

Paraguayan Army Use of Indigenous Forces in the Guayakí (Aché) Conflict

Arturo G. Muñoz

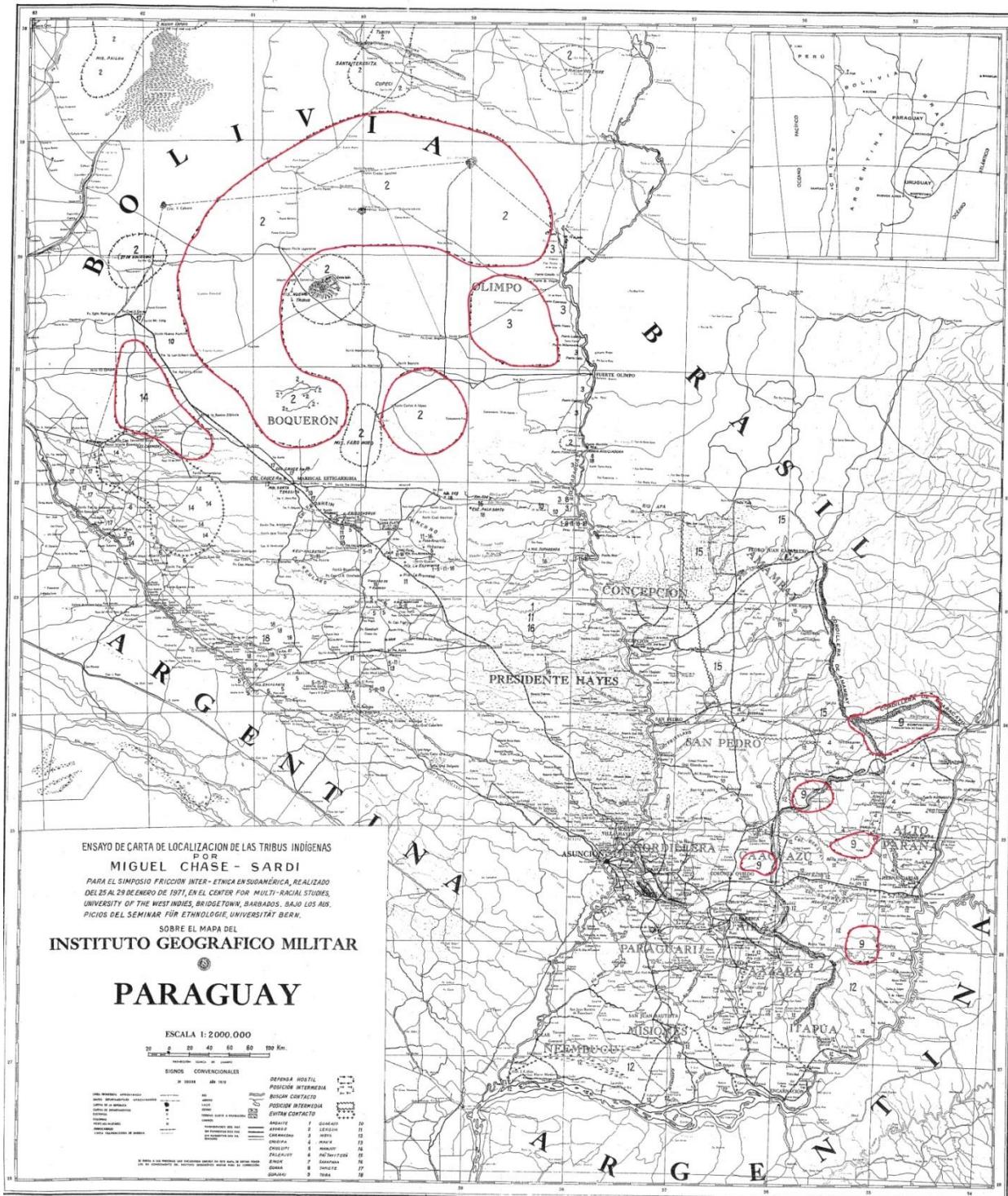
American Indian wars provide varied examples of government use of local indigenous forces against indigenous rebels. In North America, General George Crook's reliance on Apache Indian scouts and combatants to put down uprisings by their fellow tribesmen during the 1870s and 1880s is the best-known example. In South America, some Indian wars continued well into the 20th century. The Motilones Bravos (Barí) in the Río Catatumbo frontier region between Venezuela and Colombia fought incursions by ranchers and oil companies until 1960. In Paraguay, Aché resistance against encroachment on tribal lands continued until 1978, with some tribesmen taking sides with the invaders.

