvytyruzu Ache, about 60 individuals; Ypety Ache, about 40 individuals; Ñacunday Ache, 28 individuals. A census in 1987 resulted in the following population count: Northern Ache, 459 individuals; Yvytyruzu Ache, 87 individuals; Ypety Ache 30 individuals; Ñacunday Ache, 38 individuals. Informant accounts indicate that the Northern Ache and the Yvytyruzu Ache were a single group until the early 1930s, when they split up and never saw each other again.

Linguistic Affiliation. The Ache language is classified in the Tupí-Guaraní Linguistic Family. Each of the four independent groups speaks a different dialect, with the Northern and Yvytyruzu Ache dialects being very close, the Ypety group intermediate, and the Ñacunday dialect showing greatest divergence from the others. The Ache language is similar in many respects to the Guaraní spoken by other native groups of Paraguay, but it differs considerably in

pronunciation and in the lack of verb-stem conjugations. Ache and currently spoken Guaraní are mutually unintelligible, and about as similar as Spanish and Italian.

History and Cultural Relations

The Ache were first mentioned by Jesuit historians who described them in derogatory terms as living just like animals. Undoubtedly, the Ache provided a striking contrast to the elegant and "civilized" Guaraní horticulturist peoples who inhabited the region of the Paraná and Paraguay rivers at the time of the Conquest. The Ache lived in tiny bands that subsisted entirely off wild plants and animals. They had no leaders, no permanent settlements, and very simple tools and ornaments. Lozano (1873-1874) was the first to refer to them directly by name: "Only slightly less barbaric (than the caaiguas), is the guachagui nation, although easier to tame. . . . They go completely naked, men and women, except that they cover their backs with a piece of woven material to guard against thorns. . . . And seeing or sensing strangers in their country they flee quickly without allowing one to speak with them, because they believe either that they are going to be killed, or they are being sought in order to steal their women, like they do to each other. . . ."

The Ache were pursued relentlessly, by missionaries, enemy Indians, and slave traders until the second half of the twentieth century. For this reason, relations between them and all outsiders were overtly hostile, and very little was known about them until quite recently. In 1908 a German immigrant to Paraguay, Federico Maintzhusen, managed to make peaceful contact with a small band and published some information about them. Later, when Maintzhusen returned to Germany, this band disappeared or was assimilated into the Paraguayan population. In 1959 half of the Ypety band walked out of the forest to live with Jesús Pereira, a man who had treated one of them well when he was working as a captive slave. A short while later the other half of this band joined their kin at Pereira's farm. Pereira used this group to initiate contact with the nearby Yvytyruzu Ache between 1962 and 1963, and from these two bands came the first good ethnographic information on the Ache. More than half these Ache died from virgin-soil epidemics (epidemics that strike regions where people have no immunity to exotic epidemic diseases) within a few years of peaceful contact.

In 1968 Pereira moved his Ache reservation into the home range of the Northern Ache in order to contact and subdue them. The first band of Northern Ache was finally

contacted and brought to the reservation in 1970. By 1978 all of the Northern Ache had either been convinced to join the Ache reservation, or had died from virgin-soil epidemics that swept the Northern group after first peaceful contact. About one-half of the population died from these epidemics. Finally, missionaries from the United States made peaceful contact with the Nacunday Ache in 1976, and no more independent forest-living bands remained. The four Ache groups now live in four reservation-type settlements where they have learned agricultural practices and occasionally participate in wage labor. Many Ache also continue to return to the forest for several days or weeks at a time to hunt and gather as they did before contact.

Settlements

Before peaceful contact and sedentation on reservations the Ache lived in small nomadic bands that were highly flexible in composition, generally changing membership several times per year. The median size of precontact bands was about 50 individuals, with residential bands ranging from 3 to about 160 individuals on any particular day. These bands generally moved their campsite almost every day, but would occasionally stay in one place for a few weeks before moving on. Individuals knew the approximate location of neighboring bands and would visit them to share large kills or to search for romantic opportunities. The only time most of the members of the twelve or so Northern Ache bands would come together in one place was at prearranged puberty ceremonies and club fights. Campsites were located almost anywhere throughout the home range of a group, and fully adult members of the Northern group report foraging over an area of about 18,500 square kilometers in their lifetime. Despite their nomadic character, most Ache bands did have core areas that were exploited more frequently than the entire range of the group.

