ETHNIC GROUPS

Costarricenses

The inhabitants of Costa Rica are known by the formal title of Costarricenses and by the more familiar label of Ticos. The latter derives from their frequent use of the diminutive Spanish ending of *ico* or *tico*. For example, where most Spanish speakers would say *momento* (moment), the Costa Ricans soften it to *momentico*. The portion of the population that identifies most strongly with this national description is the whites of the highlands and, secondly, the mestizos of Guanacaste Province. Other national groups usually regard themselves first as Indians or Negroes and, secondly, if at all, as Costa Ricans.

The highland population is descended primarily from the early Spanish settlers and, although intermarriage with Negro slaves and Indians occurs, the Spanish strain predominates. Many highland families contend that they can trace their heritage to their Andalusian and Extremaduran ancestors. This claim is supported by the fact that any significant immigration from other than Spanish sources has been a phenomenon of only the last 100 years. In short, the highland communities are an inbred Spanish colony and, since they constitute a significant majority of the population, Costa Rica can be called the most homogeneous nation in Central America.

An official count has never been made, but the mestizos are thought to be the second largest ethnic group. The racial division between white and mestizo is often vague, which makes it difficult to establish a concrete definition. In addition, there is little cultural distinction between the two groups and, particularly in the highlands, the difference is neither politically nor socially recognized. In Guanacaste Province, where the majority of the mestizos are found, the situation is different, for the province itself has had a unique history. Even here, however, the people consider themselves first as Costa Ricans and experience no racial prejudice in their dealings with the Meseta Central.

Guanacaste originally was the home of the Chorotega Indian tribe, the largest in Costa Rica. Early in the conquest many of the members were converted to Christianity and were allowed to live peaceably in their villages. The small number of settlers who arrived there soon intermarried with members of the tribe, and eventually a population evolved that was mixed both physically and culturally. During the colonial era, the province belonged to Nicaragua, but shortly after independence in the 1820's Guanacaste joined Costa Rica. The people, however, still closely resemble their Nicaraguan mestizo neighbors.

Because of their unique history, the inhabitants exhibit a strong provincial loyalty and are proud to be known as Guanacastecans, much like Texans in the United States. They retain a few distinctive cultural traits, such as farming techniques, that can be traced to their Indian heritage, but the majority of their culture is Spanish derived. In recent years Guanacaste has become one of the focal points for migration from the highlands, thus increasing the contact with highland culture and decreasing the differences between the two. In 1969 the Guanacaste mestizos would be likened to inhabitants of a rural outpost of Costa Rican culture with regional, historical, and racial differences, but with a similar fundamental life style.

Negroes

There have been three stages of Negro settlement in Costa Rica, beginning with the colonization of the first successful town, Garcimuñoz. Juan de Cavallón, the founder, brought nine Negro slaves in his entourage of Spaniards, Indians, and domestic animals. In the last years of the 16th century a second small group of African slaves joined those nine, but the majority of the Negroes arrived during the following 200 years. The first groups that came in the 17th century were Bantu from the Congo and Angola, and later arrivals were Sudanese. By 1751 there were approximately 200 Negroes and mulattoes in the country, the majority of the former being used to work the cacao plantations in the lowlands of the Matina valley.

Mulattoes and mestizos formed a special element in Costa Rican society, being beneath the *criollos* (see Glossary) and recent settlers from Spain, but above the slaves. There was a stronger distinction between slave and freedman than between Negro or mulatto and white, a situation that facilitated the assimilation of the Negroes at a later date. The mulattoes either worked in the indigo-dye industry and on cattle ranches in Nicoya and Esparta or became soldiers. In fact, most of the regiments that the Costa Ricans sent against the English and Mosquitos in the lowlands were composed of mulattoes. When a Negro gained his freedom, he left for the highlands where he was soon absorbed by the mulatto community. An escaping slave, however, sought haven with the English, who became a power in the lowlands during the 17th century. Here, along with the Indians and zambos (persons of mixed Negro and Indian ancestry), the escaped slaves became part of the English fighting force. Thus there were essentially three communities of Negroes in Costa Rica during the colonial era: slaves, who continued to work the lowland plantations; freed Negroes and mulattoes, who were slowly being absorbed by the highland communities; and renegade Negroes, who were also in the lowlands but fought with the English against their previous owners (see Historical Setting, ch. 2).

