

## INTRODUCTION

Only one tribe of American Indians is known ever to have successfully revolted against the empire of Spain and to have thwarted all subsequent attempts by the Spaniards to reconquer them: the Jívaro (hee'-va-ro), the *untsuri šuarä* of eastern Ecuador. From 1599 onward they remained unconquered in their forest fastness east of the Andes, despite the fact that they were known to occupy one of the richest placer gold deposit regions in all of South America.

Tales of their fierceness became part of the folklore of Latin America, and their warlike reputation spread in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when Jívaro "shrunken head" trophies, *tsantsa*, found their way to the markets of exotica in the Western world. As occasional travelers visited them in the first decades of this century, the Jívaro also became known not as just a warlike group, but as an individualistic people intensely jealous of their freedom and unwilling to be subservient to authority, even among themselves. It was this quality that particularly attracted me when I went to study their way of life in 1956-57 and I was most fortunate, at that time, to find, especially east of the Cordillera de Cutucú, a portion of the Jívaro still unconquered and still living, with some changes, their traditional life style. This book is about their culture.

A factor that contributed to my decision to do fieldwork among the Jívaro was the incredible volume of contradictory and often obviously unreliable information on their culture.

There was certainly no other tribe in South America about which less was known in proportion to what had been published. Part of this situation was due to certain aspects of Jívaro culture, particularly the making of *tsantsa*, which lent themselves to sensationalistic articles and popular books which were typically based upon a minimum or even an absence of actual contact with the Jívaro. Only two serious major works on them existed: the late Rafael Karsten's *Head-hunters of Western Amazonas* (1935), and M. W. Stirling's *Historical and Ethnographical Material on the Jívaro Indians* (1938). Yet much of what Karsten wrote was vague and highly opinionated, and Stirling's field data were fairly limited due to the short time he spent with the Jívaro. In addition, where the two authors overlapped in subject matter, their reports tended to be strongly contradictory.<sup>1</sup>

In view of this situation, I took both Karsten's and Stirling's works into the field with me and reviewed them sentence by sentence with Jívaro informants. Except for Stirling's data on material culture, I found that there was scarcely a paragraph of ethnographic information in either work that could be considered wholly accurate.

In time, it became evident that the erratic quality of information supplied by both anthropologists derived in part from their reliance on white men as interpreters. Karsten depended almost exclusively on Macabeos, the mestizo inhabitants of the village of Macas, for his communication with Indian informants. He also relied on them for second-hand information on Jívaro culture, as I ascertained by talking to Macabeos who had worked for him. I also found that the Macabeos had misconceptions of Jívaro culture which they believed in so strongly that they were willing to argue with the Indians about the latter's own culture. It was not too different in Stirling's case, although much more expectable,

since he was able to spend only a few short months with the Jívaro in comparison with Karsten's intermittent work during several years. Stirling's interpreter was Santiago Baca of Méndez, whom I knew personally, and whom on one occasion I tested as an interpreter. Although a fine person, Baca hardly would let an Indian speak before he reinterpreted and expanded what had been said to fit his own preconceptions. The following portion of a letter from Stirling to me, dated June 30, 1962, in response to an article which I had just published on Jívaro soul beliefs,<sup>2</sup> shows the role of Baca in his work. I would like to add that I consider the letter a tribute to Stirling's scholarly integrity:

It is high time that adequate studies are finally being made of this significant group. When I made my rather hasty trip through the Jivaro country in 1930-31, the working conditions were far from ideal. The expedition was badly organized and from the standpoint of the ethnologist we were never able to stay in one place long enough to get proper results. I knew nothing of the Jivaro language, and depended entirely on the interpreter—Santiago Baca—for the esoteric information. What I recorded was what he understood from the informants. He was, incidentally, a political refugee and had lived 2 years with the Jivaro in hiding.

It is interesting to note that most of the Jivaro we encountered at that time insisted that they knew nothing of religious beliefs—that we would have to contact oid Anguasha (on the Yaupe [Yaupi] River). We finally did contact him, and he was the source of most of this type of material which I secured. I am sure that he was a good informant—very sincere and desirous of being precise—so the errors were probably the result of misunderstanding by the interpreter, since I tried not to fill in any interpretations of my own. I had Karsten's work with me, and after getting our own material I checked with Karsten's accounts. The Indians would agree with practically none of his ideas, in-

sisting that they had never heard of such a thing. Incidentally, I never learned with which group he worked—a fact which he appeared to keep secret. I assumed that either the Indians with whom he worked had different concepts, or that he possibly supplied interpretations of his own.

It does not seem probable to me that basic changes in fundamental beliefs could take place in 30 years, so I am inclined to agree with you that the errors in my account were the result of wrong interpretation.

Since the purpose of the present book is to provide a broad introduction to Jívaro culture rather than a detailed comparison with earlier publications, the reader will not find specific criticisms of Karsten's and Stirling's data in the following pages. These will be gradually provided in more specialized publications, which will also have the function of focusing on particular aspects of Jívaro life in greater detail. To the specialist who reads this work, however, I wish to say that statements that he finds here implicitly contradicting those of the two other authors may be taken, in fact, as explicit corrections of their accounts. A contradictory account here does not imply ignorance of their material.