Campsites were generally located within 50 meters of good patches of palm trees that could be exploited for their fiber and heart. When large animals were killed, however, camp might be set up within a few meters of the kill site so as to avoid transporting the game. Water is abundant throughout eastern Paraguay and does not generally constrain the choice of a camping spot. Forest camps generally consist of five to ten fir hearths laid out in a circle with about 2 meters between each. The Ache sleep on the bare ground, on palm leaves and ferns, or on palm-leaf woven mats. Closely related family members or friends sleep together at the same hearth. Sleeping arrangements vary daily and are highly flexible. In precontact times, adolescent males were sometimes made to sleep in the center of a camp.

Small huts are made only when rain is imminent. These consist of four corner posts, two crossbeams, and a few dozen palm leaves laid flat across the crossbeams to shelter occupants from the worst of the rain. Current Ache reservation settlements have several hundred inhabitants, and wood-board-or bamboo-walled houses are spread out over several hundred meters. Each dwelling at the reservation houses one or more nuclear families and, often, visiting children, adolescents, relatives, or friends. Current reservation household composition changes almost weekly,

and many individuals do not reside with their own nuclear family members.

Economy

Subsistence and Commercial Activities. The precontact Ache economy was based on hunting mammals, exploiting palm products and insect larva, and collecting wild fruits and honey. Recent samples of subsistence suggest that meat provided about 55 percent of the calories in the diet, honey about 20 percent, and plants and insect larva about 25 percent. Today men spend about seven hours per day in subsistence work and supply about 90 percent of the calories in the diet. Women spend about two hours per day moving camp and about two hours per day in subsistence tasks. They dedicate the remainder of their time to intensive child care, which is crucial to the survival of offspring in the forest. Men hunt all mammals larger than 1 kilogram and also pursue larger reptiles, birds, and fish when the opportunity arises. No species of animal is generally taboo, although some species are not eaten by certain age and gender classes. Men hunt with long (2 meters) bows and arrows; the most important game species are peccaries, monkeys, large rodents, armadillos, coatis, and deer. Men also kill many game animals (e.g., coatis, armadillos) by hand, simply slamming them to the ground or by suffocating them (e.g., paca) when they are driven from their burrows. No traps are employed, nor are hunting blinds used. Instead men walk long distances each day in search of game, and often call for help when they encounter an animal that can be cooperatively hunted. Men also collect wild honey by climbing a tree in which a hive is located or felling it. Whereas meat is an important resource year round, honey is commonly eaten only in the early wet season.

In the forest, women carry the family's possessions in woven palm baskets and also carry small children and pets. They stop to rest frequently and generally move toward where the men are hunting. They chop rotting palm trunks looking for beetle larvae and also collect a variety of forest fruits, especially in the wet season. Once they have located a camp spot for the night they often spend some time extracting palm fiber. This fiber is chewed or extracted in water and is rich in starch. Men find the women's new camp spot late in the day and the one large meal of the day is prepared.

Food is shared widely among band members, with complete and equal pooling of meat resources and somewhat less sharing of vegetable resources. The current reservation Ache depend primarily on sweet manioc and corn as their staples and raise some domestic animals in addition to fishing and hunting nearby for protein. Some of the younger members of the population spend weeks away from the reservations engaging in wage labor as field hands.

Industrial Arts. Traditional artifacts included bows, arrows, clubs, tooth knives, palm-leaf baskets, mats, beeswax-covered woven water containers, brushlike utensils for sucking juice, stone axes, clay pots, monkey-tooth necklaces, skin bonnets, baby slings, bamboo flutes, lip plugs, and a few other small items. The Ache still make most of

these items for use, but only water containers and bows and arrows are sold commercially.

Trade. Before peaceful contact there was no trade either between the Ache and non-Ache peoples or between different Ache bands. Currently, trade takes place within the context of the market economy of rural Paraguay.