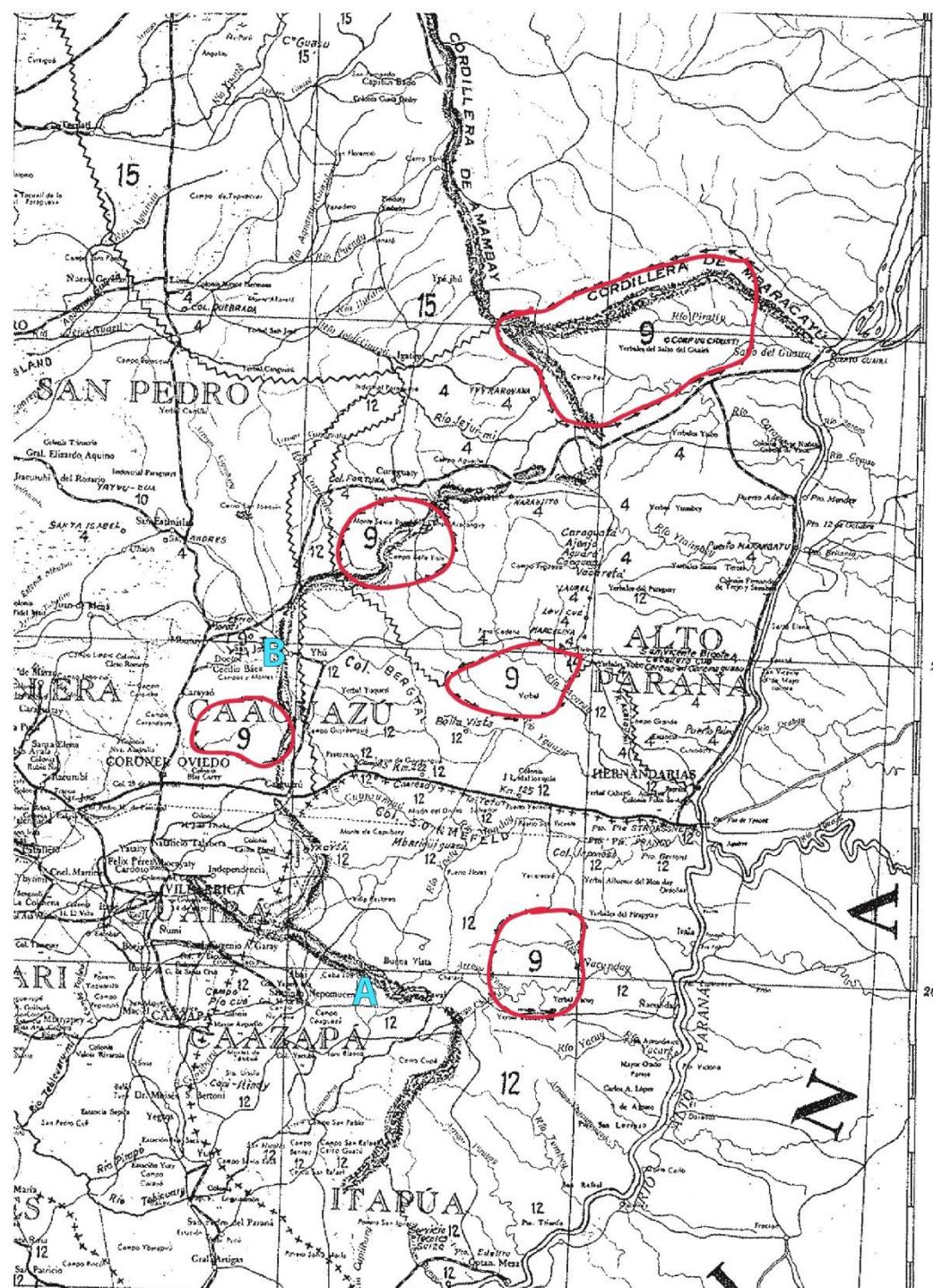
In 1971, the Paraguayan anthropologist, Miguel Chase Sardi, prepared a human terrain map for the 25-29 January "Symposium on Inter-Ethnic Friction," held at the University of the West Indies Bridgetown Center for Multi-Racial Studies, sponsored by Bern University's *Seminar Fur Ethnologie*. Superimposed on a Paraguayan Military Geographic Institute (*Instituto Geográfico Militar*) map, the overlay showed the disposition of the diverse Indian tribes in the country. Published in 1972 by the Catholic University's *Suplemento Antropológico*, it was used by government officials, academics and Indian rights activists alike as a reference. Most tribes were at peace with the government, or in a state of passive resistance. However, three tribes, the Manjuy, Ayoreo (Moro) and the Aché, were defined as being in a position of "hostile defense," meaning they posed an armed threat.¹ Their tribal areas were designated literally as hostile Indian territory.

This article focuses on the Aché. Their case is *sui generis* and cannot be replicated elsewhere. In general, it can be argued that measures that work well in a particular environment

¹ Miguel Chase Sardi, "Ensayo de Carta de Localización de las Tribus Indígenas," in *Suplemento Antropológico*, (Asunción, Paraguay: Universidad Católica: 1972), Vol. 6: No 1-2 (correspondiente al año 1971), 100; the present article is based primarily on the various chapters in that *Suplemento*, the author's own observations and interviews in Paraguay in the summer of 1972 with Chase Sardi in Asunción and other sources at the Colonia Nacional Guayakí in Caaguazú Department , the 1973 and the 2008 studies of the International Working Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) and the Aché section of Arizona State University Professor Kim R. Hill's web site.

may not be effective in other situations where different historical, cultural, economic, demographic, political and military factors may be at play. That said, a comparative approach to





DEFENSA HOSTIL
POSICIÓN INTERMEDIA
BUSCAN CONTACTO
POSICIÓN INTERMEDIA
EVITAN CONTACTO

Hostile Defense (Outlined in Red)
Intermediate Position
Seek Contact
Intermediate Position
Evide Contact

A = Beato Roque González de Santa Cruz Camp
B = Colonia Nacional Guayakí

**Guayakí (Aché) Hostile Defense Areas
Eastern Paraguay 1972**

the study of divergent case histories can yield cross-cultural commonalities and relevant lessons learned. The US army would reject out of hand as illegal, immoral or simply impractical some of the measures implemented in Paraguay. Nonetheless, it is useful to study from an analytical perspective courses of action contrary to our way of thinking and behaving. In the Aché case, the Paraguayan army agent on the ground exploited internal tribal divisions and traditional rivalries to his advantage, while offering attractive incentives to captured warriors to raid rebel tribesmen who remained free in the wilderness. Also relevant was his willingness to stand back and let the Indians conduct raids on their own. A key lesson learned is that, although the Paraguayan military authorized this campaign, and provided some logistical support, uniformed Paraguayan soldiers played only a very minor role. It should be emphasized, moreover, that a crucial factor shaping decisions was the relentless persecution the Aché suffered at the hands of non-military sectors, which made collaboration with the army more palatable than the alternatives.

The settlers, loggers and cattle ranchers invading Aché lands since the beginning of the 20th century considered them as dangerous savages who should be exterminated. In the present text, the term “wild” (*salvaje*) is used interchangeably with free, independent or rebel Aché to highlight Paraguayan perceptions during the period in question. Those Aché who surrendered and agreed to collaborate with civilized men were referred to by Paraguayans as tamed (*mansos*).



Note: the captured Aché chief, Kandepukígi, upon arrival at the Indian reservation in 1970; he did not want to be *manso* and escaped. Too far away to return home, he tried to survive in the unfamiliar forest near the reservation, but it had been denuded of wild game and edible plants and he almost starved to death. His sister, Torági, tracked him down and convinced him to return to the reservation; source: *Suplemento Antropológico* and the *IWGIA*.

