



TYPE OF INDIAN OF THE PERUVIAN REGION

Hipurina man, 22 years old, from Acre-District, Brazil

INDIANS OF PERU¹

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AMERICAN CONSUL AT IQUITOS, PERU

(WITH TWO PLATES)

INTRODUCTION

The difficulty experienced in obtaining reliable information relative to conditions in general in the region about Iquitos, leads me to believe that the results of certain studies I have made regarding the Indians of Peru may be of some value and interest to others.

I had hoped to make a more thorough study of this interesting subject from actual observation among the different tribes, obtaining specimens of their weapons of warfare, their clothing, utensils, etc., but ill health has prevented any systematic work along these lines. I have been fortunate, however, in having been able to make several trips among different tribes with Mr. George M. von Hassel, thus gaining first hand a limited amount of information on the subject, but the greater part comes from Mr. von Hassel himself, who, it seems to me, is probably one of the best authorities on the subject and one highly qualified to speak regarding these Indians. Mr. von Hassel has had long experience in the interior of Peru. During the last ten or twelve years he has lived for months at a time with various tribes, speaks the Quechua language and many other dialects, and by gaining their confidence has been able to mingle freely with the Indians, gaining an insight into their customs, methods, and manner of living such as few white men have enjoyed.

The accompanying photographs were taken by the French explorer Robushon, who spent a number of years among different tribes. Among his experiences was his romantic marriage with an uncivilized Indian girl, whom he met in the forest one day roaming about entirely nude and alone, her father and mother and others of the tribe of which she was a member having died of some pestilence.

¹ Consular report to the Department of State, transmitted to the Smithsonian Institution by the Department. Dated Iquitos, Peru, November 30, 1907. Slightly abridged and several illustrations omitted.

He took her to France, where she was educated, and she returned to this country a few years later thoroughly conversant with three languages and assumed, with credit to herself, a place in local society among the best families here. Mr. Robushon undertook another trip in a wild part of the Upper Putumayo district about two years ago. He has never returned, and searching parties which have been sent out have been unsuccessful in their efforts to find him. It seems most probable that he was killed and eaten by some of the cannibal tribes of that region.

Owing to the difficulty of obtaining authentic data as to population, due allowance must be made for the estimated number of inhabitants of the Department of Loreto (in which Iquitos is situated), 120,000, and that of trans-Andean Peru, 300,000. Of this latter number one-half, or 150,000, are said to be wild Indians, most of whom, aside from petty tribal wars, are peaceably inclined, obtaining food and such raiment as they require from the supply furnished by a generous and lavish nature.

ENUMERATION OF TRIBES

Following is a list of the principal tribes which go to make up this total of 150,000, with the approximate number of inhabitants of such tribes as are said to number more than 2,000, though names of smaller tribes and subtribes almost without number could be added. The total of these numbers is 116,000, and the difference, therefore, 34,000, comprises such tribes as those whose number of inhabitants does not appear on the list and which are composed mostly of from 200 to 1,000 souls each. Some of these tribes are said no longer to exist as such, having become extinct by intermarriage with other tribes, taken prisoners by stronger tribes and the whites, or dying from diseases introduced by the white man, usually small-pox.

In the spelling of these names one will detect at once the Spanish style, which has been given to the words as pronounced by the natives themselves, and as there is always considerable difference in accent, enunciation, etc., of different individuals in the pronunciation of the same word, one often meets with several ways of spelling the name of a certain tribe. Most of the tribes retain the name handed down for generations, though others are known by the names of the rivers or vicinity in which they live, being thus designated by the rubber-gatherers or the whites with whom they come in contact.

Principal Indian Tribes of Peru

Tribe	Number
Huitotos	} 20,000
Gellas	
Emuirises	
Spunas	
Ucheruas	
Onocaises	
Sebuas	
Nongonis	
Comeyones	
Sigayor	
Miralles	} 13,000
Bonanisayes	
Casabes	
Caidullas	
Lunas	
Yaramas	
Munjoses	
Conroy	
Ayafas	
Achotes	
Cuyubos	
Canines	
Yanis	
Minicuas	
Miretas	
Chontaberis	
Cheseyes	
Tamas	
Herayes	
Tayajenes	
Guipi	
Angoteros	2,000
Orejones	2,000
Rosainos	
Inji-Inji	
Muratos	} 7,000
Andoas	
Iquitos	
Itatos	
Huambisas	} 2,000
Batucos	
Antipas	
Aguarunas	2,000
Jeberos	
Cayapas	
Cahuapanas	

