

Unarranged Notes on the Aucas of the Nushino Basin - Dr. W. C. Tidmarsh

Early in May 1945, Joaquina Grifa, a yumba or Quichua speaking forest Indian girl escaped from the Aucas who had taken her captive just over a year ago as she was going up the river Arajuno with other Indians in a dug-out canoe. She gave the following information of the aucas, their customs and language. Most of the details were obtained directly from her, but some were obtained through Srta. Ella Souder.

Estimate of number of Aucas varied in different accounts, and at various times suggested that there were perhaps thirty men, twenty men in each of two houses (communal), seven families in a house. A normal family consists of husband, two wives, four or five children by first wife, one or two by second. Hence assuming twenty male adults, the number of aucas would be in the neighborhood of a hundred and eighty to two hundred including women and children.

Two main Aucua houses, one near Shell camp. other nearer River Napo in the region of the river Sumine or perhaps south of the Nushino in that region. One of the Curages from time to time uses a house across the river Sapino (or Tsapino)

When she was captured, a man caught her by both hands and swung her over his shoulders and carried her into the forests, later, he made her walk and led her by the hand. The band of aucas followed the 'barradero' from the lower Arajuno, across the Sotano and the Nushino, and onwards in the same direction. She was captured about nine in the morning and they reached their house about nightfall. She was given a hammock, but threw it in the river, the Auca Yacu. She seems to have been well treated, and lived and was treated like all the other women. They would go out to the chacras at early dawn, and continue working till darkness without returning to the houses during the day when it was really fine weather. Toward the end of her time with the Aucas they wanted to marry her, but she refused: and the women told her that one day, on the following day, there would be a great feast, and if she would not consent to be married, she would be killed. Consequently, taking advantage of the moonlight, she fled from the house when all were asleep, (she says in the middle of the night, but to an Indian that could signify any time after 9 P. M.) and knowing the direction of the Napo, she escaped through the forests, and arrived on the banks of the Napo River in the neighborhood of Sumino Chicta at about dawn. Shortly, a canoe came by, and a man wanted to shoot at her, but an Indian restrained him, saying it was but a girl. She called out to them to take her across the river, and was able to explain that she had been captured by the aucas, and had escaped. After that she lapsed into auca language, probably overcome by the nervous strain of the ordeal. These Indians took the girl to Santa Rosa and gave her clothes. Later Mr. Souder hearing of her escape sent and took her back to his home.

The aucas take a great pride in their hair. It is long and abundant and they encourage growth by treatment with concoctions from the forest plants.

All sleep in hammocks, men and women in different parts of the house. The hammocks are strung up in lines, the height above the ground varying with the size of the hammock and its occupant. A fire burns under each hammock. Little boys sleep with the father, little girls sleep in the same hammock with their mother until big enough to have their own hammock. Men make their own hammocks and women make the women's hammocks.

The women who go out to work all day in the chacras come back heavily loaded with food which they divide with the women who did not go back but were occupied with duties in the houses.

The Aucas live in perfect harmony. She never saw men fight or saw a man strike a woman. The men have two wives, the first may have four or more children, but the second is put to death apparently with great festivity after giving birth to a second child. Joaquina insists that such a man does not marry a second wife, but this seems improbable. Often the two wives are sisters, and often the second wife is taken as a little child and lives with her future husband until she is old enough to be married. The second wife is killed with lances, and seemingly with great rejoicing.

When the men return from a killing expedition, having caught or killed victims, there is great rejoicing. The men drink much chicha then retire to their hammocks. The women then beat them with nettles (ortiga) until they fall asleep. These victories are celebrated by a great feast in which they have a dance. In the dance the women gather in two groups in the center, all holding hands, and the two groups march toward and away from each other in rhythm; at the same time around this group the men jump and leap brandishing their lances. At these feasts all put on clothes that they have captured, regardless of sex, thus the men may arrange themselves in trousers or with skirts. On their heads they put crowns of vertically placed long white feathers of the 'garza' and on the crown or back of the head, they put the dried skin and brilliant blue plumage of the 'lusham pishcu'. These adornments are thrown away after the dance as they become damaged, but the clothing is guarded in 'zaparos' until the next occasion. The auca know how to make zaparos, double woven baskets with leaves placed between the two layers of weave, overlapping in such a fashion that water falling from above will not enter. On these occasions the men bore holes through the nose just above the alae nasae and put small balsa sticks through horizontally. The holes are allowed to close up after the feast until the next occasion.

Men and women alike wear thick balsa sticks through holes in the lobes of the ears.

When the men return from an expedition without having taken or killed any victims, they are furious, and the women often run away and hide in the forest.

