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DOCUMENTARY INFORMATION ABOUT
THE SURINAM WAMA OR AKURIO INDIANS

(with 4 photographs)

INTRODUCTION

In 1968 renewed contact was made with a group of primitive nomadic Indians living in the south-eastern corner of Surinam. Their existence was discovered thirty years ago during the Southern Border Expedition of 1937 (VAN LYNDEN, 1939). One year later a special expedition was organized under the leadership of Father W. AHLBRINCK (1956), a linguist and a well-known expert on Carib Indians in Surinam. AHLBRINCK spent more than six months in the field for the purpose of studying these stone age Indians, but contact was made for one day only. For a long time this or a related tribe was known as Wayarekoelé Indians by the other upland Indians and by the Bush Negroes living along the Tapanahoni River, who dreaded them because of their aggressive attitude. As AHLBRINCK has pointed out, the Wayarekoelé tribe became extinct, probably during the fights they had with French gold raiders. The last member, a woman named MALAWNI, died in 1938 on the way back from the Lawa to her native soil.

New contacts with these mysterious Indians were made in 1968 by Wayana Indians when paddling down the Waremapan Creek, a tributary of the Litani River in its upper course. After this was reported, ANDRÉ COGNAT, a French journalist and schoolmaster, and later on IVAN L. SCHOEN and other American members of the West Indies Mission working with the Wayanas and Trios in Surinam, came to that spot to contact the unknown Indians. They succeeded during two different trips. M. W. H. DE BOER, a Dutch pedologist working at that time in the Litani River, visited the Indians a short time afterwards. The reports of SCHOEN and that of DE BOER have brought to light many new facts, confirming many of the observations made earlier by the

Dutch explorers. DE BOER was able to bring back at the same time a series of excellent photographs of this people.

Contact of isolated Indians with our civilisation can lead to a drastic transformation of their life, not to speak of the danger of infection with the influenza virus, which could wipe out the whole population. To load them with presents of unfamiliar objects, accelerates the speed of their transition from the stone age level to semicivilisation at a very quick rate. From our point of view, their attraction is not only due to unfamiliarity, but is one of extremes, that we are here confronted with a people still living at a prehistoric level. They show us today what we mostly try to reconstruct by trial and error after a painful study of only stone axes and potsherds. It is therefore of great importance to report on their original mode of life, so far as it is known, before the outside world confuses this picture. This is the reason why in the following a compilation is given of the known facts about these Indians, especially as the first observations made by MEULDIJK and AHLBRINCK are published in the Dutch language. As a necessary follow up, a serious ethnological, anthropological and sociological study should be done by competent students, before it is too late. Through the efforts to open up the interior of Surinam, the homeland of these nomadic Indians will be diminished more and more. Measures should be considered to provide against drastic influences of this kind. The question is not only one of national importance; it is an international matter of great scientific significance. We must be under no illusion about the acculturation of this people. Attempts in this direction will result in their decline rather than in a change for 'the better life', a necessity which after the last reports seems not to be urgent.

The writer is most grateful to Dr. AUDREY BUTT COLSON (Oxford University) for reading the English text and making critical notes. In one of these Dr. BUTT draws attention to the fact that the Akurios are occasionally mentioned in Spanish literature in the mid 18th century and that CAULÍN (*Historia Corográfica de la Nueva Andalucía*) has 'Akurias' marked on the accompanying map (that of LUIS DE SURVILLE, 1778) in Central Surinam.

CONTACTS

In August 1937 Admiral C. C. KÄYSER, leader of the Southern Border Expedition in Surinam and his telegraphist K. MEULDIJK, together with some Bush Negroes, found in the upper Oelemari

River signs of the presence of Indians not belonging to the Wayanas nor the Trios, *viz.* footprints on the bank of the river, scales of a fish, a broken cane and a knotted palm leaf. Further exploration in the vicinity led the next day to the discovery of an Indian trail in the bush, marked by broken twigs of the shrubs in the undergrowth. After a walk of an hour and a half they were suddenly face to face with Indians, a man armed with bow and arrow ready for shooting and an older woman with a long stick in her hands. Two other women were packing their belongings in preparation for flight. After the first fright was over and some advances had been made to the man, especially by showing beads (of glass), four children appeared belonging to this family: a boy aged 8, two girls of approximately 5 and younger and a baby. At the camp four simple shelters were built with hammocks below these, and there were some earthen pots, arrows and three bows. To the side of the shelter was a barbecue with smoked meat and fish and, further on, tubers of yams, some baskets made from palm leaves for carrying luggage, stone axes and numerous jaws and teeth of bush pigs. Men and women all wore necklaces made of perforated teeth from bush pigs, jaguars and monkeys. The man was wearing a small loin-cloth (*kamisa*), the women a small apron made from seeds. Twine was fabricated from wild pineapple fibre. The poisoned heads of arrows were put in safe keeping in a small container of untanned leather. Admiral KÄYSER noted the names of a number of things but after a while the friendship was suddenly broken off: the Indians took back the tools they had exchanged without returning the presents they had received and forced the strangers to retire.

This discovery of an unknown Indian tribe in the hinterland of Surinam, was the motive for sending a second expedition to that area with instructions to make contact with these people and to study them as far as possible.

In July 1938 Father W. AHLBRINCK started on the expedition to the Oelemari River in company with J. A. F. RAATGEVER, a local medical man, LODEWIJK SCHMIDT the foreman of some workmen from Paramaribo, and Indians and Bush Negroes, most of them veterans of the Border Expedition. When they arrived at the headwaters of the Oelemari River, AHLBRINCK soon found some signs of the unknown Indians, not only footprints but a sapling with its side branches broken and stuck in

slanting direction over the river. After five days of exploration they found the Indians far inside the bush: a young woman with a baby sitting in a new camp. She was extremely frightened, and began crying out for help to a man further on in the bush. The man came running in with bow and arrow and a stone axe in his hands. He was naked, stocky but strong, his fierce face was of a pale colour. Seeing that the strangers were not malevolent, he changed his hostile attitude into a distrustful resignation. AHLBRINCK and his men put their weapons on the ground demonstrating their peaceful intentions by showing their empty hands. This proved to be effective, the more so when showing some barter goods and so making contact.

