MUMMIFIED JIVARO HEADS

The custom of taking the head, eyes, scalp, hands, teeth, or other part of the body as a trophy was widespread in the New World. The trophy was nearly always taken from the dead body of an enemy belonging to an alien tribe. The taking of the whole head was common in many places and was no doubt the earlier custom. From this there developed in both North and South America the practice of taking scalps. In some regions the head of the enemy was cut off, the body dismembered and horribly mutilated but no part taken as a trophy. The Eskimo were probably the worst offenders in this respect, followed closely by their Athapaskan neighbors.

The taking of scalps was not exclusively an Indian practice. Herodotus records it among the Scythians. The first reliable account recorded in America was that of Cartier, in 1535, on the St. Lawrence. The custom is generally supposed to have been common all over America but it was practically confined to a narrow region extending from Canada to Florida including some Algonquian tribes, the Iroquoian and the Muskogian stocks. Later on, when the colonists offered bounties for scalps the taking of scalps became a business and spread to the western tribes. One reason for the rapid spread was the introduction of firearms and steel knives which made killing and scalping easier.

The first to offer premiums for heads were the Puritans of New England in 1637. The Connecticut colonists, in 1675, paid their own troops thirty shillings each for Indian heads. It was the New England Indian custom to take the head and not the scalp. In 1689 South Carolina colonists paid £8 each for scalps of Indian warriors. In 1688 French Canadians paid ten beaver skins for scalps of enemies, both whites and Indians. This was the first time a
bounty was placed on the scalps of white men. Throughout the colonies friendly Indians were employed to take the scalps of other tribes. Even as late as the Revolutionary War scalping was practiced on both sides.

Hudson River Indians preserved the right hands of their enemies. They learned the practice from the Dutch who introduced Negro slaves from Africa where it was the custom to cut off the right hands of fugitive slaves. Here the Dutch offered rewards for hands of slaves who ran away. The Indians as well as the whites engaged in these pursuits. Later the whites offered rewards for Indian hands, but the custom soon died out.

Today we have the scalp dance among some tribes but scalp taking is prohibited by law.

In South America scalping was found in the Chaco region of Northern Argentina. The head was first cut off and carried home and later the scalp was cut around and pulled off. Here, as in North America, the scalps were given to the women who carried them in the scalp dance. In Argentina the custom did not spread because premiums were not offered for scalps, and firearms were kept away from the Indians. The Caribs in Guiana took scalps, but they undoubtedly learned the practice in post-Columbian times from North American Indian slaves taken to the coast about the mouth of the Orinoco or possibly it came by way of the Antilles from Florida.

Taking the head as a trophy was common in prehistoric times in Peru as shown by the mummies and in the paintings on ancient pottery. It would appear that the head was sometimes reduced much as the Jivaros reduce it today. The Mundurucus in Brazil preserve the head and use the teeth in making belts. The Witotos eat the head and preserve the skull. The Tupi preserve the eyes of their enemies as trophies.

The motives for taking war trophies were much the same in the various tribes. They were considered as compensation for former loss or tokens of revenge. They were the evidence of the owner's prowess and were kept as a matter of pride or personal satisfaction.

The nine tribes of the Jivaros stock occupy a very large territory on the eastern slope of the Andes Mountains in the Republic of Ecuador. Early in the seventeenth century the missionaries crossing the mountains came into contact with some of the tribes and established stations which have continued in spite of the fact that little progress has been made in Christianizing the Indians. The more
remote tribes have not been visited by white men and continue to live their old life and practice their old customs. They, unfortunately, have not escaped the influence of white man's diseases, and are gradually decreasing in numbers. When first reported upon it was estimated that they numbered 200,000 but now there are not more than 10,000 remaining.

They do not live in villages but in large oval shaped communal houses. A single house containing several families may be seventy-five feet long and forty feet wide. The thatched walls continue to the ground with no windows and only two doors, one for the women at their end of the house and the other for the men at the opposite end. Each woman has her little fireplace made of three short logs with their ends together. The men have stools but the women sit on the floor. All sleep on regular couches or beds built around the walls on raised platforms. They never use hammocks. The dogs are kept tied day and night to the foot of the beds of the women.

The men, in their end of the house, sit on stools and manufacture their lances, blowguns, poisoned darts, quivers, round shields of wood or tapir skin. Here they make and keep the great signal drum which enables them to convey simple information rapidly and to a long distance. They do not have a developed code but they are able to warn each other of threatened danger or to call for help. One day, when three men were needed for a journey, the signal was sounded and the three men later appeared prepared to go.