Tribe	Number
Cocamas	} 2,000
Nautinos	
Ocayos	
Cocamillas	
Lagunas	
Omaguas	
Mayorunas	
Capanahuas	3,000
Nahuas	2,000
Shipibos	
Shetibos	
Conibos	
Remos	
Sacuyas	
Amueshas	
Piros	
Amahuacas	7,000
Yurimaguas (now extinct).....	
Yaros	
Pamaris	3,000
Yamamadis	2,000
Hipurinas	2,000
Pacahuaras	2,000
Mojos or Muzos.....	6,000
Arahunas	} 2,000
Capahenis	
Campas	} 15,000
Machigangas.....	
Campas (pure).....	
Campas Bravos.....	
Cashibos.....	
Chonta-Campas.....	
Pangoas.....	
Cumatjcas	
Cotangos	
Pucapacuris	
Mashcos.....	} 6,000
Mashco-Piros.....	
Sirineiris.....	
Moenos.....	
Huachipairis	
Amajes	
Tuyneiris	
Andoques	2,000
Araizaires	
Huarayos.....	} 3,000
Yamiacos.....	
Tiatinaguas.....	
Atsahuacas.....	
Pacahuaras	2,000

Tribe	Number
Chacobas	
Amigos or Inaperis.....	
Huaparis	3,000
Boras	3,000
Cachiboyanos	
Ticunas	3,000
Yuminaguas	
Yahuas	
Pebas	
Zaparos	
	116,000

BRIEF DESCRIPTIONS OF TRIBES

Brief sketches of the manners and customs of a few of the stronger of these tribes may be of interest before a general summary is made.

THE HUITOTOS

The Huitotos, together with their subtribes, are considered the strongest in point of numbers of any of the Indians of Peru. They inhabit the district of the Upper Putumayo River (called Içá in Brazil) and the regions between that river and the Yapurá, or Upper Caquetá, on the north and as far south as the vicinity of the Napo River. The greater part of these are inclined to treat with the whites, and several thousands of them are employed by rubber-gatherers. They speak a distinct language and use the lance and club as weapons, while stone axes are to be found among some of the tribes of the central regions. As is usual with Indian tribes generally, the women do most of the domestic drudgery and hard labor. It is a common sight to see a mother with a babe at her breast bringing in a supply of yucca for the noonday meal in a reed basket hung from her head down her back.

The houses in which they live are not unlike huge circus tents in shape, constructed of poles covered from peak to ground with a thatching of palm leaves. In one of these houses it was estimated that 150 persons were living at the same time. Each family is allotted a triangular space of about 12 feet, and at each point of the triangle poles are erected, from which their hammocks (made of woven reeds) are hung, while in the center of the triangle the cooking for the family is done over a small fire. The rougher work of crushing the yucca, etc., is carried on in the open space in the center of the house, though this space is free to all and is always used for their dances and other celebrations.

THE CAMPAS

Though less numerous than the Huitotos, the Campas, with their subtribes, numbering in all some 15,000, are much the more intelligent and in many respects the most interesting of any of the tribes of Peru. They inhabit the vast region from Rosalina, on the Upper Urubamba, to the junction of that river with the Tambo, and from that point the left bank of the Ucayali as far as the Pampas del Sacramento. All of the subtribes speak the Campa dialect and generally wear the traditional *cushma*, a sort of sleeveless shirt, crudely woven from the wild "cotton" which grows in abundance on a large tree in those regions.

The Chonta-Campas and the Cashibos are the least advanced of the subtribes, and still use the light bark of a certain tree for the scant covering they wear when any is used at all. They are generally hostile to the whites and at times have been known to eat human flesh, believing that by so doing they imbibe the strength, physical and intellectual, of their victim. The Cashibos are almost continually at war with the neighboring subtribes. They inhabit the region of the Pachitea and Pampas del Sacramento. They number approximately 3,000, though the continual intertribal wars and frequent excursions of the whites into their territory in quest of workers (when, if resistance is shown, they are often taken by force and practically enslaved) are causing a steady decrease. Men and women alike go naked or use the bark of the tree in the form of a long shirt, as above mentioned. Because of the isolation of their position, the machete and other arms so commonly used by other tribes are almost unknown to them, and they still use, as they have for centuries past, the stone axe and the bow and arrow, and defend the entrance to their homes by concealing sharpened spears in pitfalls.