There was one older man, two younger women each of them with a baby and a boy of about eight years. This boy looked fine and healthy, the women however looked sickly, but probably from fright because they appeared better later. In the afternoon an older woman together with a boy of about 12 years old came out of the bush. For a long time they stood looking at the strangers, tongue-tied. At twilight two young men appeared, but they were not afraid. Pointing at different objects, AHLBRINCK asked the names, repeating the words while noting them. When making camp for the night, the labourers soon missed a cutlass and the next morning two guns had disappeared. It became evident that in the early morning the older man with his wife and son had gone to the riverside to see if there were some more people. When asked something, the Indians only answered: "ë, ë" and there was an atmosphere of distrust. To avoid further difficulties, AHLBRINCK and his men left the Indians and returned to their boats. The next day when they came back, the camp site was deserted; the Indians did not want further contact. This group was the same as met with by KÄYSER and MEULDIJK for they carried a broken point of a machete and the blade of a pocket-knife.

Thirty years later, in June 1968, some Wayana Indians, men and women were paddling down the Waremapan Creek in the upper Litani River, not far away from the Brazilian border, when they suddenly heard a noise in the flooded bush around the creek that they thought was made by peccaries on the run. Two men went ashore while the boat quietly drifted down the creek. One of the Wayanas sitting in front of the canoe saw five strange Indian men peering at him from the bush. The two men who had

given chase, arrived on the scene exchanging greetings but with very little reply. One of the Wayanas speaking the Trio language, found that he could converse quite freely. They talked for almost an hour and finally the strange Indians were willing to take them to their camp just over the hill. Three of the Wayanas went there leaving one man and the women in the boat. As they neared the camp, one of the Indians called out that they had seen strangers and were bringing them into the camp site. The captain shouted back, and the women and children ran and hid. Once the Wayanas had entered the camp, the people crowded around them, talking, bartering and endeavouring to get their possessions. They did succeed in stealing two machetes and a shotgun. At this point, the Wayanas decided it would be prudent to try to return to their boat which they were able to do without incident. Several of the strange Indians followed them and wanted to have all the possessions the Wayanas had in their canoe, but they were able to push away from the bank. A few days later they arrived safely at the mission post near Awara-soela in the Lawa River.

This story came to the knowledge of the American members of the West Indies Mission working in Surinam with the Wayanas and Trio Indians since 1961. They immediately planned to make an expedition to these unknown Indians to make further contact. On June 19th, 1968 this expedition started from the Lawa River with the following crew: seven Wayanas (one woman), six Trios (two women) and five Americans (Mr. & Mrs. IVAN SCHOEN, Mr. & Mrs. ART YOHNER and DEAN FORD). The women were taken to show there was no evil intention and that there would be no harm to their women. After two days the expedition encountered the Frenchman ANDRÉ COGNAT, who with some Wayanas was paddling down the Litani River. This school-master/journalist, who had been living for some time with the Wayanas of the Lawa River, related that he had just come back from a visit to the strange Indians but that his contact was not a success and that the Indians were terrible thieves. When taking pictures they had smashed his camera, while others smashed his boat and motor with their stone axes.

The next day the mouth of the Waremapan Creek was reached and two boats with Wayanas working for K.L.M. Aerocarto were found there. In one of the boats were three men who had made the first contact with the strange Indians. These could be

engaged to help the expedition. When the place was found where the first contact was made, a group of explorers climbed over a hill to the West and descended into the adjacent valley. There a campsite was found but the people had left about two days before. The ground was littered with hundreds of fish-hooks, meters of fish line, beads, broken mirrors, red cloth, bags of salt, matches and the barrel of the shotgun stolen from the first group of Wayanas. It had been smashed with their stone axes. There were eight shelters in the place, built under the trees and on a dry piece of ground in the centre of a swamp.

The next morning four Trios and one Wayana returned to the deserted camping place to look for a trail leading to the inhabited camp. They returned in the early afternoon with the report that they had found the Indians further on to the West. Following the trail a second camp site was found and this one had also been deserted by the Indians. On the next part of the trail the path was several times closed to mislead intruders and efforts had been made to confuse the trail, but the explorers were able to find the right way. The third camp was inhabited by an older man, two old women and several young girls and children. After greeting them, the old man slapped his chest and the back of his neck and said: I am good, are you a tiger that you smelt me out? One of the Trios replied that he was a tribesman and not a tiger. They talked and bartered for about an hour in a language they could only partly understand. The old man said that they were very hostile towards outsiders and the younger men had gone ahead, to get arrow cane to make arrows to kill others who might come in to molest them. He also told them that he had been watching all the movements of their expedition and he had seen them all approach his deserted camp site. The Trio told the man that the white people with them were good and that they wanted to bring them to see the old man. After a time, the old man agreed and said that he would wait in this camp until noon the next day. In the meantime the others had successfully stolen two of the Trio's' machetes. Then the men from this party returned to their camp on the Waremapan Creek.

The following day early in the morning the expedition started with five Indians going ahead to mark the trail, while the others, including the women, followed later on. Two men were left behind with the boats with instructions to load all the supplies and shove off downstream in the event of any trouble in their absence. It

was about noon when the expedition arrived in the third camp of the Indians but the members were again keenly disappointed to discover that the people had moved out, hardly an hour before they arrived. A Trio and his wife were waiting at the camp site to tell them of the old man's departure and to lead them on. At about 3.00 pm they splashed across another swamp and approached a village exactly like the other three that they had passed. There was a murmur of excited voices and wood smoke hung heavily in the damp air. A young man carrying a stout bow and several arrows came to the edge of the camp to greet them. His appearance was formidable. He was short and heavily muscled with an almost white skin which was incredibly dirty. The man was extremely nervous, and shifted rapidly from one foot to the other as the strangers approached. They greeted him with forceful slaps on the chest and back of the neck. He responded in the same way. They filed by him to the centre of the camp. The men were gathered there around their chief, the women were watching quietly from the back of their huts, trying to keep their children quiet and as much out of sight as possible. After a while the Indians, consisting of eight men, eight women and twelve children, acted more freely. They felt the skin of the strangers, pulled the hair on their arms and chests, endeavoured to look under the women's skirts, and tried desperately to steal their machetes, bows and arrows, knives, etc. As soon as new shelters were finished by the Wayanas and Trios the pack containing the gifts was opened: machetes, axes, knives, files and matches. The men of the expedition showed them how to use files for sharpening the tools, and one man became so excited that he hit himself on the head with the file instead of his hand as is their custom. Each disappeared into the bush with his new possession, going in every direction to hide it or retrieve some possession for exchange. SCHOEN and his companions tried to find out who these people were, but they evaded questions and refused to name themselves. They told them there was another group of their relatives, consisting of ten men plus women and children, off to the West. In that case, there could be as many as sixty or seventy of them still surviving. The chief told them of another group of fierce Indians, to the southwest, whom they called the 'Maladiyaima'. They feared them and did not advise going into their territory.