The Jivaros are very warlike and are divided into two hostile groups; one of four tribes and the other of five. These groups are traditional enemies and live in a chronic state of warfare. War parties are continually making raids, first from one tribe in a group and then from another tribe in another group. It seldom happens that all the tribes organize and go to war against the enemy. In 1904 it was reported that the northern group joined all their forces against an unrelated tribe, the Piros, and killed some two thousand in a surprise night attack.

They have been called head hunters and cannibals because they take the head of the slain enemy and preserve it as a trophy. They never eat any portion of the human body. The mummified head, or tsantsa, is their most esteemed war trophy. It is considered a great honor to kill one of the enemy warriors, hence the head is taken as evidence and preserved so that it may be present at the
feast which the hero must give. If the head is that of some noted warrior or important individual then a great feast is given and all the friendly tribes invited.

It is necessary to preserve the head because it requires many months to clear a field and grow yuca and bananas for food and drink for the great throng that will attend the feast. Near the time for the feast the hero's friends assist him in hunting and fishing and in curing the meat. The women of the household assist the wife of the hero in making great quantities of drink which is stored in large earthen jars to ripen. Besides all this a number of young peccaries must be captured and kept fat, to be killed at midnight on the last day of the feast, to furnish food for the guests on their way home. As the feast always lasts until all the food is consumed the hero naturally wishes to have the added honor of giving a long feast.

The head of the enemy is cut off with a bamboo knife and carried home where it undergoes a very careful treatment. It is hung up for three or four days. Then an incision is made at the edge of the hair and carried over the top of the head to the neck and the skull with considerable flesh removed. The skin is boiled in an infusion of herbs containing tannic acid. Next hot sand is put inside to dry and to shrink the skin. Then a hot stone is put inside, over which the skin is worked into the desired form. Lastly the head is greased and smoked for a long time over a fire made of the roots of a certain palm.

In order to keep the lips in position while the head is drying three small sticks of chonta palm are thrust through them from below, and strings woven in and out between them over the lips. When the head is completely cured these sticks are removed and cotton cords passed through in their stead. To these cords a transverse cord is attached and hanging from it there are usually several single cords about fifteen inches in length. Some students have thought that these suspended cords formed some kind of a record or quipu kept by the hero, but my informant said they were ornaments only. This seems the more probable because they often have feathers and other ornaments attached to them. From the perforations of the ears are hung decorations of various kinds. For the purpose of suspending or wearing the head over the back ornament of bird bones, a cord is passed through a hole in top of the head and around a piece of stick placed there before the head was cured. The head is now very dark brown in color due to the smoke, and is about one-eighth of its normal
size. It is said that these heads so much resemble the original that they have been recognized by friends. A captive woman is said to have recognized the head of her son. In all such cases the facts that the head has been prepared and is kept in a certain house are already known, and hence the identification becomes very easy. Among some tribes heads of friends as well as those of enemies may be so prepared and preserved.

Every boy is expected to be a warrior later on, and is trained in the manufacture and use of weapons and in the taking and treatment of the head. He cannot practice on a human head but he kills a sloth, reduces and preserves its head with all the care his elders use in preparing the enemies head.

The feast of the head is held in honor of the man who has taken the head. The hero must prepare the feast or be dishonored. He must also undergo a fast, or rather submit to certain taboos. He must not eat any game killed with the spear, nor eat the flesh of certain animals. He eats fruit, vegetables and fish caught in a net. He shows his bravery by going without weapons in his hands. He paints his body with black lines, and lives alone.

The feast is in direct charge of the head man who is always the most influential citizen. When all the invited guests have arrived and the dance is ready to begin the hero comes from the house, bearing the tsansa on the top of a staff and presents it to the master of ceremonies, who dips the head successively into a decoction of tobacco, in chichi and in clear water. He then pours a little of each beverage into the mouth of the hero who sits on a low stool and opens his mouth to receive it. This ceremony closes the fast and frees the hero from any further obligations.

The master of ceremonies takes the head on the staff, advances towards the people, falls on his knees several times and then makes an address in which he praises the hero for his courage and ends by saying "Brave Jivaro, you have avenged an injury." As he finishes his oration he sets up the staff in the dance ground and the men, with the wife of the hero, catch hands and dance around the head, advancing and retreating, hurling ridicule and derisive epithets at it. Sometimes the other women dance in a larger circle around the men. The greatest honor a woman can have is to dance with the men, and this single dance at the feast of the head is her only opportunity. The hero then takes the head and hangs it up on the principal pillar of the house, where it remains for some years and then may be
thrown into the river. Among some of the tribes it is worn on anniversary occasions over the bird bone back ornament as shown in Fig. 71. After the head dance the master of ceremonies serves food and

![Back view of costume showing wearing of the mummified head.](image)

Back view of costume showing wearing of the mummified head.