The Indians of the head tribes of the Campas are generally of rather noble features, friendly to the whites and willing and quick to learn their habits and customs. They are excellent canoeists, learn readily the use of firearms, and are sometimes employed in rubber-gathering. They spin and weave and cultivate quite extensive tracts of corn, yucca, bananas, peppers, and a species of potato.

The Machigangas, another subtribe of the Campas, live in the Upper Urubamba and Pachitea districts, and with few exceptions are friendly toward the whites. They are rather small of stature, with regular features, and men and women alike wear the *cushma*. They are polygamists. Their numbers are also steadily decreasing,

as is the case with all the wild tribes, through fevers, smallpox and attacks by neighboring tribes. From their language and customs they show that they must have been in contact with the ancient Incas, though not entirely assimilated. They worship in their manner the sun and moon, believe in witchcraft, and besides their own language speak the Campa dialect.

The Chonta-Campas are distinguished from others of the Campa subtribes by a small piece of wood about an inch long which they wear pierced through the upper lip. Some also wear such a decoration from the lower lip and a metal pendant from the nose and tattoo their faces with blue penciling.

THE AGUARUNAS

The Aguarunas number approximately 2,000, inhabit the Marañon River district below the Cahuapanas River, have their own language and laws, believe in a good and a bad god as well as in witchcraft, and are polygamists. They use the lance and blow-gun with poisoned arrows. They are of medium stature, very muscular, with regular features, and some of the women are quite beautiful. They engage extensively in cultivating the natural products of the country. This tribe, in civilization sometimes designated "Head-hunters," has the gruesome custom of preparing human heads in a manner by which, though reduced to about one-fifth their natural size, they retain the same shape throughout that they possessed during life, and in a seemingly mummified, diminutive head thus prepared, can easily be recognized the features of the individual when alive. This custom originated in preparation of the heads of the enemies of the tribe who fell victims to them during their wars and which were kept as trophies. The head was cut from the body and placed on a pole, where it was allowed to remain several days till decomposition had fairly set in. A vertical cut was then made in the cranium and the bones deftly removed in such a manner that only the thick cuticle remained. The inside of the head was then burned and seared with hot stones and afterwards allowed to smoke in a flame from the burning roots of a certain species of palm. This flame is said to act much the same as salt on the parts exposed, and by the process described the head is made much smaller in size. Specimens of these heads became so much in demand a few years ago for museums, etc., that a premium seemed to be thus placed on the heads of persons venturing in the vicinity of this tribe, and many murders resulted. The Peruvian government has now forbidden the practice, and the specimens becoming more scarce are

commanding higher prices. I have known of them selling for \$150 to \$200 in gold, and rather a poor specimen was recently sold in Iquitos for \$80. In the Rio Negro and Orinoco regions there is said to exist a tribe which prepares entire bodies in this manner, and in the Putumayo district they are said to retain in natural size, by a system of smoking, the hands of enemies slain in battle. I have seen teeth, shin bones, and other parts of skeletons thus treasured.

The Aguarunas, in common with several tribes, also make use of certain poisons, both in their wars and in hunting. The poison is extracted from different species of vegetables and plants and prepared by the women and old men of the tribe. It has the peculiarity of killing game without giving any evil effects to one who may eat the flesh. Another poison is scattered over the surface of a pool where fish are known to gather, and great numbers of them are killed in this manner. The small fish, being able to withstand the effects of the poison for only a short time, rise to the surface first, and later the larger ones, though only the latter are taken. There is thus a vast waste, and though this form of fishing is prohibited by law, it is by no means stopped. The Indians of the Putumayo use in their wars a kind of poison which has the peculiarity of producing putrefaction almost as soon as the wound is made.