All the slaves were freed in the late 18th century, and in 1801 there were approximately 9,000 mulattoes in the highlands. By this time they had become active and loyal members of the community, accepted by the society at large. Within another 50 years, they had been completely assimilated and were a physical and cultural part of the Costa Rican population. The escaped Negroes and zambos remained in the lowlands as a separate society. In 1969 there were still isolated zambo communities whose only outside contact was with the Talamancan Indian tribes. Thus, except for the few scattered lowland settlements, there was no trace of the colonial Negro in 1969.

In the late 1900's, however, a large number of Negroes were brought from the West Indies to help build the railroad from Limón to the highlands. Most of them remained in the lowlands to work on banana plantations. Here they were isolated from the highland both by choice and by legal restrictions that forbade them from spending a night in the Meseta Central. Their North American employers were also outside Costa Rican society and served as a buffer against the highland culture. The Negroes were allowed to preserve both their British West Indian style of life and their identity as English-speaking Protestants in a Spanish-speaking, Catholic country. They achieved higher positions in the lowlands than did Costa Rican whites who migrated there, but in the national society as a whole Negroes occupied very few positions of authority, wealth, or prestige.

In the 1930's the plantations failed and were abandoned, thus removing the buffer between the Negroes and Costa Rican society. At first, there was no visible change in the situation other than adverse economic conditions. The majority of the Negroes were forced into subsistence farming, growing cacao and bananas on the abandoned plantations and selling them to exporters. Others became stevedores on the wharfs of Limón or hired out as workers on the large cacao plantations owned by absentee highland landlords. They were still apart from the highland society and were intent on preserving their own culture. English schools flourished, and Jamaican newspapers and British films were the most popular. Many of the first generation remained British subjects and applied for British passports when leaving the country.

In 1949, however, a new constitution was passed that guaranteed them many additional rights. The travel prohibitions were removed, and the Negroes legally became full citizens of the country. The members of the younger generation began to consider themselves Costa Rican nationals rather than British, and they desired assimila-

tion into the highland society. Even those who attended English-speaking schools, which were by then subsidized by the government, acquired a knowledge of Spanish. As a rule, the younger generation is bilingual, and many of them have begun moving to the highlands. These persons now have positions in the lower and middle strata of Costa Rican society and are becoming an integral part of the highland culture. They represent the third stage of Negro settlement in Costa Rica.

The whites and mestizos of the highlands are reacting to the new generation of Negroes in a variety of ways. When the travel prohibition was first rescinded in 1949, there were many prophesies of a Negro invasion but, on the whole, the migration to the highlands has been accepted amiably. This could be because the influx was much smaller than expected and the full numerical weight of the Negroes has not yet been felt. Nonetheless, there are pockets of discontent. The Negroes are Protestant, primarily Anglicans, and this fact alone would separate them in a devout Catholic country. They usually are physically larger than other Costa Ricans and excel in national sports. Consequently, they have begun to dominate the major basketball and soccer teams in the country.

On the other hand, the Negroes of the lowlands are beginning to experience the effects of a large migration of highlanders to their area. In the early part of this century, the work force in the Meseta Central was white and mestizo, and that of the lowlands was Negro. Since there was plenty of work for everyone, the two groups complimented one another. Today, however, with the large increase in population, unemployed highlanders have been migrating to the lowlands, and competition for the available work has greatly increased. Highland whites are also filling the upper class vacuum created when the North Americans left, and Negroes are losing the economic advantages that they once enjoyed.

These new developments have not created radical changes in the life style of members of the older generation. They continue to live in Limón, and most know little, if any, Spanish. Few have bothered to request Costa Rican citizenship. They listen to Radio British Honduras and Radio Jamaica and even play the Jamaican illegal lottery. There is no racial unity, however, for rivalries still exist between the Negroes from Jamaica, who are the most numerous, and those from Barbados, Trinidad, and the Bahamas.

Members of the younger generation who have left Limón are primarily those who received advanced education and are pursuing their careers in the highlands. Some of the lower-class workers have left for the banana plantations on the Pacific coast. The middle class that has remained in Limón is becoming politically aware and producing the leaders of the Negro community. To unify their activities, they have formed an organization called the United Negro Improvement Association. Their children now attend the Spanish-speaking public schools in the area but, since these meet only for a half-day, the children also attend a Protestant, English-speaking school in the afternoons. Although this group retains many traditions from its past, its members regard themselves as Costa Ricans.