The women became bolder and came out of their huts, eyeing the strangers curiously. For the most part they busied themselves

with their children, cooked wild pigs, and foraged for fire wood. One of the women was cooking a wild pig in a discarded five-gallon oil can. No doubt they had rumaged about the camps of other expeditions.

At dusk the men called the strangers to eat. The cooked meat was heaped on canoe-shaped palm spathes. The men tore off chunks of the meat and passed it around to the guests, the other villagers and children. Cassava bread which was offered them was not eaten; the old man slipped his piece under him and sat on it. Others smelt the bananas and sugar cane that were offered but threw them away. When darkness descended the Indians became very alarmed by the beams of the flashlights and told the people of the expedition to put them away. One of the men took a sapling, split the end, wedged a large chunk of resin in it, and stuck the other end into the ground and ignited the resin.

During the night an old woman in the hut adjacent to that of the expedition did not even hang a hammock, although she had three of them. She squatted by her fire all through the night watching the strangers. Her only move for more than eight hours was to reach out and push the wood farther into the fire as it died down. Others were up and down throughout the night, moving from their hammocks to the fire side to straighten arrows. At all times their weapons were within their reach. The night passed without incident. Just before dawn a breakfast of little pieces of pig meat and skin were offered by several men with the announcement that the strangers should leave. They too were going to leave as soon as the expedition was on its way. Some talk and trade was done and then the two groups parted. The expedition returned safely to the canoes on the Waremapan Creek in just over five hours.

A second trip to the Waremapan Creek was made in September 1968 by Mr. & Mrs. IVAN SCHOEN, CLAUDE LEAVITT and fourteen Indians from the Lawa. After a few days of exploration they were able to make contact with the stone age Indians on the northern side of the upper Litani River, about one mile inside the bush. The first sign of their presence was a large tree laid across the river as a bridge with some poles planted alongside the trunk, connected by a vine as a handrail. In a deserted camp site on the southern river bank fresh footprints and 'pounded' vine (fish poison) were found. The meeting was much simpler than the first time in the environment of the Waremapan Creek.

It was the same group of people, but one man and one boy were new and there were thirty persons all together, three men, twelve women and fifteen children. They remembered the visitors and told them that they had already heard them when they came in over the river. There was some talk, trade and a divine service was held. During this one of the Indians seized the opportunity to take a machete off a Trio. In the afternoon the visitors left the Indians promising to come back the next morning. The next day two cayman, shot in the river, were taken as a present. These were eagerly accepted by the women and cleaned. Iguana eggs were thrown away. Most of the people had gone into the bush to look for food. Some songs were given in the Trio language and the gospel taught to those who remained in the camp. While this took place some Indian men walked to the canoes on the river to take back the goods they had exchanged on the previous day. They were probably not content with the presents they had received the day before. When the members of the expedition detected this manoeuvre, it became evident that the Indians had also stolen some necessary goods belonging to the expedition. An effort was made to get these back but the only answer given by the Indians was that they were good and that they had not taken anything. Some search in the bush around the camp site produced a pot, a knife and bananas. One of the Indians pointed an arrow at a Wayana who came across the stolen goods, but as at that moment SCHOEN approached, walking through dead leaves, he ceased to be hostile. In general the Indians were less reserved than during the first contact. They now took bananas, sugar cane and cassava bread, all of which they had refused the first time. Bananas were eaten even unpeeled. When pictures were taken they were greatly alarmed by the light of the flash and they insisted on the cameras being put away. They were not frightened of Trios but they were of the white people because they were so different.

It was the intention of the missionaries to leave five of the Trios for one month with these Indians, to learn their language and to find out some more about their home territory. The Trios were to cut down a piece of the bush to give them the opportunity of making a garden. This was an experiment in introducing them to shifting cultivation methods with view to persuading them to give up their nomadic type of life. The main information from this expedition was that these people call themselves 'Akuri', which must mean agouti (Sur. rabbit). The Trios had heard in

earlier times of an aggressive people fighting and killing men with clubs and called Akurio. Another name that they gave was Tula, the name of a small brown monkey. Because of this information SCHOEN proposes to name these Indians AKURIO instead of Wama as was done by AHLBRINCK.

Some weeks later, M. W. H. DE BOER, a Dutch pedologist doing fieldwork in the upper Litani River, not far away from the localities where the American missionaries and the Frenchman ANDRÉ COGNAT made their contacts with the stone age Indians, decided to go and look for the Akurios himself after getting detailed information from the foregoing visitors. He started with three Bush Negroes and one Wayana while the remaining people stayed in his base-camp near the Koelé Koelé Creek. He started his trip on September 27th with one canoe. Two hours after passing the mouth of the Waremapan Creek the expedition found the fallen tree with the handrail made of a vine. From there the trail into the bush to the Indians was found. After a walk of two hours an abandoned camp site was entered with nine huts of a very simple construction. The expedition spent the night in that camp. The next morning a second camp was found on a walk of one hour from the first one. Smoke was rising and soon the five Trios, left behind by the missionaries, were seen. Another Indian was in their camp saying 'koele' in a very penetrating voice. A second man appeared, also saying 'koele'. A lot of people came out of the camp to look at the strangers: six men, six women and nine children. As soon as the loads were put on the ground, some Akurio men turned the luggage upside down touching everything. Some of the women appeared to be as curious as the men. The Indians were very interested in machetes, knives, axes, files, plates and pots. After having exchanged some presents, the Indian men inspected the strangers thoroughly. They tried to pull their beards from their faces and touched them all over looking into their shirts and trousers. Thanks to the Trios the visitors were invited to stay one day and one night with the Akurios. As soon as the hammocks were tied in the newly built camp, some Akurios lay down in them. They were not embarrassed by DE BOER's camera; one man put his finger in the lens when he tried to take a picture of him.