To end wild Aché resistance, the Paraguayan government utilized the Aché themselves. At the time, the tribe was divided into four distinct groups, each with its own dialect and identity: the Northern Aché, the Yvytyruzu Aché, the Ypetý Aché and the Yñaró (Nacunday) Aché. They considered each other as rivals and sometimes clashed violently. Dispersed in the wilderness, these groups were further subdivided into multiple bands of twenty to fifty people.

Anthropological research indicates that some bands practiced cannibalism as late as the 1960s.²

As in the 17th century, when they were first contacted by Europeans, the independent Aché still lived in the 1970s by hunting and gathering. Desperately seeking to protect themselves and their way of life, they were accused of ambushing outsiders who entered their territory. When the author of this report visited the Caaguzú frontier, he heard from settlers and Christian missionaries specific accounts of *palmíteros* (gatherers of wild palm hearts) killed by wild Aché who shot their victims in the back with long, serrated arrows. [It should be noted that palm pith is a traditional staple of the Aché diet.] Separate reporting claimed a logger also was shot with arrows during that period. Most complaints involved killing cattle and stealing crops.

Asiatic in appearance, the Aché seem more Japanese than Amerindian; evidently they are descendants of hunters who came from East Asia during the last Ice Age and migrated southwards for thousands of years without much racial mixture. The term Aché denotes human being. In contrast, the predominant, agricultural Guaraní Indians call them Guayakí, meaning

² Mark Munzel, *The Aché Indians: Genocide in Paraguay* (Copenhagen: International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, 1973), 10, at http://www.iwgia.org/iwgia_files/publications_files/Ache_Doc1.pdf



Copyright © Arturo G. Munoz 2015

Note: Aché in the service of the Paraguayan army, Colonia Nacional Guayakí, 1972.

“enemy people”; some translations call them “rat people,” or even “rabid rats.” Because of Paraguay’s unique history of racial and cultural intermixture, most of the frontiersmen who clashed with the Aché in the 20th century spoke the Guaraní Indian language, as well as Spanish.

During the Colonial Period, a few Aché were captured and brought to the Jesuit missions to be civilized and there were reports of peaceful coexistence with the Guaraní Indians in certain areas. After the expulsion of the Jesuits in the late 18th century, there was no further reported effort to civilize the Aché until the German immigrant, Federico Maynthusen, convinced an Aché band to settle on his ranch in 1908. He learned their language, studied their culture and published his findings in anthropological journals.

The manner in which he contacted the Aché became a model for future efforts. Since they avoided contact with outsiders, Maynthusen’s men tracked them to their encampment and conducted a surprise raid at night. They captured two Aché men and brought them back to his ranch, where they were treated with kindness. After winning over the kidnapped tribesmen, Maynthusen sent them back to the forest where they convinced their band to come live with the German benefactor and become farmers. He held utopian ideas about forming a hybrid

community with the newly civilized Indians, but he was a poor administrator and businessman, unable to feed and care for them adequately. After returning in 1919 from a visit to Germany, Maynthusen found his Aché community in ruins. Some of the Aché he had “civilized” had returned to the forest, while others went to work for ranchers in the area who provided better compensation than him. To Maynthusen’s consternation, many of his civilized Aché became slave-hunters tracking down wild tribesmen.

During the first half of the 20th century, the opening of the frontier in what had been for centuries an abandoned wilderness resulted in a campaign to eliminate all savages who stood in the way of progress. According to the Jesuit priest-anthropologist, Bartomeu Meliá, hired hands at the big ranches (*estancias*) did most of the killing, as opposed to small settlers.³ However, much of this activity was never reported and it is hard to tell in retrospect who were the main culprits. Rewards of 300 to 500 pesos were given for each Aché warrior killed. Aware the Indian bands constantly on the run were hungry, the frontiersmen put out poisoned food where they could see it. Faced with the destruction of their means of subsistence, the Aché killed and ate cattle and stole manioc from the settlers’ fields. In retaliation, local posses relentlessly tracked Indian bands for days or weeks, sometimes using dogs or trackers from other tribes, until they could surprise an encampment. They sought to kill the men and enslave their women and children. Selling Aché women and children was commonplace for decades. A tribal song recorded by anthropologists in the 1970s referred to Aché girls as “beautiful flowers stomped by the white men” (*Nuestras muchachas, que eran lindas flores, los blancos solían pisotearlas*). Other songs refer to the daughters of the Aché as working in the houses of big landowners, completely subdued, doing the white man’s work, forgetting the ways of the forest.⁴

In 1949, the notorious slave-hunter “Pichín” López, who employed numerous civilized Aché in his raids, captured a large band and brought forty of them in chains to San Juan Nepomuceno for sale. Besides the former warriors who turned against their tribe after they were captured, the slave-hunters also relied on *señuelos*, that is, Indians who had been captured as children and sent back as adults into the forest to contact those who were still free. This tactic

³ Ibid, 13.

⁴ Mark Munzel, “Kawre Veja Puku – Notas preliminares sobre cinco canciones Axé,” in *Suplemento Antropológico*, 216-218.

was facilitated by that fact that many enslaved Aché escaped and rejoined free bands, sometimes to be captured again, so that there was repeated interaction between Indians roaming in the wilderness and the outside world.

Conversely, it should be mentioned that there were Paraguayans on the frontier who considered it their Christian duty to civilize the savages. It was not uncommon for captured Aché children to be adopted and raised as members of a family. Some of these adopted children eventually became respected members of Paraguayan society, without being held back because of their origins. The majority of captured Aché, however, evidently lived out the rest of their lives as laborers, servants or concubines.

Concerned over recurring reports of massacres and slave-hunting on the frontier, the Paraguayan government in 1957 declared illegal all persecution and enslavement of the Aché. Previously, frontiersmen apparently had not considered it illegal or wrong to kill or capture savages. The following year, the Department of Indigenous Affairs (*Departamento de Asuntos Indígenas*) was established within the Ministry of Defense for the purpose of protecting Indians and facilitating their integration into national life. Nonetheless, violence on the frontier between settlers and the Aché continued unabated. Some military officers on the frontier reportedly were in cahoots with powerful landowners fielding their own armed bands attacking wild Indians to drive them off their lands.