THE HUICHIPAIRIS

These Indians, united with neighboring tribes, have resisted to this day the invasion of the whites and remain hostile. They live in the Upper Madre de Dios district, are very muscular, both men and women, though not large of stature. The naturally fierce aspect of the men is heightened by the custom of perforating the upper lip, through which a piece of wood, feather or shell is inserted and worn. They have a language of their own, but many of them understand the Quechua and Campa dialects, the latter being introduced by the women of the Campa tribes, whom they are continually stealing.

THE INJI-INJI

Five hundred souls, the remnant of what was once a powerful tribe, go to make up all that now exists of the Inji-inji Indians, who live along the small streams and branches of the Curaray River. They are the lowest of the Peruvian Indians, both in manner of living and in the progress they have made. They use stone axes for breaking down the trees when small clearings are needed in which to plant corn and yucca. They are not hostile to the whites, but avoid as much as possible any contact with them.



TYPE OF INDIAN OF THE PERUVIAN REGION
Hipurina girl, 18 years old, from Acre District, Brazil

THE NAHUMEDES

This tribe, now almost extinct, is remarkable only for the tradition which clings to it of having been responsible for the naming of the great Amazon. It was they who attacked the Spaniard Arellano on his journey down the great river after he had deserted the Pizarro expedition. The Indians, because of their *cushmas* and the manner of wearing their hair flowing loosely down their backs, were thought to be women warriors or "amazonas," and from that incident, as history also asserts, the river has retained to this day the name of Amazonas.

THE OREJONES

This name is given to the tribe which inhabits the Napo and its branches, from the fact of their enlarging the lower part of the ear by a process which is begun when they are children, until sometimes the ear hangs down almost to the shoulder. This custom is attributed by some to the Incas, who in this manner indicated the families and descendants of Incas of "royal" blood.

THE TRIBES AS A WHOLE

The average traveler through the Amazon lowlands would probably notice little difference between the various tribes further than that some wear the *cushma*, others a short covering from waist to knees, and others go entirely nude. Several reasons are apparent by which the Indians have been driven to wear clothing at times: First, the moral; second, climatic conditions, such as cold in the mountainous regions, and third, the abundance of flies, mosquitoes, and other insects which abound in a hot country.

The student would immediately note other differences, probably the first and one of the important ones being that in the regions on the right bank of the Amazon, from Urubamba and Ucayali to the Marañon, all the Indians, with the exception of the Aguarinas, use the bow and arrow, while those on the left bank use the lance and blow-gun with poisoned arrows. These and many other items in detail would probably be interesting, but there has been no opportunity for systematic study of the subject, so general information regarding the Indians of Peru is all that can be furnished.

FORM OF GOVERNMENT

All of these tribes of Indians seem to be aggregations of numerous families, with one leader or chief, who is recognized as such by all the tribe. Among these families are subtribes, which in turn have their leaders or subchiefs, though the entire group in that

vicinity are under the head tribe. For example, the Aguaranas, who, because of their superior culture rule over several smaller tribes, and each of these subtribes has its head man, or *Curaca*, but owe no allegiance whatever to each other; in fact, they often war with each other without interference from the head tribe. They rarely unite to fight a common enemy, which fact has been largely responsible for their condition today, as they have not been strong enough in their scattered condition to repel the invasion of the rubber-gatherers.

LANGUAGES

For the most part these tribes speak independent languages, with many dialects. Some of the tribes count as high as five, a very few even to ten, but the most of them use only the fingers in expressing numbers greater than one.

HOUSES

Excessive rains have made living under some sort of shelter compulsory, and as a result, even during their wanderings in the forests, rude shacks of poles covered with a thatching of palm leaves are hastily constructed, though their permanent abodes are often very cleverly and strongly built of the same materials.

FOOD

The Indians of Peru subsist almost entirely on the yucca, bananas, corn, fish, and the flesh of birds and game from the forests. Stones and hardwoods are used for grinding and crushing, and earthenware pots, etc., are used for boiling, roasting, and frying. In only a few localities is salt to be found, and even then it is generally used in a mixture with hot wild peppers. Some of the tribes that live on the Amazon and Ucayali eat earth from certain deposits (known by the Inca word *kulpa*) which contains a proportion of salt. Wild animals also seek these deposits. This scarcity of salt and the natural craving of the system for this mineral have been the means of making the eating of this earth a vice similar to the cocaine or opium habit. When taken in such quantities the stomach of the individual becomes much distended and death eventually results from it.