APPEARANCE AND DRESS

In their appearance the short stout build and the light coloured skin are most striking. The men have a short thick neck, firm shoulders, the upper arm muscles less developed, the legs strongly muscled, the toes rounded. The skin is of a strikingly light, sallow colour, very dirty and with many scratches and scars. Some men have their arms heavily scarred from just below the biceps to the mid fore arm. These cuts have been made by themselves apparently to increase their efficiency as hunters. The same is sometimes done by Trios too (SCHOEN). Their bushy black hair is strong and thick; men and women cut their hair to shoulderlength at the back but in front, over the eyebrows and to the middle of the ears, it is cut in crude bangs, without a parting. The eyes are dark brown, the upper lip somewhat curled up so making the mouth more or less triangular. All the people had sound teeth. They have a hollow and penetrating voice. The few hairs on the chin are pulled out but the eyebrows and eyelashes grow untouched (AHLBRINCK).

According to SCHOEN they have nice faces, however with strong lines. Their noses are rather broad, their lips relatively thick, their eyes larger than those of the Trios or Wayanas, a little bulgy and slanting. Some individuals have typically mongoloid faces with protruding cheek-bones and slanting eyes (DE BOER). On the photographs taken by DE BOER against the light, fluffy hair on the forearm of a young girl and that of a man is visible.

The women have attractive features and are short, except for one woman that SCHOEN saw. They looked healthy and have been described as rather slender (AHLBRINCK), and as 'well fleshed' (SCHOEN). Their skin however was so dirty that it appears that they never wash themselves. They scratched their heads all the time, probably because of lice. There was no sign of any sickness and they did not cough. Some had a few septic wounds (AHLBRINCK did not note any such wounds), all were covered with insect bites (SCHOEN).

The Akurios go almost entirely naked. The men wear a belt of black monkey-hair, tied to a very narrow, firmly bound loincloth of fibre. This cloth or kamisa, made of singrasi (AHLBRINCK) or mauritia fibre (SCHOEN), is only $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch broad and holds the penis tightly up against the abdomen with the testicles protruding on either side (SCHOEN). The women wear a small

apron (kwejoe) of tree seeds (AHLBRINCK) or palm seeds (DE BOER) made heavier by bigger seeds on the bottom row. This may be decorated by beetle shards (AHLBRINCK). The apron is very small, measuring $5\frac{1}{2}$ – $7\frac{1}{8}$ inches (SCHOEN). The women of those families who have already received glass beads from strangers, have made a much larger size of kwejoe from such beads as the Trio and Wayana women do, or formerly did.

Men wear strings made of black (kwatta) or red (baboon) monkey hair around the ankles and below the knees. The women wear such a string (sepoe) only below the knees. AHLBRINCK noticed that two babies who were still sleeping with the mother in the hammock had two small fibre strings on their legs and arms and also one around the waist. The sepoe of an older woman as photographed by DE BOER, shows that it is made of several strings of mauritia (?) fibre, which are knotted artistically to form a narrow band of about one centimetre wide.

Originally all Akurios were wearing necklaces made of the teeth of peccaries, jaguars and of various monkeys. These teeth had holes in them so that they could be strung together (MEULDIIK) and they alternated with small fruit stones and self-made wooden beads (AHLBRINCK). SCHOEN reports that the teeth of the necklaces are taken from baboon and smaller monkeys and alternate with seeds of trees as used in the small apron of the women. According to DE BOER "The teeth are from different monkeys, the wild pig, the jaguar and the cayman. The animals' teeth are perforated with a sharpened incisor of an agouti ... The people combine the teeth with brown seeds of the Tassi palm". And further on: "many people had only bead necklaces ... A young lady ... wore a bead apron. We had the impression that many Akurios hid their tooth necklaces, being afraid that we would take them". Of importance is DE BOER's assertion that the Akurios do not use red paint (koesoewé) like the Trios and the Wayanas, but that they do use black paint. The liquid of the fruits of tapoeripa is or was commonly used also by Trio and Wayana Indians, to make decorative black lines on their skin during some festivals. Maybe the Akurios use the same product for this purpose.

LANGUAGE AND NAME OF THE TRIBE

During the first contact with the Akurios, Admiral KÄYSER made a point of noting the names of different objects (MEULDIIK).

So also did AHLBRINCK, writing down 150 words, of which about one hundred could be recognized as belonging to the Carib language. The Wayanas who came across some Akurio Indians on the Waremapan Creek in 1968 found that their greetings in the Wayana language had no effect, but when they used the Trio language they obtained a response. When the Trio pioneers of SCHOEN's expedition made their first contact, there was no more than a 50% understanding. Some words are the same, as the one used for palm nuts which means cassava or cassava bread i.e. their staple food in the language of the Trios and Wayanas (SCHOEN, 2nd report).

AHLBRINCK was told by MALAWNI, the last woman of the Wayarekoelé Indians, that the unknown Indians were called Wama, and during his contact with these Indians this information was affirmed by an older man. SCHOEN however heard through his Trios during their second contact that the people called themselves Akuri, but also that the name Tula (of the Captain?) was given. The name Akurio was known to the Trios as being that of an aggressive tribe in earlier times. For this reason SCHOEN introduced the name of Akurio for these Indians instead of Wama as proposed by AHLBRINCK. As the language of the Trios and Wayanas belongs to the Carib family, it is evident that, as regards their language, the Akurios belong to the same group. In this they are more closely related to the Trios than to the Wayanas.

FOOD

The Akurio Indians support themselves with fish, game and products of the bush. Of the last we know honey of wild bees, palm fruits (koemboe, maripa), palm nuts (boegroemakka, maripa) and some wild tubers. One of these, a small tuber called by them 'oeroewa', looks like a small potato with soft spines on its surface. When travelling on the hills near the Waremapan Creek in 1939, I found these 'potatoes' on rocky places in the bush. Later on when some of the collected tubers started to sprout and flower, they were seen to be a species of *Calathea* belonging to the family of Marantaceae. Larger and longer tubers were seen by AHLBRINCK who noted the name of 'tinana iri' for them, but we do not know their botanical identity.