In 1959 a major turning point occurred when twenty Yñaró Aché voluntarily turned themselves in to Manuel de Jesús Pereira at his ranch. He had been a slave-hunter in the region of San Juan Nepomuceno and had captured the chief of the band, Pikygi, several years earlier. After eight months of captivity, Pikygi escaped and rejoined the free Aché in the forest. Constantly fleeing from Paraguayan raids, Pikygi remembered being treated well by Pereira and decided to return to his old master. This caused a schism within the band between those who insisted on following their traditional way of life and those who opted for surrender to the white man. By that time, most of the independent Yñaró had been defeated and few were left fighting. Pereira received Pikygi with open arms, generously promising to protect and feed his people. Consequently, the rest of the band that had remained in the forest joined Pereira.

The Department of Indigenous Affairs took advantage of this event to put Pereira in charge of a new program to gather together wild Aché for their own protection under military auspices. He was referred to as *sub-oficial* in documents at the time. When the author met him in 1972, he was referred to as a sergeant even though he never wore a uniform or rank. Perhaps he had been a sergeant in prior military service. The Paraguayan military officially denominated Pereira's nascent Indian reservation as the Beato Roque González de Santa Cruz Camp, but did not station soldiers there. It was a military camp without militaries. Pereira may simply have been a local rancher deputized by the army.

To help Pereira make good on his promise to Pikygi, the Paraguayan army provided some military rations to the Indians at the new camp. Seeking to avoid Maynthusen's mistakes, Pereira additionally sought to garner ample outside support for his Indian followers. A group of businessmen, clergymen, intellectuals and bankers established the Committee to Aid the Guayakí Indians (Comisión de Ayuda a los Indígenas Guayakés) (CAIG), which, augmented by donations from CARITAS, provided food, powdered milk, clothes, wheat and corn flour, clothes, and agricultural tools. The experiment soon proved its worth.



Copyright © Arturo G. Munoz 2015

Note: Sergeant Pereira giving instructions to one of the principal leaders of the Aché who collaborated with him; this young Aché chief seemed to have gained Pereira's trust and Pereira relied on him; the chief's own standing in the tribe increased because he was seen as close to "Papa Pereira"; 1972.

The Yvytyruzú, who were traditional rivals of the Yñaró, stepped up their theft of settlers' crops and killing of cattle during the early 1960's, provoking calls for action by the authorities. The Ministry of Defense instructed Pereira to deploy with his Yñaró allies to the mountainous wilderness that was the rebel stronghold. Between February and July 1962, they succeeded in capturing most of the rebels, many opting to join their captors. As a result, Camp Beato Roque González now numbered 100 Aché, including 40 Yñaró (22 men, 10 women and 8 children) and 60 Yvytyruzú (18 men, 17 women and 25 children). According to the field work of German anthropologist Mark Munzel, Pereira told his Indian followers that the way for them to become like white men was to capture more Aché. "Many Aché you will catch, a white man you will be!"⁵ Munzel observed that "inducing the Aché to do this was facilitated by the fact that the Aché were split up into many small groups, often at war with each other, with almost no common tribal feeling."⁵

Following the success in pacifying the Yvytyruzú, the Paraguayan military instructed Pereira to move his settlement in 1968 to San Joaquín (Caaguazú Department), also known as Cerro Morotí. The government named Pereira's new camp, Guayakí National Colony (*Colonia Nacional Guayakí*), disregarding the negative connotations of the Guaraní term for the Aché. The Ministry of Defense stationed a small detachment of soldiers at the Colonia Nacional after a murky incident in May 1972 in which shots were fired. The fact that this incident resulted in soldiers being stationed there for the first time suggests some sort of aborted revolt, but there is no further information on what happened.

The move to Caaguazú responded to increased violence between settlers and the Aché.

⁵ Munzel, *The Aché Indians: Genocide in Paraguay*, 22.



Copyright © Arturo G. Munoz 2015 Note: general store and supply storehouse along Caaguazú frontier road, 1972.



Copyright © Arturo G. Munoz 2015

Note: Caaguazú settler's house and ox cart, 1972.



Copyright © Arturo G. Munoz 2015

Note: Paraguayan anthropology students hiking to the Colonia Nacional Guayakí, 1972.

in that frontier region. Stimulated in part by plans for a large hydroelectric project on the Paraná River on the Paraguayan-Brazilian border, dirt roads began to penetrate the last major strongholds of the northern Aché in the early 1970s, opening the forest to logging and agriculture. At that time, it was estimated there were 562 wild Aché in the region, but there was really no way to come up with accurate numbers for these elusive tribesmen. Although construction of the Itaipú Dam did not commence until 1975, the project began to have an effect years earlier. Some accounts argue that the conflict was aggravated by business firms buying tribal lands intending to establish large-scale commercial plantations. Today, vast soy bean fields grown for export cover what once were forests roamed by the Aché.



Copyright © Arturo G. Munoz 2015 Note: Entrance to the Colonia Nacional Guayakí, 1972.

From the Colonia Nacional Guayakí, Pereira's Aché allies penetrated deep into the wilderness regions of the Caaguazú, Alto Paraná and Guairá departments, to convince the free Aché to surrender, or capture them by force. In the latter case, veritable war parties achieved confirmed results. For example, in March 1971, they captured 80 Aché rebels, while in February 1972, they captured 90.⁶ Although the main objective of the raiders was to capture

⁶ Details for this historic account were drawn mainly from Bartomeu Meliá, S.J., and Cristine Munzel, "Ratones y Jaguares: Reconstrucción de un genocidio de los Axé-Guayakí del Paraguay Oriental," in *Suplemento*

wild Indians alive and bring them to the reservation, armed clashes did occur with casualties. In 1971, four free Northern Aché warriors were killed by raiders from the Colonia in a failed attempt to capture their band. The previous year, in October, several Aché hunters from the Colonia had been ambushed by a wild Northern Aché band. The reservation Indians drove off their attackers with newly acquired shotguns and captured one of their women. Within a month, she led them to the wilderness hideout of her band, where she convinced her kinsmen to surrender peacefully and put themselves under the protection of “Papa Pereira.”⁷ This was facilitated by the kinship ties between the reservation Yvytyruzú and the Northern Aché, from whom they had been separated in the 1930s due to the building of the road to Ciudad del Este.