Division of Labor. Men traditionally hunted and extracted honey, whereas women moved camp, collected plant and insect products, and took care of children. Recent studies have suggested that the overriding importance of competent child care in a dangerous forest environment placed strong constraints on female subsistence activities. Men and women both were responsible for the production of the tools that each used, although women manufactured the bowstring used by men. Men built huts when necessary, but both sexes were involved in food preparation and butchering. Women and men were not tabooed from touching or using each others' tools, and about 3 percent of the adult men took on a female economic role and acted like females in social interactions. Men were in charge of a few ritual activities that involved the Ache. Members of both sexes are present at the birth of infants, and the two sexes interact freely and without tension both publicly and privately. In the current reservations men do all the farm labor, but women harvest manioc and prepare meals. Informal and friendly relations continue to be the norm between sexes.

Land Tenure. Traditionally, there was no territoriality in any sense of the word. All Ache bands and band members were free to roam wherever they pleased and often covered large areas. Bands had core activity areas, but these frequently overlapped and might change over a period of years. Members of the four major Ache groups avoided each other's home ranges because of fears about violence and raiding. The Ache currently live on four small reservations (from 300 to 2,000 hectares) with legal or provisional land titles. They have engaged in attempts to obtain more of their traditional home range through the Paraguayan legal system.

Kinship

Kin Groups and Descent. Ache society is not divided into descent groups, clans, sibs, or sections. Traditional band composition was flexible but often included sets of sibs (both sexes), their husbands, and some affinal kin. Close male relatives helped each other in club fights (see "Social Organization"), and female relatives cooperated to some extent in child rearing. Kinship was considerably less important in determining daily economic and social interaction than is the case for most small-scale societies. Informants consistently report strong alliances and residence with individuals described as "friends," having no close kin connection. Affinal ties were strong as long as the marriage lasted, but faded rapidly after separation. Sibling sets containing more than three surviving adult full siblings were rare, but often very cohesive and politically important when they existed.

Marriage and Family

Marriage. Ache marriages are arranged only by the principal parties, with parents and close kin having little or no say in the matter. Siblings, first cousins (both types), and individuals with particular ritual relationships are not allowed to marry. No prescriptive marriage rules exist. First marriage traditionally took place at about age 14 for women and 19 for men. Not infrequently there was great age disparity between the partners, with young women marrying men 40 years older than themselves on occasion, and men occasionally marrying women 20 years older than themselves. Marriages generally did not last long, and were interspersed with short romances in which one spouse might temporarily desert for a few days or weeks. Postreproductive women report a mean of thirteen spouses in a lifetime. However, marriages did tend to become more stable after two or more children were born to the couple. Between 5 to 10 percent of all marriages were polygynous, but no man ever had more than two wives simultaneously. A very low level of polyandry was also reported (less than 1 percent of marriages). No marriage or divorce ceremonies are performed. Generally, the man simply moves to the woman's hearth if he is young, or brings her to his if he is older and powerful. Postmarital residence is strongly matrilineal for young couples but bilocal for older couples. At the current reservations marriages are more stable than in precontact times and are generally between individuals closely matched in age.

Domestic Unit. Precontact Ache lived in small camps, which, because of widespread cooperative foraging and food sharing, were to some extent units of production and consumption. Nevertheless, individual nuclear families were the most important domestic unit, with adult sib sets sometimes important when they coresided. Reservation Ache emphasize the nuclear family more strongly, but sibling sets are also important units. Food sharing is now kin based, and small reciprocity networks have developed within the reservation.

Inheritance. The Ache have no rules of inheritance and nothing to inherit.

Socialization. The most important general social rule is to be a "good giver," or generous. Children are taught at a very young age to share part of all the food they receive. Child rearing is very permissive at early ages, and young children are very spoiled by Western standards. Older children are surprisingly well behaved and obedient. Children spend a good deal of time visiting other households without their parents. All overt expressions of hostility are discouraged; however, very young children are often encouraged to hit older children and adults when they are angry. When they calm down they are met by hysterical laughter and perhaps learn to be ashamed of publicly expressing their aggression. Reservation Ache strongly encourage their children to attend school, which also serves as a free day-care center.