According to SCHOEN, the Indians harvest a lot of palm nuts from the bush. The people crack these nuts on a special flat stone

with another smaller stone as a hammer and chew them raw (DE BOER). It is known that these kernels contain a high percentage of vitamins in their fats. The flesh of the ripe fruits of koemboe palms are used for a drink as by many other people living in the bush. Also the young white heart (palmite or kabbes) of palms (what species?) is eaten.

The Akurios are very keen on the honey of wild bees, taken from their nests in hollow trees. SCHOEN (first Report, p. 4) saw in the forest "an ingenious scaffold about 45 feet off the ground . . . to extract honey" from hives in the trees. It is very probable that the Indians use the honey of a kind of *Melipona* bee, very similar to a honey bee but not able to sting.

Of the game that is hunted by bow and arrow, we know: peccaries (pakira and pingo), tapir, deer, monkeys (kwatta, baboon and others) and agouti. It seems that sometimes the jaguar is shot by them as its eyeteeth are used in their necklaces. Cayman was accepted when presented by SCHOEN's expedition, but iguanas and their eggs were refused. There is no note about tortoises, which are often used by other Indians, by Bush Negroes and by other people living in the bush. Of the birds the well known powisi or bush turkeys are shot and the flight-feathers of these are used at the end of the arrows as a steering mechanism. No other kinds of birds are mentioned as their food, but the Indians surely make use of them (marail, kami-kami).

As a good eating fish, the anjoemara is in great demand. This fish is lured with a bait on a line hanging over a forked twig on the bank of creeks and rivers and then shot with an arrow. No other kind of fish is reported, but SCHOEN and DE BOER both mention that nekoe-vine is used as a fish poison in smaller creeks.

Meat and fish are dried and smoked on a barbecue or boiled in pots. The Indians do not scale the fish, they pull off the skin just before eating. No salt or pepper are used in their food.

CAMPS

AHLBRINCK has described two types of shelters, small ones as long and broad as the size of the leaf of a boegroemakka palm to protect one person against rain and sunshine, and the family hut built in a triangle. The horizontal sticks bearing the palm leaves are tied up with kamina vines on poles having no fork at the end. The bases of the palm leaves are fastened on top of the

frame, the distal ends of the leaves are spread over the base stick of the triangle on the other end. In this way a sloping roof is constructed for the rain to run off. These shelters and huts are well made, protecting the people against rain, sunshine and falling twigs and fruits.

The barbecue is large and triangular in form, 1.40 m high, each side $2\frac{1}{2}$ m long (AHLBRINCK). Of a camp site seen in the area of the Waremapan Creek, SCHOEN (1st Report, p. 3) reports the following particulars: "It consisted of eight huts built under the trees on a dry piece of ground in the center of a swamp. The huts had shed type flat roofs, made from the leaf of the mumu palm, and pitched slightly to the side and rear. The posts were so arranged that hammocks could be hung in a triangle or a square with a fire in the center . . . At the side of each hut was a fireplace made of three stones dug down into the ground. Beside each hut was a pile of palm fruit seeds, bones and other debris. All the bones were cracked or crushed for the purpose of sucking out the marrow". DE BOER states that menstruating women are put in separate huts.

The Akurios build their camp sites not along the banks of larger streams, but far in the bush near a small creek. They conceal their community in the deep forest and do not make a direct trail out to the riverside (AHLBRINCK). The camp sites are made about 3–5 km from one another and they stay in each a few days to three weeks at the most (SCHOEN, 2nd Report).

TOOLS

Stone axes are made of a black stone, long and narrow, rectangular, fastened in a short wooden handle, 30 or 35 cm long, the handle at the end narrower. Their cut is small, not sharp but rough and splintery. With these axes the Indians are able to cut the trunk of moderate sized trees (AHLBRINCK), or to 30 cm diameter (SCHOEN). SCHOEN saw stone axes of different sizes, from very small ones to those weighing one kilo. The wooden handles are roughly made and just long enough to hold, the top is much wider and contains the stone head inserted in a hole. If the hole is too wide, it is filled up with palm fibres and balata. The head of the axe is tied with string to keep it from being split by the blows. The men carry the axes on their back by putting the handle under the belt around their waist (SCHOEN).

There is no indication of what kind of stone these axes are

made. The black stone reported by AHLBRINCK could be a diorite. Unmounted stone axes are evidently not seen. From an archeological point of view, their form is of great importance. This could be recognized by making X-ray photographs of a mounted stone axe from different sides.

Arrows of three types are mentioned by AHLBRINCK. (1) Those with long lancelike bamboo points, fastened with a smaller stick (the foreshaft), that is firmly fixed into the stem of the arrow. The larger animals are shot with this kind of arrow such as peccaries, tapir and deer. (2) Arrows, the long point of which is made of a bone of the kwatta monkey to transfix birds and fish. (3) The arrow that has a small hollow in the top to hold a small poisoned bamboo point inserted when the Indian is about to shoot a kwatta. The poison (curare) is used to paralyse the spider monkey which otherwise does not fall down when killed, but is entangled by its long legs and tail in the trees.

On the underside of the arrows the flight-feathers of *powisi*, which have been split in half, are mounted as a flight guide. There is no mention of any decoration on the binding, such as the delicate ornamentation which is usually found on Trio arrows.

The length of the arrows is about $1\frac{1}{2}$ m; SCHOEN also has seen smaller ones probably used by children. The poisoned points are kept in a short container made of unprepared leather (MEULDIJK), or in one of bamboo (SCHOEN). These containers are suspended on a piece of rope round the neck when on the hunt. DE BOER asserts that the arrows are made not only from arrow cane, but also from the stems of *warimbo*. Further on he says that "The people also know *Kamaloea* (planted arrow cane) that has probably been found in old plantations of the Wayanas or the Trios". Plots of arrow cane are often found on the banks of rivers where Indians have lived in earlier times and often in areas where no Indians have been present for a long time. In this case I believe that these 'plantations' of arrow cane go back to archeological times. We spotted the same occurrence in several places on higher ground, in the coastal belt of Surinam.

Bows are made of letterwood, they are relatively short (1.40 m or less) and 'strong', while the bow string is made of the fibre of *singrasi* (AHLBRINCK). SCHOEN noticed a length of $6\frac{1}{2}$ ft with a string made of fibre of the *mauritia* palm. He also found a number of small bows in a deserted camp, probably used by children. For smoothing their bows the Indians use the pingo's lower jaw with an eyetooth.