It would have made sense for Paraguayan soldiers to accompany their Indian allies to monitor their activities and, perhaps most importantly, prevent a friendly fire incident with Paraguayans they might encounter. However, the author has not been able to find any interviews, documents or investigative reports indicating that soldiers participated directly. It appears that the Aché from the Colonia conducted their raids unsupervised by the Paraguayan military. Given the emphasis of the Aché on raiding in a traditional manner, living off the land for days or even weeks, it was unlikely that regular soldiers could have kept up. Although Paraguayan frontiersmen and slave-hunters had been hunting the free Aché since the beginning of the 20th century, the fact that these tribesmen, who never had a large population, were still resisting in the 1970s, suggested that they were pretty good at evading white men. Evading their fellow Aché, on the other hand, was a different matter, and that is why the slave-hunters relied on them since at least 1919.

Munzel and his wife, Cristine, witnessed preparations for a raid from the Colonia Nacional Guayakí during September and October 1971 and recorded interviews with the reservation Aché describing their plans. The warriors relied on a truck, provided by the Ministry of Public Works and Communications, driven by a Paraguayan soldier, to travel closer to their target area. In the recordings, published in 2008 by the Copenhagen-based International Work Group for Indigenous

Antropológico, 101-147. A chronology of all documented captures of Aché bands from 1958 to 1972 is contained in Luigi Miraglia, “Dos Capturas de Aché-Guayakí en Paraguay en Abril 1972,” in *Suplemento Antropológico*, 149-171

⁷ Vera Blinn Reber, “The Stroessner Regime and Indigenous Resistance in Paraguay,” (Book Review), *The Catholic Historical Review*, 94:3 (July 2008), 618-620.

Affairs (IWGIA), the Aché referred to their targets as Guayakí, adopting the negative Guarani term.

“We shall follow far the tracks of the Guayakí … We will go far from the truck…far from here, we will dismount to hunt the Guayakí, and we will bring them grabbed by their arms. We will fall upon them at night, extinguishing their fires, striking them on the ground. Those stupid women who do not want to get on the truck, we will force them to walk in front of it, and we will follow behind on the truck, until they fall on the ground from exhaustion. That savage Krymbegi [chief of the band targeted for capture] we have to break his arm, brutally, so that he comes with us. Krymbegi will cry in pain. We have to kill him with a machete. Krymbegi will cry in pain.”⁸

Despite the ferocious intentions of the Aché *mansos*, they failed to capture Krymbegi’s band on that occasion. Separately from the conduct of the raid, Pereira had an argument with the driver of the truck. Because Pereira did not know how to drive a vehicle, he asked Munzel to do it next time, a request the anthropologist declined.⁹

Regarding Pereira’s personal participation in the raids, first-hand reports indicate that he commonly accompanied the raiders to a jumping off point into the wilderness, but stayed behind by the road as they went into the forest, without any Paraguayans. In the following 1972 account Munzel again witnessed the departure of the raiders and interviewed them upon their return. On 29 February 1972, Pereira, accompanied by a group of his Aché warriors, his Aché concubine, two other Aché girls and a Paraguayan (presumably a truck driver) set out on foot to the community of Cecilio Báez, where they spent the night, about 15 kilometers from the Colonia. The following morning they took a truck and headed on the Curuguaty road towards the Saltos de Guairá [the spectacular Guairá Waterfalls now submerged by the Itaipú Dam reservoir] to a point about 100 kilometers from the reservation. Getting off the truck, the Aché entered the forest and headed towards the Ywyrrarovaná hills leaving behind Pereira and the truck driver. It is unclear if the Aché girls stayed with Pereira or accompanied the men. They picked up the trail of the band they sought. These wild Indians were under severe pressure from outsiders invading their lands and had recently shot arrows at a soldier from the Santo Domingo outpost.

⁸ Bartolomé Clavero, et al, *Los Aché del Paraguay: Discusión de un Genocidio* (Copenhagen: International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, 2008) at http://www.iwgia.org/iwgia_files_publications_files/0295_ache.pdf

⁹ Ibid.

Some of them had been captured previously and had escaped, only to live in fear of their lives because of the constant pursuit by Paraguayan raiders.

Seeing that the tracks of the wild Aché headed south, the reservation raiders decided to head them off by returning to the road and travelling parallel further south to a point called Silva-cué. There the raiders entered the forest again and found the tracks of the targeted band. The raiders surrounded the camp silently. They initiated the surprise attack jumping up all at once, yelling fiercely, making a great din. The frightened Indians raised their hands up, shouting *anikijapiti!* (don't shoot). One warrior who did not immediately throw down his bow and arrows was killed by the raiders. Having disarmed the men and secured their surrender, the raiders raped all the young women of the band.

Afterwards the captured Indians were marched to Silva-cué where they waited a day for the arrival of a large military truck to transport everyone to the Colonia Nacional Guayakí. Since there was limited space, the raiders and the captured Indians were all packed together for the long, bumpy ride. Unaccustomed to any moving vehicle, many of the captured Aché got motion sickness and vomited on those next to them. Paraguayan travelers on the road marveled at the sight of a military truck full of naked savages and the event was reported in the press. [This episode recalls the infamous train ride of General Crook's Apache scouts; after successfully tracking down Geronimo across the border in Mexico, they were banished with him to the same reservation in Florida, and rode the same train as the renegades they had just pursued.]

Munzel was present when the truck arrived at the Colonia Nacional Guayakí and the captured Aché dismounted. When he spoke to them, they expressed dismay at being separated from their families, because not everyone had been present at the camp that was ambushed. In contrast, a few expressed hope that they would be reunited with their children that had been kidnapped by Paraguayans in recent months. The reception of the reservation Aché to the newly captured band was sympathetic. The older women of the reservation greeted the new arrivals with the traditional "tearful greeting" which included ritual crying and chanting. One of the

chants recorded by Munzel on this occasion declared somberly to the newcomers that they were now dead and could never again live like free Aché.¹⁰



Note: The civilized Aché, "Rafael" (wearing military shirt), in April 1972 with a wild Aché band he convinced to move to the Colonia Nacional Guayakí; on the frontier road awaiting transport to their new life on the reservation. Source: *Suplemento Antropológico*.