In Limón the daily and yearly cycles for all groups continue in much the same pattern as that of their grandparents. They rise early in order to escape the oppressive heat that can reach 90°F. by 8:30 A.M. Women go to the market each day, men to their jobs, and children to school. After a meal at noontime there is a siesta, and work is resumed in the late afternoon. Men frequent the bars on the weekends, but usually by 9:00 P.M. the city is quiet. On Saturday night the young people attend a movie and then go for a *paseo*, or formal walk in the square. This is in imitation of the ritualized highland custom that is the socially accepted means by which young persons meet.

For the most part, the people ignore Costa Rican national celebrations, with the exception of Columbus Day. A 4-day fiesta is held, resembling the springtime carnival of other Latin countries. There are numerous parades, rows of hastily constructed huts for street vendors, bars and gambling stalls, and crowds of people in the street at all hours. Many highlanders come to Limón for the event, usually staying for all 4 days.

The Christmas season, by comparison, is quiet. It is not considered a religious holiday, and few people attend church, viewing this as a Spanish custom. The bars remain open 24 hours a day, and business continues as usual. On the other hand, New Year's Eve is regarded as a very religious day, and the churches are usually crowded. It is thought that if God sees a person in church on the first day of the year, he will overlook his absences during the remainder. In 1963, for example, in Limón there were only 90 persons at the Anglican Church Christmas service, but over 400 attended on New Year's Eve. The greatest religious celebration, however, is Holy Week. Throughout the whole country, all bars are closed, businesses shut down, and solemn processions are held. Church attendance is high and social events are at a minimum.

Little information exists concerning the life style, customs, and traditions of the Negroes who have left the area, but it can be assumed that in many ways they still resemble their Limón relatives. The influence of the Spanish culture has certainly produced some deviation, and the extent of the difference is probably more visible among the young. No intensive study, however, has been made.

Indians

When the Spanish conquistadores first arrived in Costa Rica, they found five major Indian tribes, composed of various bands numbering approximately 27,000. During the next 400 years, the Indian population was swiftly depleted as thousands died of European diseases that swept across the Central American isthmus in epidemic proportions. Many more died of starvation as they were driven off their lands. The tribes in the central highlands were almost completely wiped out, although a few were assimilated into the dominant Spanish society. The Chorotegas of the Nicoya peninsula eventually lost most of their aboriginal culture and today form part of the mestizo population of Guanacaste Province. The remnants from other groups made their way into isolated areas on the Pacific and Atlantic coasts, many replacing their original tribal identities with new loyalties. Here they attempted to preserve their culture, forcibly obstructing any attempted Spanish settlement (see Historical Setting, ch. 2).

In the colonial era the Indian's major contact with the Spanish society was the Roman Catholic Church whose priests built missions in various parts of their territory. As they had done in other Central American countries, the priests moved various tribes into concentrated areas to facilitate the conversion and education of the Indians. The Cotos, Turucacas, Quepos, and Abubaes were all transferred to the Pacific coast in the southwest. Here they were gradually assimilated by the Borucas, the only tribe in Costa Rica that still resides in its pre-Columbian habitat. The priests were not as successful in other parts of the country, and in the 18th century the Bribri, Guatuso, and Cabécar tribes burned several missions and massacred Franciscan priests. As punishment the Costa Rican government forcibly moved them to the Talamancan region on the Atlantic coast in the southeast and into Guanacaste Province.

All the groups that were sent to the north, except the Guatusos, disappeared as a separate people and became part of the mestizo element. The bands in the south, however, were isolated and have preserved much of their original culture. In 1969 they were collectively labeled the Talamancan tribes.

The Borucas, the Talamancas, and the few remaining Chorotegas to the North form the major Indian groups in modern Costa Rica and numbered from approximately 5,000 to 8,000 in early 1969. The Guatusos number less than 200. Acculturation is taking place at an accelerated pace, and each year more families leave the tribal territory to join the dominant Spanish culture. Those who remain are abandoning much of their indigenous culture, and even the most isolated groups have not preserved their traditional ways intact.

The Talamancas

The Talamancan tribes are composed of two major groups—the Bribri,—who number approximately 4,000 and the Cabécares, who number about 1,500. They were forcibly moved to the Talamancan watershed in the 18th century, but in the last 100 years about 1,500 have relocated on the Pacific coast. The reasons for the recent movement are shrouded in legend, but most contend that the people were fleeing from an exceptionally cruel chief called Berchi. Others say that one couple who did not adhere to clan marriage regulations fled to escape punishment and were soon followed by others. A third explanation claims that the Atlantic valleys could no longer support the large number of Indians.