The rather insignificant looking yucca, a shrub which grows ordinarily to a height of from four to six feet, is probably the most practical and useful of all the vegetal products of this region. The root of this plant, which resembles somewhat our sweet potato, is really the "staff of life" for the average Indian household. Baked, it

serves as a substitute for bread; fried or boiled, it is as good as our potato; kneaded into a dough and baked with minced meats, fruits, etc., it makes a splendid pastry, while the juice, after treatment by certain processes, is made into *masato*, the beverage common to nearly all the tribes of Peru. To make this drink, baked yucca, crushed and ground till it forms a sort of a meal, is placed in earthen jars, mixed with the raw article likewise crushed (or sometimes chewed by the Indians till, mixed with saliva, a considerable portion is liquid), which serves to ferment the mixture, thus producing a greater or less amount of alcohol. The preparation of this drink is usually the occupation of the older women. Great quantities of it are drunk at the celebrations of marriage ceremonies, births, the beginning of a tribal war or at its successful termination. On journeys a certain amount is always carried, which, mixed with water, furnishes a very refreshing drink. The juice of the banana, prepared in more or less the same manner and mixed with water, is also refreshing.

PHYSICAL CHARACTERS

In the color of his skin the pure-blooded Indian of Peru is practically the same dark brownish color as the North American Indian. The most of the tribes, however, seem to have become mixed at some time or other with whites or blacks, and many variations in color are therefore to be noted, from the very dark tribes of the Putumayo, in whom may be traced strains of blood of escaped negro slaves from Colombia and Brazil, to the very light Huarayos of the Madre de Dios, of an ancestry of mixed Indian and Spaniard. In stature they may be said to be below the average in height, though usually very stockily built, and strong and muscular.

MENTAL TRAITS

When brought from their native haunts into contact with civilization, these Indians are as a rule very quick to adopt the customs of the whites. It is admirable to see the manner in which they learn in a short time to use firearms. As pilots on the smaller boats plying the tributaries of the Upper Amazon many are rendering excellent service, while the crews are often made up entirely of men born and reared in the wilderness. A few of the more aggressive have become shrewd business men and wealthy exporters of rubber.

POLYGAMY

All of the tribes of this region practice polygamy, a man's standing and wealth being determined by the number of wives he may have, though this number rarely exceeds ten, the wives ranging

in age from ten years to fifty years. A man's wives are obtained from among the women of his own tribe, or by barter or theft from neighboring tribes. Thus a number of wives, one the favorite for a longer or shorter period, will live together in one household with very little jealousy or quarreling. They are submissive, attend to all the duties of the household, also work in the small fields of yucca, corn, etc., and usually accompany the men on their journeys into the forests.

DISEASES

In addition to the violent deaths from the many tribal wars and attacks by the whites, certain diseases are proving an alarmingly great factor in reducing the population of the Indians of Peru. Probably chief among these is the viruela, or smallpox, unknown among them till after the coming of the whites, and entire tribes have been known to perish from epidemics of this disease, to which they seem peculiarly susceptible. In the mountainous parts of the country some die of pneumonia, and there is always a considerable number of deaths from malaria and other tropical fevers. Beri-beri, or elephantiasis, a swelling of the legs, is also quite common in certain districts, and among the Aguarunas epilepsy has been known to exist at times.

MEDICINES

Contrary to the popular belief that Indians in general have a wonderful knowledge of the value of herbs, plants, roots, etc., for medicinal purposes, very little is known or pretended to be known among the Indians of Peru. For fevers of all kinds they commonly use a species of tea made from Peruvian bark, and a mixture of quinine and the leaves of a certain shrub made into a poultice is placed upon wounds. In case of snake bite the blood is immediately sucked from the wound or the wound seared with a burning stick. Those who use firearms place powder on the wound caused by the bite, which is then set afire in the attempt to burn out the poison. When one is attacked by some unknown form of disease he is supposed to have been taken possession of by an evil spirit, and for his relief the Aguarunas, for example, use oaths and prayers by which they hope, through threats or entreaties, to free the victim from the malady.