As the preceding accounts demonstrate, the process of resettling Aché from the forest into Paraguayan military-controlled reservations that began in 1959 had the unintended consequence of facilitating ethnographic research by a number of Paraguayan and foreign anthropologists. They undertook a series of systematic interviews focusing not only on tribal

¹⁰ Ibid.

culture and society, but also on oral history and the ongoing struggle to survive. These anthropologists played a key role in publicizing the violent persecution that the Aché suffered and in raising national and international awareness of the need to protect them and preserve their way of life as much as possible. The in-depth interviews the anthropologists conducted also provided insightful, albeit disturbing, assessments of why the Aché seemed so prone to become hunters of their own people once they were captured.

Note: The following photographs were taken in the summer of 1972 in Sergeant Pereira's house, which doubled as the reservation headquarters. They depict recordings made by Paraguayan anthropology students of Aché songs and chanted poems. The bottom picture shows a woman performing the stylized crying typical of various Aché rituals. Some of these recordings were tribal songs handed down over generations, others were new compositions meant to express the travails of the Aché. Pereira facilitated these recordings, evidently wanting to be seen as a gracious host to visitors and a friend of the Aché, dedicated to their welfare.



Copyright © Arturo G. Munoz 2015



Copyright © Arturo G. Munoz 2015

In essence, the Aché believed they lost their humanity when they were captured. Some interviewees described being captured, or even surrendering voluntarily, as losing one's soul, and being transformed into a predatory jaguar in the service of the white man. They were no longer in the "column of the forest," which was the same as the "column of the ancestors," but became part of the "column of the civilized (white) man," or sometimes specifically Pereira's column. Various interviews and songs referred to Pereira as the "great father" (*papa grande*) of the civilized Aché.¹¹

Conversely, the Aché at the Colonia Nacional Guayakí considered hunting their fellow tribesmen as an opportunity to revive the warrior-hunter way of life that they had once enjoyed. For days or weeks at a time, they tracked their human prey in the wilderness, free from the constraints of reservation life, yet still under the authorization of the Paraguayan military. They took no supplies and conducted these raids as they would have done in aboriginal conditions, living off the land. There is little specific information on the weapons used, but it appears that

¹¹ Munzel, "Kawre Veja Puku," 198-203.

they were mainly the traditional bows and arrows with some guns and machetes. The man-hunts could be especially satisfying if they targeted bands that had been traditional rivals. Notwithstanding these tribal rivalries, however, some songs recorded by anthropologists at the Colonial Nacional indicated a deep respect for their wild brethren: “magnificent beings are they, who flee the path of the white man.” (*Magníficos seres ya son, aquellos que huían del camino del blanco.*)¹²

The raiding parties from the Colonia Nacional Guayakí also had the compelling motivation that, if the wild bands fought back and had to be subdued violently, or attempted to flee, then the raiders could take their women as wives. Thus, the prospect of capturing a wife became a major incentive for the reservation Aché to cooperate with Pereira against rebel tribesmen. He relied on primeval practices to achieve his objective of pacifying the frontier.¹³ The author became aware of this policy while visiting the Colonia Nacional in the summer of 1972. It has also been documented by several anthropologists.

For example, an Aché informant, Airági, whose captured wife had died of disease at the Colonia Nacional, expressed to Munzel, an intense desire to acquire a new wife. As payment for his services, Airági asked the anthropologist for an aluminum pot or other item that unattached women in the Colonia would consider desirable, so that he could use it to woo them and convince them to marry him. Alternatively, he requested a large dagger so that he could plunge it into the wild Guayakí and take their women forcibly “o también un gran cuchillo para poder clavárselo a los Guayakí selváticos y traer sus mujeres.”¹⁴ Another informant, Beipuradarégi, composed a song linking the idea of captured Aché being transformed into jaguars serving the white man, to the current hunt for women in the forest. “Those jaguars of the white man, are putting the women at risk of being captured soon.” (*Esos jaguares de blancos, tienen las mujeres expuestas a ser presas ya.*)¹⁵

¹² Ibid, 223.

¹³ Raiding enemy communities to capture wives was commonplace among some tropical forest tribes, notably the Yanomamo. However, the author does not know how widespread this practice was among the Aché in aboriginal conditions. It would have been compatible with endemic rivalries between bands, but may not have been consonant with the gender equality and high status that women enjoyed in traditional Aché society. On the other hand, the Aché may have wanted to compensate for the increasing loss of women and children kidnapped by white men.

¹⁴ Ibid, 196.

¹⁵ Ibid, 223.

Munzel's report published in 1973 examined in detail the fate of captured women since 1970. (In reviewing the list of names given, it should be noted that Pereira renamed all Indian adults in the reservation giving them Spanish first names often followed by his own surname, completely disregarding the spiritual significance of Aché names.) In other cases, captured Aché wives were taken from their husbands and given to those who had already lived on the Reservation for some time and had won Jesús Pereira's confidence by participating in the hunt for their brethren.

As there is a lack of women on the Reservation, this policy is one of the factors used by Jesús Pereira to induce the Reservation Indians to participate in his manhunting expeditions. Such forced couples are: Kybwyarági (Angel Pereira) and his wife Baivyrawachúgi (Julia Pereira); Kajamirígi (Marcelino "Machení;" Pereira) and his wife Kryúragi; Airági (Locadio "Nogalo" Pereira) and his wife Jégumai Brévigma...captured towards the end of 1970... [She] died in early 1971; after her death, Airági took the captured Torági (Lucia Conchita Pereira), who later on managed to return to her also captive husband Kvevégi Chachúgi, before Jesús Pereira separated her again from him...other forced couples are: Bikúgi (Santiago Pereira) and Bywagi; Kanégi (Carlino Pereira)...and his wife Kanedarégi Pikygi (Angela Pereira); Baipúgi Jawági (Lucio Pereira) and Beipuradarégi (Julia Pereira).¹⁶

Additionally, the IWGIA reports accused Pereira of using women as means of reward and punishment within the reservation, taking wives away from Indians he considered insubordinate or rebellious, and giving them to those who embraced him fully as their commander.¹⁷ Munzel

¹⁶ Munzel, *The Aché Indians: Genocide in Paraguay*, 29-30.