Sociopolitical Organization

Social Organization. Precontact Ache lived in autonomous bands with no true leaders, headmen, or class distinctions. Each band, however, did contain one or two

males 40 to 60 years of age who were recognized as "having the band." Two or three men in their 50s and 60s organized most of the club fights and ritual events in the last twenty years before contact. Everyone participated in discussions about where to move or how to react to certain social situations. Generally, whoever was most strongly committed to his or her opinion would convince the others to cooperate actively or passively. When strong men wanted to take some course of action they simply forced their will on weaker individuals who were unwilling to resist. Men gained considerable prestige from being good hunters or tough opponents in club fights. The threat of violence and the availability of trustworthy allies and personal strength conferred greater coercive authority on some men. Reservation Ache have developed greater disparities in wealth and prestige because of differential exposure to outsiders and ability to manipulate missionaries and members of the Paraguayan national society. This has tended to concentrate power in the hands of a few young men who have lived with or been educated by outsiders.

Political Organization. Precontact Ache had no political organization, but formed alliances and coalitions, primarily at club fights. Reservation Ache generally have two elected chiefs who organize community affairs, redistribute goods, punish offenders, and represent the community before outside authorities. These chiefs are elected democratically with each man, woman, and child exercising one vote. Elections can be called whenever the community is dissatisfied with the actions of the current chiefs.

Social Control. Precontact Ache had no formal mechanisms for exercising social control. Group social pressure and negative opinions were partially effective, but powerful individuals could take whatever actions they thought they could get away with. Close kin of wronged individuals might come to their aid or defense if the offender were not too strong. Wife beating was common, as was child homicide by nonkin. Occasionally, groups of individuals took action against a single powerful man who had committed a particularly atrocious act. Reservation Ache publicly judge individuals thought to offend the norms of the society. The most common crimes today are petty theft by children and spouse mistreatment or desertion. Ad hoc punishments are administered and usually include public scolding, sentencing to public works, and, very rarely, short incarceration in a hut for a week or so. Although sanctioned homicide was common before contact, there have been no serious crimes (assault, homicide, rape) reported since contact.

Conflict. Violence played an important role in the lives of precontact Ache. Three major categories can be discussed: external warfare, club fights, and infanticide/child homicide.

External warfare was the single most important cause of adult mortality before peaceful contact. Ache were killed on sight by Guaraní Indians and Paraguayan peasants until the mid-twentieth century. Many children were captured and sold as slaves. Ache men, in turn, killed as many outsiders as possible, shooting them with arrows when they were encountered. Within Ache groups, shooting other individuals was strictly prohibited and only happened once in the last century.

Club fights between men, however, were common and

occasionally led to death. These fights were organized when an important individual died or was captured by enemies, when rival bands met accidentally in the forest, when men were caught in sexual affairs with other men's wives, and sometimes just because the powerful men of the group wanted to fight. Club fights did not pit one band against another, but instead rapidly degenerated into contests between individuals, with allies and kin backing them up. Older men were particularly feared, and newly initiated men in their teens and twenties were most apprehensive about fighting.

Infanticide and child homicide were common before contact, claiming the life of about one out of every ten children born. Parents would kill defective children, twins, or those born after a short birth spacing. Unrelated individuals often killed the children of men who died soon after the father expired. It was common to sacrifice girls ritually so that they would accompany important older men to the grave.

In all cases of homicide—whether killing an outsider, an Ache man with a club, or a child—the killer was made to undergo purification rites, was given particular body scars, and was called by a title noting that he had killed.

Religion and Expressive Culture

Religious Beliefs. Precontact Ache had no formal religion and no belief in a supreme deity or deities. They did have beliefs in certain spirits, three being most important. First, Kre'i was a shadow or gust of wind that could cure or help individuals in need. Second, Anjave was an evil spirit who often pushed people into the fire at night, knocked them out of trees, or generally caused harm to befall them. Finally, Berendy was a frightening spirit associated with meteors and falling stars, who could also take a human form. People are formed from the essence of the game that a mother eats while pregnant, and some part of the animals' spirits can linger in the spot where they died and cause harm to befall others. Myths fall into two categories—those that explain or are historical (origin of fire, origin of the moon, the flood myth, origin of night, why animals escape humans, why the Ache live in the forest) and those that have a moral (the mean old woman, the stingy man). Most reservation Ache have nominally converted to Christianity as taught by fundamentalist Protestant missionaries. They hold their own services several times a week.

Religious Practitioners. There were no religious practitioners in precontact society. Young, educated Ache men have become Christian preachers at the reservations.