A thick shell was used as a scraper to smooth the points of arrows (AHLBRINCK). This is probably one of the halves of a freshwater mussel, to be found on the sand banks in the rivers. Beside the jaws of peccaries those of deer with empty sockets are also used as a scraper (AHLBRINCK).

Drill and chisel: AHLBRINCK and SCHOEN both have seen a tool made of a sharpened incisor of an agouti, mounted in the hollow bone of a spider monkey (kwatta), cemented with a black pitch. Are the teeth as used in their necklaces perforated by this kind of tool? According to SCHOEN the point of a deer antler is used as an instrument to enlarge the hole in the wooden handle of the stone axe.

Baskets and mutetés (back carriers) are fashioned out of palm leaves, mostly on the spot in the bush when fruits or dead game must be transported.

Fans to light the fires are also made of palm leaves (DE BOER) but they are crude and not decorated (SCHOEN). The shape of the fans is not noted, but one figured by AHLBRINCK (p. 115) is nearly quadrangular with the two stronger end ribs crossed, pinned by a pointed stick through the crossing.

The hammocks look like a fishing net without knots made from the fibre of the mauritia palm. They are short (1.68 m long) and narrow and are tied up at about 20 cm above the ground (AHLBRINCK). Everybody has one hammock, some people have two or three (SCHOEN).

Their pottery is thick, heavy, and not very symmetrical, and bears no design at all (SCHOEN). AHLBRINCK names two models: (1) 40 cm broad, 30 cm deep as a pot for cooking food; (2) 10 cm broad and 10 cm deep as a pot for cooking aroea 'potatoes'. The form of the pots is not described.

Bowls or waterjugs are not present. For drinking they use a small rectangular trough made from the folded spathe of the inflorescence of the pina palm. The ends of this tough spathe are folded inside and fastened by two spines. One of these drinking cups is present in the collection of the Surinam Museum in Paramaribo.

During an expedition in 1953 under the leadership of J. MICHELS and D. FINDLAY to the Oelemari River, an abandoned camp of the Akurios was found, in which they came across a kind of bracelet, made from the empty claws of a sloth, which were put into one another to form a ring. This object is now in

FINDLAY's private collection of Amerindian material in Paramaribo.

A tiny comb was seen by SCHOEN, made from sharpened sticks mounted in a piece of arrow cane. Their combs (and fans) are also crudely done compared to those of the Trio or Wayana Indians (SCHOEN). DE BOER mentions that they cut their hair with bamboo knives, and they use simple wooden combs. Further details are not given.

Clubs don't seem to be used. SCHOEN reports that a woman smashed a dead tree into little pieces of firewood with a heavy club, but it is not clear if this was a special instrument or just a piece of hard wood. Clubs for fighting as Trios, Wayanas and Caribs have or had, seem to be absent. Probably the stone axes take the place of these clubs.

Canoe-shaped palm spathes (of koemboe probably) are used as plates. DE BOER remarks that the meat is lifted out of the pot with a sharpened stick.

HOME TERRITORY AND FAMILY LIFE

The Akurio Indians are exclusively inhabitants of the rain forest and their manner of transport is walking. Canoes are not constructed. They are nomadic, travelling through the wilderness probably over more or less permanent trails up and down the hills and through swampy valleys. Their trails are marked by broken twigs of the shrubs in the undergrowth of the bush in such a manner that it is very difficult to find one's way when not acquainted with this kind of indication. At places where these trails cross a bigger creek or river, a tree is cut down so that it falls across the river and can be used as a bridge. A hand rail of planted sticks, connected with a vine at the top, is often constructed alongside the trunk of the fallen tree.¹

This mode of life is necessary for their food supply. They stay no more than three weeks in one camp site, generally less. Agriculture is not practised. This nomadic life demands a great deal from them physically and this shows in their bodily strength. The oldest people were probably aged about forty. How they dispose of their dead is not known.

¹ Dr. BUTT noted: "As a matter of interest the Akawaio also mark their trails by breaking twigs as they go: they also occasionally put handrails by the side of fallen logs and tree trunks - to aid crossing streams. However, they *do* have canoes!"

As usual among the Indians and many other primitive tribes, there is a set division of labour for men and women. The men fish and hunt, make camps and defend them in case of danger. The women are occupied with the household, collect edible fruits, vegetables and fire-wood in the forest, clean and cook the food and last but not least, take care of the children. En route heavy loads and even fire-wood are carried. The babies are carried on the back in a bark sling which passes round the forehead. DE BOER observed that the fathers carry babies beside their bundles of arrows, their bows and their stone axes.

One family consists of a group of no more than 30 persons, among these are many children. These Indians do not have any luxury and no festivals are known nor the use of music instruments (flute). According to DE BOER, the Akurios do have a number of chants: happy songs (iwano) and spirit songs (wiri).¹

How many of these families there are at present is not exactly known. In 1969 two other groups were contacted and YOHNER, one of the missionaries, reports that there are at least two groups that have not yet been contacted, maybe more (DE BOER).

It is understandable that their home territory must be very extensive as only a small density of persons is possible on account of their nomadic manner of life. As far as known today, the Akurios have their home in the Orange Mountains and neighbourhood in the south-eastern corner of Surinam, an area of about 10.000 km². It is not known whether they slip over the southern border into Brazil. Their presence in the hinterland of French Guyana has never been observed. It is also surprising that they do not go into the uninhabited Wilhelmina Mountains in the centre of Surinam. Our impression is that their area is limited by the presence of other tribes as Trios, Wayanas and Bush Negroes, living more or less around this unexplored area of jungle.

¹ Note of Dr. BUTT: "It looks as though these groups of 30 or so are 'extended' family groups, composed of closely related nuclear families. If so, this is very interesting. There is the question of whether they meet temporarily for festivals, even though they have no village as the cultivating tribes have. When, among the latter, something happens to disrupt the community I have noticed that it is the extended family which is the functioning unit. About 30 people more or less seems to be the size for the basic economic unit – not the nuclear family which is too small for safety."