¹⁷ Clavero, et al, *Los Aché del Paraguay*.



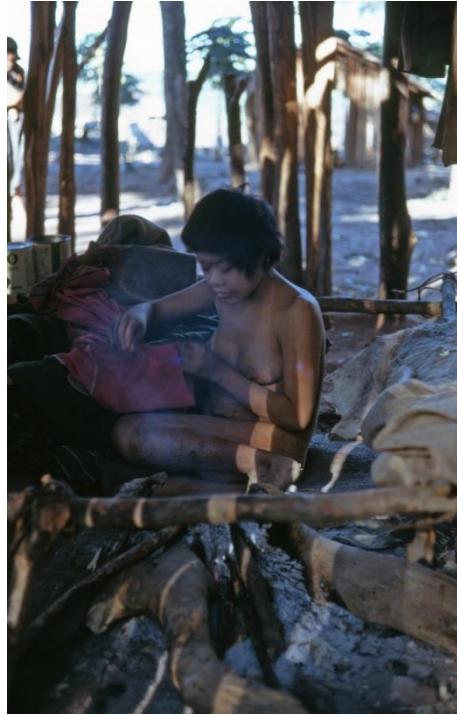
Note: Aché raider Kanepukúgi (Rafael Pereira) with an Aché woman he has captured in the forest. Photograph taken 8 May 1972 at the Colonia Nacional Guayakí; source: Munzel: *The Aché Indians: Genocide in Paraguay*, 45, at http://www.iwgia.org/iwgia_files_publications_files/Ache_Doc1.pdf

observed that because “women are a reward for faithfulness to the authorities... one of the most positive aspects of Aché culture, profound respect for women, is destroyed.”¹⁸

¹⁸ Munzel, *The Ache Indians: Genocide in Paraguay*, 30.



Copyright © Arturo G. Munoz 2015



Copyright © Arturo G. Munoz 2015

Note: Aché mother and child at the Colonia Nacional Guayakí. In her hut, a young woman mends the dress that she has been given to wear on the reservation; 1972.

Pereira later was accused in the media of not appreciating Aché culture and trying to integrate these tribesmen forcibly into Paraguayan society, regardless of their preferences. As soon as naked Indians were brought into his camp, he gave them clothes to wear as the first step in the process of obligatory civilization. He disarmed the Aché warrior-hunters and kept their bows locked under his control. They could retrieve their bows only to go hunting away from the reservation, with his permission, or to go on raids against the wild Aché. However, one report states that they were provided with shotguns for hunting, which contradicts the dominant narrative of disarmed native warriors.¹⁹

The author was told that Pereira personally removed the *tembetá* lip plug from all Aché men in his power, which they considered a symbol of adulthood, or manhood. Pereira also banned the traditional shaved-head tonsure and encouraged the Aché to speak Guaraní. He may not have understood fully the Aché belief that they lost their souls upon entering the world of the

¹⁹ Reber, “The Stroessner Regime and Indigenous Resistance in Paraguay.”

white man, or the metaphoric transformation into jaguars. Both ideas facilitated submission to his demands. Nonetheless, Pereira instinctively exploited this facet of Aché culture, in the same manner that he exploited internal rivalries and played different chiefs against each other. This is what led Munzel to observe that, despite occasional violent acts of repression, “the management of the Reservation is generally carried out in a subtle way.”²⁰

In addition, the forest around the Colonia Nacional Guayakí had been largely denuded of wild game by the settlers and by the Indians themselves. Therefore, the reservation Aché could not live primarily by hunting as they had before, and they depended on Pereira for most of their food. Relocation to a reservation adjacent to Paraguayan settlement also meant that escape back to the wilderness was more difficult, thereby intensifying feelings of despair or resignation.



Note: An Aché man recently brought from the forest to the Colonia Nacional Guayakí in March 1972, still wearing the *tembetá* and traditional tonsure; source: *Suplemento Antropológico*. When the author visited the Colonia in the summer of 1972, he did not see anyone with the *tembetá* or the traditional tonsure

Despite the catalogue of reprehensible actions, Pereira, in affable discussions held with the author, spoke of the Aché in positive terms and seemed to actually admire their fighting spirit. Accordingly, he allowed the Aché men during the author’s visit to perform one of their most cherished traditional rituals, the *tomombo*. It is unclear whether this was previously scheduled, or whether Pereira arranged it for the author’s benefit, to showcase his professed cultural awareness. Whatever the case may be, it was clear that the Aché thoroughly enjoyed it.

²⁰ Munzel, *The Ache Indians: Genocide in Paraguay*, 30.



Copyright © Arturo G. Munoz 2015

Note: Sergeant Pereira in front of the Colonia Nacional Guayakí headquarters, which also doubled as his personal living quarters. Behind him, Aché warriors have retrieved their bows from his quarters and head for the *tomombo* ritual. In the background, one of Pereira's Aché concubines stands by the fence opening.

As soon as the word went out, the men gathered enthusiastically in a flat field near Pereira's headquarters. They happily stripped off their clothes and, completely naked, wielded long, heavy, palm-wood bows without bow strings. These bows normally were stored in Pereira's headquarters and he released them for this special occasion. Traditionally, a specially-shaped club was used for this ritual, which has also been described as a club fight or duel.

Dispersed clans gathered periodically in the old days to conduct these club fights, in which warriors could die from blows received.



Copyright © Arturo G. Munoz 2015

Note: Aché men gather in high spirits for the *tomombo* at the reservation, 1972.



Copyright © Arturo G. Munoz 2015

Note: Aché with their bows waiting for the start of the ritual fight, 1972.

At the *tomombo* witnessed by the author, the men first squatted as a group, waiting for a signal from the standing leader. As soon as the command was given, the men jumped up. They formed a circle holding their bows in the air and began smashing them forcefully against each other. This made a distinctive, war-like sound that was impressive to hear. As they moved in a circle, the blows came lower. The men now were striking hard at each other's heads, shoulders and chests. Eventually, the whole group collectively threw itself on the ground, shouting as they went down. Despite the painful blows they had just received, all the participants grinned broadly and seemed quite pleased. Apparently, the one who was most visibly wounded gained the most prestige.

Note the following pictures depict the three stages of the *tomombo*.