Fig. 71.

drink and the dance continues day and night until the supplies are exhausted. The tobacco drunk by the hero serves as a violent emetic, but he soon recovers from his sickness, takes a bath in the river and returns to the dance.
At midnight when the last of the food is consumed, the pec-ccaries which have been preserved for the occasion are killed, and the master of ceremonies divides the meat among his guests to serve their needs on the way home. This is the signal to depart. Everything is made ready and all join in the final dance, which ends at daylight, when all set out in different directions on the long, weary, homeward march, which may last for ten days. They have had too much to eat, too much to drink, too much of everything but rest; hence they soon camp and have one good long sleep.

**Marriage**

A man has the first right to take his cousin in marriage but he is not required to take her. Polygamy is common and a man may take his first wife's sister. The marriage ceremony takes place when the girl is about twelve years of age. Her father makes a feast and invites the household. The ceremony is in charge of the medicine man who takes food and offers it to the girl and says, "this is the way you must serve your husband." He offers mandioca, plantains, corn and potatoes and each time repeats the same injunction. Then he brings a servant and says, "you must always be ready to serve your husband without his asking." The Jivaros make raids upon their enemies and carry off women whom they keep as wives or as servants. It has been reported that the Jivaros practiced the custom of the Couvade but they do not now and probably never did practice it.

Women wear a cotton skirt which reaches a little below the knees and a cloak of the same material thrown over one shoulder and fastened under the other arm. The children run about the house
naked until eight or ten years of age. The men wear either a short kilt-like cotton garment or a loose sleeveless shirt made of bark. Sometimes these garments are ornamented by painting on geometric designs or sewing on strings of beads or feathers. Fig. 72 shows an unusually good specimen of this type. This figure shows also a beautiful ceremonial hat or crown worn by the leading man at a dance. Fig. 71 shows how the back ornament made of bird bones is suspended from a band over the forehead and also how the reduced head or war trophy is worn by the hero at dances other than the one in which the head first appears.

The spear in Plate IX is used in warfare and in hunting the peccaries and the tapir. They use the blowgun with poisoned darts for hunting but do not use the bow and arrow for any purpose.

The traffic in salt is the most important trade, because of the rarity of this article in the upper Amazon region. The salt deposit at the mouth of the Curi-Curi River is guarded jealously in part, because of the tradition connected with the origin of salt. An ancient Jivaro, Whui, found the place and sang, "here I shall live and flit about as a butterfly with iridescent wings." Today when they go to get salt they sing a song to the butterfly which they regard as the spirit of Whui.

Religion among the Jivaro is not well developed but they have interesting myths and traditions, some of which are here recorded. The highest divinity, Iguanchi, directs all the important acts of life. It is rather unfortunate that the missionaries have used the name of this divinity to designate the devil and have manufactured a new name for the God of the Christians. The medicine man enters into communion with the divinity by drinking an infusion of natema on a high hill. The Indians believe in another life which is really the continuance of this on earth. Disease and death are caused by the enemy through the medium of the medicine man. The idea of natural death is not entertained. Morality is utilitarian and the Jivaro can hardly be said to be either good or bad. He is one of the most intelligent Indians of the upper Amazon but he is unable to contend against the white man's diseases and hence is doomed to disappear.

**Origin of Men**

In the beginning all animals were like men or had the understanding of men. Animals, birds and reptiles used the same language, understood each other and conversed together.
In a lake there lived a great serpent who killed for his food a
great many birds and animals when they went to the lake to drink
or to bathe. So the animals held a consultation to determine what
should be done. They decided to drain the lake, capture and kill
the serpent. After this was accomplished, they held a fiesta at
which they drank chichi and the men danced with the widows whose
husbands had been killed in the conflict with the serpent. This was
the last meeting of all the animals, who, until now had used one
language and had acted like men. Each group of animals and birds
went away speaking its own distinct language and neither has since
been able to understand the other. Some of the birds remained as
men, and some of the monkeys as women, and this is why the men in
their dances sing histi, histi, histi, while the women sing oa, oa, oa,
in imitation of the bird and the monkey.