NAMES OF PLANTS AND ANIMALS AS QUOTED

Plants

- Arrow cane – *Cyperium sagittatum* Beauv.
 Boegroemakka or mumu palm – *Astrocaryum sciophilum* (Miquel)
 Curare, oerali – *Strychnos guianensis* Baill.
 Kamina vine – *Heteropsis jenmannii* Oliv.
 Koemboe palm – *Oenocarpus bacaba* Martius
 Letter wood – *Piratinera* sp.
 Maripa palm – *Maximiliana maripa* Drude
 Mauritia palm – *Mauritia flexuosa* L.
 Nekoe vine – *Lonchocarpus* sp.
 Pina palm – *Euterpe oleracea* Martius
 Singrasi – *Bromelia alta* L. B. Smith
 Tapoeripa – *Genipa americana* L.
 Tassi palm – *Geonoma baculifera* (Pointeau) Kunth
 Warimbo – *Ischnosiphon gracilis* Koern.

Animals

- Agouti – *Dasyprocta leporina* (L.)
 Anjoemara – *Hoplias macrophthalmus* (Pellegrin)
 Beetle – *Euchroma gigantea* L.
 Baboon – *Alouatta seniculus straminea* (Humboldt)
 Cayman – *Caiman* sp.
 Deer – *Mazama americana americana* (Erxleben)
 Honey bee – *Melipona* sp.
 Kwatta, spider monkey – *Ateles paniscus paniscus* (L.)
 Iguana – *Iguana iguana* L.
 Mussel – *Castaliella sulcata* (Krauss) or *Castalia ambigua* Lm.
 Pakira – *Tayassu tajacu* (L.)
 Pingo – *Tayassu pecari* (Link)
 Powisi – *Crax alector* L.
 Tapir – *Tapirus terrestris* (L.)

SUMMARY

In this study the known facts have been arranged concerning the WAMA or AKURIO Indians, a primitive tribe still living in the stone age in the unexplored wilderness of southern Surinam. For a long time they were known by rumour as Wayarekoelés, dreaded by the other upland Indians and by Bush Negroes because of their aggressiveness. The first contact was made by Admiral C. C. KÄYSER and K. MEULDIJK during the Southern Border Expedition in 1937 and one year later a special expedition under the leadership of Father W. AHLBRINCK was organized to study these Indians, but only a one day meeting could be achieved.

Recently new contacts were made by Wayana Indians in 1968 near the Brazilian border, followed by visits of ANDRÉ COGNAT, a French journalist and schoolmaster, by American members of the West Indies

Mission under the leadership of IVAN L. SCHOEN and by M. W. H. DE BOER, a Dutch pedologist.

The different reports brought to light bit by bit the manner of life of these mysterious Indians, who are from an ethnological and archeological point of view of extreme interest. They travel as nomads in families of about 30 persons inclusive of children, along more or less permanent trails through the bush in and around the Orange Mountains in the south-eastern corner of Surinam. Their camp sites are all temporary, designed for a stay of a few days to three weeks at most, deep in the jungle. The camps are simple but well constructed, covered with palm leaves. Walking is their only manner of transport; they do not make canoes. Food is obtained by hunting and fishing and by harvesting some wild products from the bush. No agriculture is practised.

Their appearance differs from other Indians by their stocky stature and remarkably light coloured skin. They look very dirty and their bushy thick black hair is cut to shoulderlength and in crude bangs over the face. They all have sound teeth and a hollow penetrating voice. Some individuals show typical mongoloid faces with slanting eyes. Men and women are almost naked, the men wearing a narrow loincloth of fibre, the women a small apron of seeds, tied on a belt round the hips made of black monkey hair. All the people wear necklaces made of the teeth of wild animals, alternating with seeds or self-made wooden beads. Apart from the bow and arrow the most important tool is the stone axe. They also use poisoned arrow points (curare) for hunting spider monkeys. A drill made of an incisor of a rodent is probably used to perforate the teeth of their necklaces. Some baskets and back carriers are constructed from palm leaves. Hammocks similar to a fishing net are made from palm fibre. Their simple pottery is coarse and bears no design.

Their language is related to that of the Trio Indians and belongs to the Carib group. They refuse any contact with strangers and when they do meet them they try to steal their possessions. We are still in doubt over their number, although according to the latest reports, more than one hundred must exist. Measures for their protection are recommended.

APPENDIX

After the foregoing article was written, I received YOHNER's *Report of the May '69 contact with the Akuriyo Indians*. It contains a number of new facts, names of persons, of rivers and creeks, and the plan of a new airstrip, garden, and village site for the Akurios at the Sarapi Creek, a northern fork of the upper Oelemari River near the place of an arrow cane field. All Akurios know and visit this area in order to secure arrow cane. Here CLAUDE LEAVITT and DUYSKER cut 160 × 160 m of the forest as an 'approach' to the airstrip, after their visit to the new group of Akurios in the Mariti or Tahem Creek. A line approximately

1. One-man shelter of the Akurios. Note the high top on the right side for draining the rainwater to the left side.

Photographs taken by Ch. BLEYS in March/April 1953 in the forest on the upper course of the Oelemari River.

2. The same kind of shelter seen in front. Note the horizontal sticks, the function of which is not known.

3. Another one-man shelter seen from the side in the front part. The top is covered with a back carrier made of a palm leaf. Note the horizontal stick connecting one of the poles with a tree trunk at left.

4. A fire place with three stones used as pot stands. The flat (granitic) stones are put upright in the ground. Two pieces of firewood lie between the stones.

800 m long has been cut down the centre of what is to become the strip. A village site of appr. 125 × 125 m has also been cut.

From this report the most important data concerning the new detected group of Akurios are recorded here.

EXPEDITION

On Tuesday, May 20, 1969 the missionary expedition party was assembled at the Oelemari airstrip, located on the Oelemari River. This party consisted of 18 men: CLAUDE LEAVITT, ART YOHNER, DUYSKER (Governm. repres.), 9 Trio Indians, 3 Wayana Indians, 3 Bush Negroes. On the same day an air survey was made of the area to be searched for Akurios. Leaving the Oelemari airstrip by boat upriver, a creek known as 'Mariti or Tahem' Creek was reached after 4 hours. Two days the expedition checked this area. Only old trails, shelters, cuttings were found. At the third day near the upper course of that creek, one part of the expedition found a campsite inhabited by 25 people. They were extremely friendly, unafraid, but cautious. All together 6 men, 7 women, (two of whom were pregnant) and 12 children. This group of the chief TUPITA, a man of about 45, had never contacted strangers before. The same day another Akurio Indian, ARAIPUKU, chief of a second group, arrived with his wife and child. The expedition spent 7 days and 7 nights with these Indians. They were extremely cooperative in giving names of people and linguistic information. A number of new names and words could be recorded. The Indians were happy to receive steel machetes and coloured beads. They did not steal goods and they accepted medicines and medical treatment and food. They called themselves Akuri, not Wama and said that Wama was the name of a tribe but that all of them had died.