In 1969 the Bribri were located in clan groups on the Atlantic coast from the Talamanca Valley to Panamá and from the Lári River to the eastern bank of the Coen River. On the Pacific coast they were found near the towns of Cabagra and Salitre. The Cabécares inhabited the eastern bank of the Coen River and were scattered in clans to the Chirripó Valley. On the Pacific, they had settled near the towns of Ujarrás and China Kichá, in the General Valley.

Because they are more isolated, the Caribbean groups still observe most of their traditions and customs, whereas the Pacific settlements are being daily influenced by the dominant Spanish society. A handful of Spanish Costa Ricans have lived in the jungles of Talamanca, but the most numerous non-Talamancans are the Chicanoes (persons of mixed Indian, white, and Negro ancestry) from Panamá. The Talamancan area itself is divided into upper and lower regions, the latter being more accessible. The United Fruit Company established plantations in the upper plains during the 19th century, driving the Indians farther into the jungles. Consequently, these Indians and especially the Chirripó groups are the most isolated and the most conservative. They do not welcome visitors and, since the jungles are practically impenetrable with trails known only to the Indians, few outsiders attempt to enter their territory. In lower Talamanca there are more savannas, and the people have access both to good schools and nonindigenous settlements. Most of the clan settlements can be reached by horseback and in general the people are more friendly to strangers.

The Cabécar and the Bribri regard themselves as different tribes, even though they share a very similar culture. Their historical relationship can be traced to the pre-Columbian era when the two tribes were continually at war with one another. The Cabécar were finally defeated, and the Bribri leaders became the secular chiefs of both groups. The spiritual leaders, however, were Cabécar, and the high

priest always came from a particular Cabécar clan. Around 1827 the Bribri defeated another group in the Talamanca, the Tiribis, assimilating them and becoming the rulers of the valley. Henceforth, the Bribri leader was known as the King of Talamanca, a title arbitrarily bestowed by the English and Spaniards. He was always chosen from a certain clan and was succeeded by a blood relative who was considered best suited for the office. In 1873 none of the candidates seemed competent, and the Costa Rican government asked an American sailor, John H. Lyon, to assume the position. He had come to Talamanca years before, stayed to marry and raise a family, and had acquired a great deal of personal power and respect among the Indians. Lyon was followed by another member from the king's traditional clan, and the office lasted until the 1920's. Today, the secular and religious hierarchy has disappeared, and each clan governs itself. The memory of the king still exists, however, as do remnants of his clan.

This matrilineal clan is the basic unit of organization among the two tribes, although the system is currently in a state of flux as some are wiped out by war and disease and as new ones are formed when members of two different tribes marry. Whatever their origin, however, all groups continue to strictly observe clan rules, the most important of which are the marriage regulations. No person may marry anyone designated as his mother's relatives; indicating the strength of this taboo is the fact that the greatest sin which an Indian can imagine is to have sex relations with a member of his mother's clan. There is an extremely complex set of kinship terminology religiously taught by parents to their children that clearly designates whom one should or should not marry. Preference is given to cross-cousin unions—marriage with the father's sister's daughter or the mother's brother's daughter—neither of whom is a member of the clan, since descent is traced through females.

Each clan is named for a totem animal, insect, bird, or spirit, and all have a specific place in a hierarchy dating from the pre-Columbian era. Thus among the 24 existing Bribri clans can be found the Duriwak (bird water people), the Diuwak (sun people), and the Tsiruriwak (cacao people). In addition, there is often a profession or craft tradition that is associated with each clan. Over the centuries, this situation has created the equivalent of social classes. At the top of the hierarchy are the clans that produce kings and medicine men.

Since the clans are matrilineal, the head of the family is the mother whose wishes are respected by all, including her husband. Polygamy is practiced, and men are allowed four wives, usually sisters. The first wife is considered the head and has control of the family. Matrilineal descent is still recognized on the Pacific coast, but polygamy is dying out.

In all aspects of clan tradition, the Caribbean groups remain strongest. Each one owns a specific geographical area and preserves its ritual property, consisting of a drum or gold pre-Columbian artifacts. On the Pacific side the clan system is degenerating and, as of mid 1969, there were only two Cabécar groups in existence. Instead of each clan owning a specified area, they settle in groups of two or three and work a plot of land in common. There is no ritual property. Nonetheless, the Pacific groups maintain much of the clan system, and the highest goal for most is to return to the Talamancan site to visit the home clan.