CANNIBALISM

Cannibalism is practised by members of certain tribes of the Putumayo River district, who not only enjoy the flavor of human flesh well prepared, but also believe that they partake of the strength, both physical and intellectual, of their victims. Prisoners of war

are most always disposed of in this manner, amid great festivity, the prisoner always having been allowed for days previous all the food and delicacies of the village that he can consume, in order that he may become properly fattened. The indifference which these prisoners display toward the fate that awaits them, even when they know the exact time of their doom, is remarkable. They eat great quantities of all that is given them, that they may make the better feast for their captors, perform duties as slaves, often going unaccompanied for considerable distances from the place of captivity and returning without attempting to escape. When the day for the feast arrives the victim is brought to the center of the village, tied to a beam, and some one of the tribe who may have lost a relative in a war with the tribe of which the victim is a member, or perhaps had a brother eaten by them, is allowed to perform the execution. With a stone axe in his hand he addresses his victim, reminding him that his (the executioner's) brother was sacrificed in a similar manner by the tribe of the victim, that he died without a moan or sign of pain, that he was therefore one of the most valiant of his tribe, that the assembled relatives and friends of the dead warrior would now have the opportunity of seeing if the victim could die as bravely and unflinchingly. After this address the victim's skull is crushed with the axe, sometimes the unfortunate showing marvelous strength and determination in receiving several blows without a groan before he falls. Immediately after the execution the body is cut up and the feast indulged in. Among the Amahuacas the custom of burning the bodies is said to exist, and the charred bones are crushed or ground and afterward used as a flavor for their meals.

SLAVERY

. In various works written on Francisco Pizarro's conquest of Peru we read that in character the Indians at that time were not at all warlike, that their natural tendencies were toward husbandry and agriculture rather than war, which rendered Pizarro's advance much less perilous, and with a few notable exceptions their complete submission was comparatively easily brought about, nothing like such difficulties having been experienced by the Spaniards as was the case with Cortés in Mexico. This same trait of character is discernible in their descendants, who seem to expect no better fate than to become the servants of some *padron*, whom they serve submissively, with but little complaint. Their songs, so characteristic, are indeed well named *tristes* (literally "sadnesses"), and when heard on a dark night about a campfire in the stillness of an Amazonian forest, their

pathetic wail or lament seems the climax of all the sadness and pathos of their four centuries of servitude.

The average Peruvian would no doubt show resentment at the statement that slavery exists in Peru, yet such is in reality the case with most of the Indians who come in contact with the whites. For the greater part, however, they are not treated harshly, and in their submissive way, with enough to eat and drink, seem to be contented and probably as well off as when roaming the woods. Their condition might be termed a system of peonage. The Indians enter the employ of some rubber-gatherer, often willingly, though not infrequently by force, and immediately become indebted to him for food, etc. According to Peruvian law a person so indebted to another can be held and obliged to work till that debt is paid, and in these instances the employer sees to it that the employee never receives sufficient wages to extinguish his indebtedness, and he is therefore always practically a slave. By paying off this indebtedness a person may obtain the servant, who in this way becomes similarly the slave of him who pays the debt. However, the scarcity of labor and the ease with which the Indians can usually escape and live on the natural products of the forest oblige the owners to treat them with some consideration. The Indians realize this, and their work is not at all satisfactory, judging from our standards. This was particularly noticeable during a recent visit I made to a mill where *cachassa*, or *aguardiente*, is extracted from cane. The men seemed to work when and how they chose, requiring a liberal amount of the liquor each day (of which they are all particularly fond), and if this is not forthcoming or they are treated harshly in any way they run away to the forests. The employer has the law on his side, and if he can find the runaway he is at liberty to bring him back, but the time lost and the almost useless task of trying to track the Indian through the dense forests and small streams makes it far the more practical that the servant be treated with consideration in the first place.

Through intermarriage with the whites, disease, and wars, the Indians of Peru are rapidly disappearing, and I am told that statistics compiled for a given period during recent years show that their numbers are diminishing at the rate of five per cent per annum; that in twenty years the wild Indians of the Upper Amazon will have disappeared almost entirely, and it seems only a question of time when the dying tribes of South American Indians must meet the fate of their brothers of North America, and the two in common, once the rulers of two continents, become only scattered remnants of their former greatness, if not entirely engulfed by the wave which seems sweeping over them.