THE FLOOD

Two boys were sent into the forest to get game for a fiesta.
They made a camp under a great tree in the depths of the forest.
The first day they secured much game, dressed it and hung it up at
the camp. When they returned the second day, laden with game,
they discovered that their first day’s catch had been stolen. Again
the second day their meat was stolen. On the third day one remained
in hiding and discovered the thief to be a great snake that lived in
the hollow of the tree. So they built a fire in the tree and the snake
fell down and was roasted in the fire. The boys were hungry and one
of them ate some of the flesh of the snake. He was soon thirsty and
drank all the water at the camp and at the spring; then he went to
the lake and began to drink but he was soon transformed into a
frog, then into a lizard and then into a snake which began to grow.
His brother tried to drag him out of the lake but the lake began to
fill up. The snake told his brother to return and tell their people
that the lake would soon grow until it covered the whole world and
that all would perish. He told his brother to take a small calabash
in his pocket and climb to the top of the highest mountain and when
the water came to climb to the top of the highest palm tree.

He returned and told his people all that had happened but they
would not believe him and accused him of having killed his brother.
He fled to the mountain and climbed the palm tree when the water
covered the mountain. After many days he threw down palm
seeds and thus learned that the water had subsided. When he came
down the mountain he saw the vultures in the valley eating the dead people. He went to the lake and found his brother and took him out of the water and carried him away in his calabash.

**Origin of Fire**

In the beginning the Jivaros had no fire but warmed their food under their arms and cooked their eggs in the sun. One old Jivaro, Takia, learned to make fire by rubbing two sticks together but he would not allow his people to have the fire nor teach them how to make it. Many unsuccessful attempts were made to steal the fire. In those days the Jivaros were like men but could fly. Several of them flew to the house but Takia kept the door ajar and when one of them put his head in Takia closed the door and killed him. At last the snake said he would try, so he wet his wings and placed himself in the path where Takia's wife should find him when she passed in the early morning. She found him wet and cold, carried him into the house and placed him before the fire. When his wings were dry he took a firebrand with his tail and flew away to the top of a dead tree where he wrapped the fire in dry bark and took it to his own house. There he built a big fire and called all of his people together and gave them fire; so they no longer had to ripen their food under their arms. When Takia learned about it he scolded his wife but the Jivaros have had fire ever since and know how to make it anew by rubbing together two pieces of the silk-cotton wood.

**The Sun and the Moon**

In the beginning the sun and moon were two Jivaro men living on the earth in the same house with the same woman, called Ahora. The sun quarreled with the moon about the woman and the moon said he did not like her anyway and in his anger he started to climb up to the sky on a vine. The sun went into the house and obscured himself for a time. The woman cried, "Why are you burning me here alone, I am going up to the sky also," and climbed up the vine after the moon. She carried with her a small basket full of clay, the kind the Jivaros use in making pots. She was near the sky when the moon saw her and shouted, "Why do you follow me?" Before she could make reply, he cut the vine and she, with her basket of clay, fell to the earth. Wherever the clay fell it grew and the Jivaro women even today say the clay came from the soul of Ahora. She
was a brown bird and at every new moon she can still be heard crying
"my husband, my husband, why have you abandoned me?"

The sun also went up to the sky on another vine looking for the woman. The moon fled from the sun, running on tops of the moun-
tains. The sun was never able to catch up to the moon and they were never reconciled. Therefore the sun is always seen by day and the moon by night.

As the sun and the moon were unable to live together in harmony with one woman, were always jealous of each other and quarreling about her, so the Jivaros are jealous and fight for the possession of the women.

**HOW THE STARS REACHED THE SKY**

A Jivaro woman was married to a jaguar. He asked her to pick the insects from his head. She did so and, according to the custom which is followed today, ate the insects. She was soon nauseated. The jaguar was angry and said, "Why are you nauseated with your husband?" and proceeded to eat her. As he ate her, two small eggs fell from his mouth through the canine spaces. His mother gathered them up and put them away in a small pot with cotton about them. When they hatched they were two Jivaro boys. They were afraid of the jaguars and planned to kill all of them, but one escaped, so they decided to go up to the sky where they would be safe.

They made bows and arrows. The smaller boy shot at the sky but his arrow did not pass the upper clouds. The first arrow shot by the larger boy pierced the sky, the second hit the end of the first; the third hit the second, and so on until the line of arrows reached down to the earth. The boys climbed up the arrows to the sky and became the first bright stars. The arrows remained for a long time and people and stars went up and down. This was the way the Jivaros learned how the stars originated. At last the moon cut down the arrow passage way and left the stars in the sky.

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