Along with the elaborate clan system, the Talamancan tribes have preserved many of the ceremonies connected with the life cycle. Taboos and superstitions permeate every major event as well as daily activities. The cycle begins in prenatal days, when the child's future personality is thought to be conditioned by the objects that the mother wears around her waist. In addition, to prevent her child from being physically and mentally impaired, she must strictly observe such taboos as not eating from a pot, avoiding tapir meat, and avoiding the cutting of cacao trees. Just before the actual birth, she enters a grass hut constructed by her husband for this purpose. The child is born unattended because the mother is believed to have four eyes at this time and is capable of bringing death or misfortune to anyone who sees her.

She and the child remain isolated for 4 days, bathing in a specially prepared solution and eating particular foods. At the end of this time the mother enters her home and spends another 4 days secluded in one corner with her child. The medicine man performs various rituals and, on the 8th day, blows smoke over the mother and infant in a purification ceremony. The mother is then considered free of all evil spirits, and she and her child are accepted as part of the tribe.

Childhood is a carefree age, for Talamancan parents are very lenient and indulgent. A baby is not weaned for a year and a half or even longer and is always in someone's arms. He is given anything he cries for and is fed whenever he is hungry. There is a close bond of affection between parents and children, which is often displayed in public. There are few institutionalized schools in the Talamanca area, and children learn their adult duties and clan lore by imitation and through word of mouth. As soon as children can walk they are taught to swim and to help make fires. At age 6 or 7, the girls learn household duties and the boys are taught to fish and hunt. Games are simple and are often versions of adult responsibilities, such as hunting with a miniature bow and arrow. On the Pacific

side, children attend government schools in which both their native tongue and Spanish are taught. They usually finish from four to six grades.

Marriage customs have changed the most in the Talamanca, and the ancient practice of arranging a marriage between an adult male and a small girl has almost disappeared. When this practice was prevalent, the procedure consisted of the man's going to the parents of the girl and asking for her as a wife but promising to treat her as a daughter. He then frequently visited the girl's home, and she became accustomed to him. When she was of age he took her to his own or to his father's home. This custom can still be found in the isolated areas, but the more common practice involves three visits by the man to his prospective bride. If she agrees, he then secures both his parents' and her parents' permission. When this is given, the couple live in trial marriage in the girl's home for from 8 days to a year. If a man already has a wife, and he is allowed to have four, he gives the parents small gifts and only visits his future wife frequently. On the Pacific coast, trial marriage is being abandoned under the influence of the school, but the young couple continue to live with either his or her parents for a while. Informal divorce is not socially approved but is common. If a man and woman separate, he keeps the children.

The ceremonies that accompany death are the most important and elaborate in the Talamancan culture. Actually there are two ceremonies, which are observed a year apart. The first consists of a feast at which the deceased's remains are present. The corpse is then wrapped in *bijagua* leaves accompanied by food and water and then placed in a protected place in a wooded area. After a year, when the flesh has disappeared, certain officials called buriers unwrap the corpse and place the bones in cloth. A feast is held; then the package is ceremoniously placed in the clan communal grave. Among the Bribri, this consists of a hole with a stone floor and a slanting wood covering. The Cabécar's grave is not so elaborate and is simply covered with rough planks.

Since the ceremonies surrounding death are of utmost importance, they are supervised by various officials who must learn all the correct traditions and taboos. No one is allowed to touch the dead body except the medicine man and the buriers and, if by accident someone does, he must submit to a three-day purification ceremony. The buriers are considered laymen but, to achieve this position, they must study under a recognized teacher and adhere to a strict 22-day diet. If they successfully complete the course, they are allowed to bury the dead and light the funeral fires. The buriers are highly respected, second only to the medicine men, and are found, although in smaller numbers, even on the Pacific coast.

At one time, a group called the singers were attendant at every funeral ceremony. They chanted the major events in the life of the deceased and, by means of their song, supposedly helped the soul to reach eternity. Today the medicine man performs this duty among all but the more isolated Chirripó groups. On the Pacific coast the medicine man has also taken over the responsibilities of the organizer of feasts, although this personage is still found in the Talamanca. He designates who will grow the corn for the bone ceremony a year later and who will bring the specified food to the funeral feasts.

The most important official in the funeral ceremonies, as well as the most important man in the Talamancan society, is the medicine man. At one time, he ranked below the king and high priest, but since these ranks have been eliminated, he is supreme within the Indian culture and widely respected by outsiders. The medicine men of the Cabécar tribe are the most revered because of their previous position as religious leaders. Their help is consistently sought by the Borucas, who would rather go to them than to pay the comparatively higher price charged for patent medicines. There have also been cases of people leaving hospitals in large towns such as Golfito and traveling to the jungles of the Talamanca for a cure. The Bribri medicine men are not as highly regarded, for they often lack the proper knowledge of curing techniques and just as often resort to sorcery and black magic. The Cabécar, on the other hand, depend mainly upon a sound knowledge of medicinal herbs and a safe diet and only secondly upon magic.