Ceremonies. Important ceremonies are conducted at the birth of a child, at puberty for both sexes, at club fights, and after a killing. At birth, the man who cuts the umbilical cord of the child becomes a godparent, as do all those who hold the child in the first few minutes and the women who take care of the child on the first day while the mother recovers. Godparents have special obligations to their godchild and its parents, and often a child resides with a godparent later in life. Godparents and the parents of the new child are ceremonially washed with the bark of a vine a few days after the birth. The father of a newborn child enters a dangerous state where all animals, good and

bad, are attracted to him. He may have great hunting success or be eaten by a jaguar.

At first menses, girls are held and massaged as if they were newborn children. They are then isolated under mats for several days and not allowed to show their faces. Later, parallel rows of body scars are cut onto their stomach, back, arms, and legs. All men who have engaged in sex with them are washed with bark and enter the previously mentioned state of attractiveness to animals.

Boys undergo a lip-piercing ceremony between the ages of 14 and 18. When the wound is healed they often wear long wooden plugs in their lower lip. Club fights are often held at this time, and later the boys receive body scars. Boys form a special relationship with the man who pierces their lip. After club fights, women are lined up and men ceremonially hit their mothers and sisters while the women cry. Men who have killed others must be washed with bark and undergo severe food taboos.

Arts. Individual singing traditionally was common, particularly in the late evening. Men and women sing about relatives, events on their mind, or hunting, often in an ad-lib fashion. The Ache did not dance, but body painting and ornamentation were very common.

Medicine. There were no healers; traditional medical treatment was mainly limited to blowing on the affected part or an application of bark or smoke. Western medicine has been rapidly and enthusiastically accepted at the reservations, and some younger Ache have been trained in first aid.

Death and Afterlife. Beliefs about the afterlife appear to vary among the four Ache groups. The Northern Ache had no belief in an afterlife, but did believe that the spirit of a dead person could linger at the site of death and cause harm. For this reason they sometimes burnt the body of old, mean, wicked, or powerful people, or those who died in a violent manner. Most individuals were simply buried and a hut built above their grave. Small children were often sacrificed and placed in the grave with important individuals. The Nacunday Ache may have a more developed concept of an afterlife, in which people could experience pleasant or unpleasant circumstances after death. Whether this is because of the influence of earlier contact with Jesuit missions is unknown.

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Afro-Bolivians

ETHNONYMS: Morenos, Mulatos, Negritos (pejorative), Negros, Zambos

Orientation

Identification. Afro-Bolivians typically refer to themselves as "Negros" (Blacks). Black intellectuals introduced the term "Afro-Boliviano" in the last quarter of the twentieth century, and by the early 1990s the term has found its way into usage among Black urban migrants living in La Paz and more generally among Bolivia's intelligentsia. "Negrito" (Little Black) and "Moreno" (Brown) are the terms most commonly used by Bolivians when referring to Blacks; however, Blacks find the diminutive offensive. Afro-Bolivians use the term "Mulato" to refer to a Black of a lighter skin color. "Mulato" in its more common usage in Bolivia refers to the offspring of Whites or Hispanics and Black people. "Zambo" refers to someone of mixed Indian and Black parentage; it is mainly used derogatorily.

Location. There are Afro-Bolivian communities throughout Bolivia, especially in the semitropical climates of the departments of La Paz, Santa Cruz, Beni, and Cochabamba. The largest concentrations of Blacks are found in the lowland provinces of Nor Yungas and Sud Yungas in the department of La Paz. Several communities of Black agriculturists are located in each of these provinces, such as Chicaloma and Chulumani in Sud Yungas and Mururata and Tocaña in Nor Yungas. The Bolivian Yungas are characterized by heavy rainfall and a mean temperature of 23°C.

Besides rural agricultural communities, there are migrant communities of Afro-Bolivians in all major Bolivian cities. In La Paz, Afro-Bolivians live mainly on the outskirts of town, especially in the rapidly growing areas of El Alto and Villa Fatima. Because of inconsistent migration patterns, there are no well-defined Afro-Bolivian neighborhoods in La Paz. As migrants from rural villages arrive in La Paz, they settle in the poorest neighborhoods. Participation in social activities, music ensembles being the most important example, is central to Afro-Bolivians' establishment of a subjective sense of community. These groups are based on common origin, for example the province of Nor Yungas. They chose a central location within the city to