Beyond this, of course, is the question of cultural change. First of all, I wish to note that several of my most important elderly informants were already raising families prior to Karsten's initial Jívaro fieldwork in 1916-18 and did not come into substantial first-hand contact with whites until fifteen to twenty years later. The fieldwork by Stirling occurred later, in 1930-31, but as Stirling himself noted above, the basic source of difference with my own material was probably his interpreter. In addition, I made a special effort to secure field data that would reveal those aspects of Jívaro culture that had changed or remained stable during this century, and the final chapter of the book is devoted to that subject.

Informants' accounts were continually cross-checked and contradictions called to their attention individually. An informant, when thus confronted with a contradiction, and with his reputation for knowledge and veracity at stake, generally provided elaborative supporting detail.

Informants were ordinarily well paid for the time they spent. Payment was commonly in the form of black gunpowder, percussion caps, lead shot, glass and metallic beads, and cloth. Near Ecuadorian and missionary settlements, money was used as well. When visiting strange households it was found that a gift of an ounce or two of gunpowder invariably resulted in a friendly stay, since almost all Jívaro men today possess firearms and continually need replenishment of their supplies of ammunition. Leave-taking in the more isolated parts of the tribal territory typically involved assuring the host of my future return and "taking orders" for additional types of trade goods to be brought on the next visit. Thus my host viewed my continued friendship as being to his advantage and an amiable departure always occurred despite the fact that I was often leaving directly (with gunpowder and other goods) for a household or neighborhood with which he was feuding.

My chief mode of communication to obtain detailed information was through interpreters. However, unlike my predecessors, I exclusively used for this purpose Jívaro men who had learned Spanish as a second language at mission stations. I used a variety of interpreters, eventually working mainly with those who had proven themselves the most accurate, reliable and intelligent. As my own knowledge of the language progressed, I was able to check up on much of that which they interpreted, but even before that stage the comparison of different accounts on the same subject by using different interpreters and informants made substantial veri-

fication possible. I personally believe that the proper use of first-class interpreters is an excellent field technique, but that it must be done with sophistication involving constant rephrasing of the same questions in different contexts with various interpreters and informants and supplemented by as much participant observation as possible. It seems likely that at least as many errors in ethnographic research can be committed by the fieldworker who is under the delusion that he is "fluent" in the language, and who fails to check his results through interpreters, as by the researcher who recognizes his linguistic limitations and uses trained interpreters with sensible caution and patience.

The research providing the present data was conducted for a total of fourteen field months in 1956-57, 1964 and 1969, primarily in the following river valleys occupied by the Jívaro: the Río Chiguasa; the Río Macuma; the Río Cangaimi; the Río Cusuimi; the Río Mangosiza; and the Río Upano and its tributaries. Except where otherwise stated, the ethnographic data presented here refer to the culture of those Jívaro who in 1956-57 were not yet in regular first-hand contact with Ecuadorians or other whites.

The 1956-57 field investigation was sponsored by the Henry L. and Grace Doherty Charitable Foundation, Inc., of New York, with supplementary grants from the Department of Anthropology and the Museum of Anthropology of the University of California, Berkeley, the American Museum of Natural History, and the American Anthropological Association (Smith, Kline and French Laboratories contract). The organization and study of the collected data upon my return from the field was facilitated by a University Fellowship in Anthropology from the University of California and by a summer grant from the Social Science Research Council.

Fieldwork in the summer of 1964 was carried out under the auspices of the Associates in Tropical Biogeography of the University of California, Berkeley, and the Robert H. Lowie Museum of Anthropology of the same institution. Sponsorship of the 1969 summer investigations was by the American Museum of Natural History, the Columbia University Council for Research in the Social Sciences, and the Columbia University Institute of Latin American Studies.

I am particularly indebted to Professor John H. Rowe of the Department of Anthropology of the University of California, Berkeley, who first called my attention to the inadequacies of the published material on the Jívaro and who supported me in embarking on the initial field research,<sup>3</sup> when others felt that it was too perilous a project. Other colleagues who have been of particular assistance are Robert F. Murphy, James J. Parsons, Robert L. Carneiro and Kenneth Kensinger. My wife, Sandra, my son, James, and my daughter, Teresa, have helped make this work possible in such profound ways that they will probably never fully realize the depth of their contribution.

Ecuadorians and Americans in Ecuador who especially made possible the success of the fieldwork through their friendship and assistance were Dr. Alberto Flores González, Director of the Instituto Ecuatoriano de Antropología y Geografía, Sr. and Sra. Alfredo Costales Samaniego of the same institute, Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Stuck, Mr. and Mrs. Michael Ficke, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Drown, Mr. W. Ferguson and Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Ferguson, and also Dr. Glen Turner of the Summer Institute of Linguistics, who contributed linguistic information on the Jívaro language. Dr. Turner is not to be held responsible, however, for oversimplifications in the orthography used here.

My greatest debt, and one which I can never adequately

acknowledge, is to the innumerable *śuarā* who guided me in my education in their culture. I value very deeply the sensitivity, intelligence, courtesy and hospitality with which they have consistently treated me. I feel no greater affection and respect for any people on earth.