On one occasion, Joaquina was taken by the auca women to watch the airplane at the Shell Camp on the river Arajuno. She heard the women discussing as they saw the planes come, be unloaded and return to their base camp. One said: It is a man; it MUST be a man; whereupon the girl explained that it was a kind of "house built like a canoe" bringing things to the camp, for she remembered seeing the amphibian plane coming to the lower Arajuno when she was free. But the women would not believe this and declared this strange creature a "man-bird" - for did it not have arms stretched out on either side? But if it is a man, they reasoned, it must be woundable, and so they could kill it. So this decision was communicated to the warlike men folk who have a terrible thirst for human blood, and they started throwing spears up at the plane whenever it came over their houses. But as the lances could not reach the plane they decided to bring the tallest tree in the forests and erect it near their houses so the man bird would strike against it and fall, and then they could truly kill it. And they were furious when on the next visit from the air, the plane passed high above the clouds. A little later, round about last Christmas, a plane dropped some beads, clothing and other objects over the auca house. These were eagerly picked up with the exclamation, "Look, it is wounded. They have dropped out of its insides. And so a feast and dance were held to celebrate the wounding of the man bird.

Joaquina never saw an auca drunk; they take unfermented chicha made from boiled vuca (manioc) which is not masticated by the women.

as is the custom among other tribes of Indians.

She noted perfect harmony among the aucas. The men never fought and one was never seen to strike a woman. Only when the men returned from an unsuccessful foray did the women hide, and that from the passing fury of the disappointed warriors.

The aucas have plenty of matches which they use now instead of the little fire sticks which they formerly rubbed between their hands on a block of hard wood.

They have money, believed robbed from Indian houses at Achupara on the Napo River.

They have plenty of axes, machetes, and knives which they use. All these are spoils from robbing raids. They also make and use scrapers made from fresh-water shells that they sharpen by rubbing on stones. And they make knives from the hard wood of the chonta and related palms. These they use mainly for culinary purposes, such as the peeling of the fruit of the chonta palm.

Aucas know how to swim, and this is disposed of an old belief that they cannot swim or cross large rivers.

In making chonta spears, they formerly scraped the wood with the shells, but now use knives.

They make and use blow guns. She saw no gold among them. The aucas divided the strings of beads each man taking a single strand. The roofs of the aucas come down nearly to the ground, and their doors are very low. They do not make canoes, but have three stolen ones taken from the River Nushino.

They have no hens, and she saw no eggs of any kind, and could give no word for eggs.

Joaquina could tell but little about the aucas mode of counting, saying that they use their fingers and perhaps toes. A few numbers that she gave were Quichua, and all disarranged, thus she gave three for one, and four for two.

From the river Arajuno to the auca house was about nine hour's walk.

The aucas have saucepans (kettles), basins and other objects stolen from houses, and these are not used, but guarded as mementos of their victories. The aucas named the airplane 'wina' and thought to wound its abdomen with their lances.

Among the aucas are two other 'yumbas' women, robbed from the Napo (?Achupara), and perhaps one from Huitu (?), named Margarita and Victoria. These have now become incorporated in the auca tribe and are married to auca men.

On one occasion the auca women took Joaquina with them to the banks of the Napo river near Santa Rosa where hidden in the undergrowth, they watched the canoes passing. This helped her to know in which direction to travel when she ran away. J said the aucas have no flies or mosquitos. The aucas visited the house and neighborhood of an Indian, Shanri, near Achupara. She played with the auca young women when they would bathe together in the river. The Indians do not seem to poison the rivers, and do not have barbasco.

She said the Indians have no witch doctors, only two chiefs, and was unable to give me a word for God, demon, or spirit: while among the yumbas the latter two are very strong concepts.

She could tell but little about the legends and stories of the old people, who talk much among themselves but did not speak much to her.

They have no hearthstones; pots are put directly on to the fires. They use just any of the hammock fires for cooking, and do not have a

Cuando el brujo está sonando toma Kaapí, y le sopla al enfermo desde cabeza hasta el punto de los pies. El enfermo mismo no toma ninguno remedio. Cantan y bailen con esto no hay. Fuera de enfermo también sopla el brujo a todos comestibles las que tiene el enfermo en la casa, para hacer desaparecen la materia de la enfermedad. Que ha hecho al la persona enfermo no puede saber.

With la bola masticado se unta el aparato de cacería de pescador en el anzuelo.

La bola debian masticada se unta el arco. Mi informante me dice que esta clase se ha encontrado.

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## AUCA FAMILIES

Lower house (Auca Yacu)

Wamayi

Many children  
Ayuba youngest boy  
of few months.  
Kumikón- Dr. Tidmarsh's list from Joaquina?  
Upper House (Laprun Yacu)

Van

Akan

Panvana  
Umira

Daba

supu

Umankita

Itaka 2

Gustavo

Biba

Mika

Liantowa 1

Umara

Likta

Daba

Tua

Van

Kara 2

Kikita

Chanto

Wawa unm.

Kabo unm.

Namo - widower

Otros

Hombres

Huarkama

Mijima

Mujeres

Api (Victoria)

Jami o ngami

Palmira

Unui ?

Kuntaka

Ninos Wira Kimu

Markame

Zhavi Numi

Margari

Niña Nawa

Dev. una

Tcita (Joakim)

Bogonai

Umatiki

Umiya

Janwa