APPEARANCE AND DRESS

Their skin was not as white as that of the other groups seen, although it was still remarkably light. Their hair was fairly clean, partially combed; the chief TUPITA had a moustache and a beard. Most of these Indians had brown eyes. Generally speaking the people were in excellent health. One boy of about 6 had a big stomach, another boy of 9 had three middle toes of his right foot missing, burnt in the fire when small. Some of the people appear to have 'jungle yaws'. Their teeth were sound, and extremely strong. Many were worn down from use. A young man

of 12 was buck toothed; ARAIPUKU, chief of another group of Akurios, had a front tooth in the roof of his mouth.

The people were in their 'natural' dress, they wore a simple loin cloth and many monkey teeth necklaces. The women wore a small loin cloth made of malayaima seeds (one was only 3×3 inches). The men wore a loin cloth that only held up the penis, with the testicles hanging exposed on both sides. The people had many strings of teeth necklaces which apparently constitute their 'wealth'. Some of the teeth were from meku and alimi monkeys, and some were from hawawa (yawu). Between the teeth malayaima seeds were intermixed.

LANGUAGE

There seems to be a difference in dialect between the various Akurio groups. YOHNER heard far less glottal sounds among the people of TUPITA's group than was heard among those of ATULA's group on the headwaters of the Litani River.

FOOD AND DRINK

After eating greasy meat with their hands, the Indians took water in their mouth and then spit out what was needed into their hands to wash them. Then they had a very handy towel in their long hair; the same manipulation was observed by AHLBRINCK when meeting his Wamas.

The people have various ways of drinking water. They hold a palm container of water in both hands and drink from it, or bend to drink from it, or put their hand in the water and lift it to their mouth. TIRAMU, while on the trail, and in a hurry passing streams, used to plunge one hand into the water and slap the water into his mouth. At other times he would cup two hands for a quick drink. When in no apparent hurry, he would bend down to drink directly from the stream.

TOOLS

"While on the West trail to the Tai Tai river, I saw where the Akuriyos sharpen their stone axes. It is a large rock, called 'mami' stone." YOHNER does not refer to grinding grooves. He saw one of the Akurio men chopping a tree with a stone axe. Despite the sharpness of the stone, it only split the wood, which took a considerable amount of time.

It was observed that for making the handle for a stone axe the Akurios cut a small tree and hacked out a rough handle with

their stone axes. They then cut out a 'seat' for the crude stone with a bone tool made from an Akuri (small rodent) tooth. The name of the tool is 'napikana'. They would peel strips of wood from the handle with their teeth. Then the stone was pounded into the handle seat. Later they made string from fiber (kuliwaito) and wound it around the handle and stone (apparently to keep the handle from splitting).

YOHNER watched TUMAN, one of the Akurios, when weaving a new loin cloth. He first spun fiber from the kuluwaito and rolled it into a ball. He then made a rack and two shuttles for weaving. (The men make their loin cloths themselves, as do the Wai Wai's). For making the rack, he took $\frac{3}{4}$ inch sticks and broke them by putting them in his mouth, using his teeth as a lever. He measured the rack by measuring himself with a piece of vine. He wove by going over and under. Once the material and rack is gathered, a loin cloth can be finished in 2 days.

Four of the women were cutting up their meat (of black spider monkeys) with bamboo knives. They also use bamboo to cut their hair and to make arrow tips (points).

A young Akurio mother had a baby rattle made of an 'ala-wata' (red howler monkey) throat with malayaima seeds inside. She shook it loudly each time the child cried.

The same woman had 'akuri' bones tied to her hammock. She said they were simply to 'play with', but no doubt they were used as a talisman (custom of other tribes).

The women carry their babies on their backs. They simply make a bark sling, and put it around their head and then around the baby's buttocks (as a seat). The baby then tries to hold on to the mothers neck, which they seemingly learn to do at a very young age. This frees the mother's hands for gathering firewood, cutting up meat, etc.

An old woman was seen using a wooden club approximately $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet long and 2" in diameter to break up firewood.

The women clean the compound around their huts with a stick. The debris is piled up alongside the huts.

The women carry very large katalis (back packs) on the trail and smouldering firewood in their hands.

One of the men carried his possessions on the trail not in a katali, but wrapped up in his fiber hammock, with the hammock ropes wrapped around his head.

FAMILY LIFE

When the Akurios meet one of their tribespeople whom they have not seen for some time, they greet one another by holding a stick, or a bow, or an arrow and then they jump and dance back and forth, stomping their feet.

According to YOHNER, the Akurio mythology is similar to that of the Wayanas and Trios. When the missionaries asked: Who is your creator? they replied, 'Api'. Who made you, and the trees? 'Api' they replied.

ARAIPUKU brought his little son to YOHNER, and put YOHNER's hand on his son's heart. He then asked him to blow on the child (practice of most witch doctors).

Endogamy and exchange of sex partners ('iyoto') are common amongst the Akurios.

The Akurios seem to love their children and nothing was heard about killing babies. The missionaries were suspicious because there was a great shortage of female children. It is known that many tribes kill off the girls.

They bury their dead. When an Akurio dies, he goes to the sky.

NAMES OF RIVERS AND CREEKS

Litani	- Oroyoima
Luë (Loë)	- Makurutu
Oelemari	- Maraoni
Oelemari So Fork	- Tai Tai
Creek of Paloemeu	- Tapono

In spite of the presence of the Akurio Indians the Oelemari area was found to abound in game and fish, snakes too. Wild pigs, clouds of multicoloured parrots, otters, alligators, tapirs, monkeys, deer, and many other jungle animals were seen. This indicates that the hunting of the Indians does not disturb the normal jungle life.

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