Copyright © Arturo G. Munoz 2015



Copyright © Arturo G. Munoz 2015



Copyright © Arturo G. Munoz
2015



Copyright © Arturo G. Munoz 2015

These were the same men who conducted armed raids against the rebel Aché for Pereira. It seemed that, even as he sought to impose total control over them and forcibly civilize them, he realized that their warrior ethos should be maintained to some degree. Pereira's many critics focused on the brutal coercion he employed to impose his will. Nonetheless, even they conceded that he did not rule solely by force. His carrot and stick approach included persuasion and offering incentives. Some bands of Indians did come to him voluntarily. The armed Aché raiders from the Colonia could have easily escaped into the forest themselves every time they went out, but they always came back. It is relevant to note that Pereira lived for decades surrounded by former hostile Indians. He was vulnerable. Yet, as far as the author knows, the Aché did not take revenge. At age 65, Pereira made the rounds of the reservation by himself as the absolute lord of the place. For lack of better alternatives, the Aché not only acquiesced, but actively participated in hunting down the last wild bands on his behalf.

Shortly after the author left the Colonia Nacional Guayakí, Pereira was arrested in September 1972 and imprisoned, charged with mismanagement of the camp, as well as outright crimes. An informal coalition of activists and Paraguayan and foreign organizations concerned with the welfare of the Aché had pressured the government for his ouster and a change in resettlement policy. They called attention to the inordinately high death rate at the reservation due to a disease epidemic that could have been ameliorated, or prevented, had Pereira managed health care in a more competent fashion. Despite the outside assistance provided to the camp, the Indians suffered from hunger, leading to charges that Pereira illegally pilfered supplies at their expense. (Similar accusations had been made earlier about pilfering of CAIG and CARITAS support for the original Beato Roque González de Santa Cruz Camp.) The IWGIA, among others, condemned the inadequate food and medical care and documented its ill effects.²¹ Forcibly dragging Indians from the forest into this dismal environment drew special ire from the international community, and from Paraguayans who sympathized with the plight of the Aché.

Moreover, the international press accused Pereira of reverting to his old slave-hunting practices and trafficking in captured women and children. This helped explain the perennial

²¹ The 1973 report published pictures of gaunt men and women suffering from hunger and disease during the period ending May 1972. By the time of the author's visit in the summer of 1972, the situation had changed. He certainly did not see everything, but, as suggested by the *tomombo* pictures, no starvation was evident.

shortage of young women in the reservation and why they were so highly prized by the Aché. Munzel and the other investigators additionally accused Pereira himself of sexually abusing Aché women and keeping a harem of three young Aché girls in his headquarters, a charge the author can attest was accurate.²² By modern Western standards, the latter behavior was grossly immoral and criminal. Nonetheless, the reservation Aché, given their own behavior towards captured women, may have seen it differently.

With Pereira's removal from the Colonia Nacional, the raids from that Indian reservation ceased. Officially, the military-sponsored campaign against the free Aché came to an end. By that time, the raids had accomplished their purpose and there were very few wild bands left in the wilderness. The Colonial Nacional decreased in size. With Pereira gone, some of his Indian allies returned to the forest and for a time resumed their nomadic life. Others intermarried with Paraguayans or went to work as laborers for local ranchers and settlers. When Pereira was released from prison, he returned to his ranch, where a group of Aché that had been at the Colonia Nacional rejoined him temporarily. The last wild band was convinced by Christian missionaries in 1978 to come to their mission.

Various efforts by missionaries and pro-Indian activists took place over the years to establish six reservations for the Aché where they could be safe. The Catholic Church, for example, bought land at Chupa Pou and established a large Aché settlement there. The Aché learned how to lobby the Paraguayan government for enforcement of laws in their favor, while simultaneously leveraging the media and international organizations. Margarita Mbywangi emerged as a key leader of the Kuetuvy Aché, who returned as a group in 2000 to the traditional hunting grounds from which they had been forcibly removed in the 1970s. Mbywangi had been captured as a child and sold as a slave, but escaped and returned to her people. Perhaps because of the knowledge she had acquired living with Paraguayans, they eventually recognized her as a chief and empowered her to represent the Kuetuvy Aché Community in negotiations with the government and landowners. She focused on the expropriation of Finca [Farm] #470 to create the largest Aché preserve, adjacent to the Mbaracayu Forest Reserve. This ideal location would allow her community to continue hunting and foraging on a sustainable basis, while also pursuing modern commercial activities. Supported by the World Wildlife Fund and other

²² Clavero, et al, *Los Aché del Paraguay* and Munzel, *The Ache Indians: Genocide in Paraguay*, 28.

NGO's, she successfully negotiated with the government and the Taiwanese landowner, who agreed to sell the property. The Kuetuvy Aché received official permission in January 2002 to occupy Finca #407 while lengthy expropriation and purchase procedures continued.²³

Nonetheless, as had been typical for a hundred years, loggers and settlers disregarded the government decree and invaded. Perhaps in response to media and international NGO alarm, government forces expelled the first invasion. When landless settlers massed on the border of the Kuetuvy Community a second time in July of 2002, intending to invade Finca #407 again, the Aché themselves put on a show of force. Two hundred men gathered together from all six reservations, armed with bows and arrows, to confront the settlers. In the face of this unprecedented show of armed Aché unity, the settlers withdrew.²⁴ Nevertheless, legal proceedings and challenges to the turnover of the land to the Indians dragged on.

The author does not know whether today Finca #470 officially is in the hands of the Aché. It appears that this issue has been resolved favorably because there is a web site for the Kuetuvy Preserve marketing "Guayakí brand Yerba Mate" beverage internationally as a sustainable tropical forest product harvested by the Aché.²⁵ Margarita Mbywangi's success in preserving thousands of acres of land for her people is mentioned. The current situation is a far cry from the days of Aché raids against the Aché.

Note: the following photographs are taken from Professor Kim R. Hill's web site at <http://www.public.asu.edu/~krhill3/Index.html>. They show the July 2002 confrontation at Finca #470 between the Aché and the landless settlers.

²³ <http://www.public.asu.edu/~krhill3/Index.html>

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ <http://guayaki.com/about/2651/Kue-Tuvy--The-Ache-Guayaki-Preserve.html>