The medicine men are the major remaining link with the pre-Columbian religion. Their power supposedly comes from the god *sibu*, supreme diety in the pre-Columbian era. Today, the existence of the god is acknowledged by almost all the Talamancan Indians, but the ancient religious practices have been lost, and the actual worship is left to the medicine men, who preserve the few remaining symbols of his power. Their staff represents the god and is thought to be the visible source of their power. This is coupled with two magic stones that *sibu* supposedly sends to each to aid them in their rituals.

The Pacific groups are beginning to accept Christianity as a result of their daily contact with the Costa Rican society. The Talamancan, however, are not Roman Catholic and so far have resisted all efforts at conversion. They continue to believe in *sibu* and in animism, the belief in good and evil spirits, found in both animate and inanimate objects.

Subsistence agriculture is the major occupation of both the Pacific and Atlantic groups, although farming practices differ according to climate and terrain. In the Talamanca planting is possible at any time during the year, but the Indians customarily choose May. Often their

fields are located on the sides of steep hills, both because fertile level ground is scarce and because the slopes are protection against their pigs, which are allowed to roam. On the Pacific side there is a definite wet season and a dry season, and the valleys are wider and more conducive to level planting. In this area slash-and-burn techniques are common, but in the Talamanca the Indians let the heavy rainfall decay a partially cleared area. The Pacific groups have been influenced by the Costa Ricans and now farm primarily with the machete and hoe. This practice also has spread to the lower Talamanca, but the more isolated groups continue to farm with the flat, pointed digging stick of the pre-Columbian days. All groups depend primarily upon tubers, cacao, bananas, and plantains. In the past, only women cultivated the fields, but presently both sexes share this work.

Hunting, fishing, and gathering supplement the produce from agriculture, the men usually dominating the first two occupations. The Talamancan tribes continue to use the bow and arrow and the blowgun, with which the Indians hunt monkeys, rabbits, boars, and deer. The Indians are generally expert shots, for it is considered a great sin to allow an animal to suffer from a wound instead of killing it rapidly. The bow and arrow is also used in fishing, but the use of poisons is their major weapon. In using the latter, the Indians dam a certain part of a small river and, early in the morning, place a quantity of herb in a water that stuns the fish. Women and children gather the fish in baskets as they float downstream.

Talamancan handicrafts are very similar to those of the Borucas. The Talamancas, however, are more dependent upon items that they make and less upon those they buy. A few of their skills, such as weaving, have also died out, but the ability to make essential items remains. They continue to weave fibers, making many types of rope, and to manufacture both pottery and baskets.

One facet of the Talamancan culture that has always fascinated observers is their numerical system. They use the decimal system but in addition have a complex method of counting that involves both the type and shape of the item being counted. The Bribri have six classifications, the number changing if the subject is a person, an animal, a house, a round object, a large object, a plant, or a tree. Whenever a number is spoken, the subject to which it refers must precede the number itself. The Cabécar have a similar system, but the subject does not necessarily precede the number. Their system of measuring is primarily Spanish, although the contents of a *hava*, the standard Indian basket, is also used. The year is divided by the changes in the moon; and the day, by the movement of the sun.

Borucas

The Borucas are the most acculturated of the southern tribes and

in many ways resemble neighboring Costa Rican peasants. Their dress is Western style, and their language is Spanish with a Costa Rican accent. Few members of the tribe can speak their native tongue. The government school in their territory has attempted to preserve their Indian heritage but has been more successful in introducing them to Costa Rican customs and mores. The educational system has enabled some to attend advanced schools elsewhere, and at least one member of the tribe is now a university professor. The completion of the Inter-American Highway that runs near their villages has given them access to the highlands, and many Borucas visit San José several times a year. Even those who do not see the capital have extensive contact with the nearest Costa Rican town, Buenos Aires, where they sell their produce and handicrafts.

In early 1969 the Borucas numbered approximately 1,500 and were found predominately in the three villages of Boruca, Cuneso, and El Maiz and in the small hamlets of Puerto Lagarto and Changuena. The majority are subsistence farmers who work from one to five manzanas (one manzana equals 1.7 acres). Their land is not considered private property but belongs to the tribe as a whole. One section is set aside for the Church, and produce is stored in a local building for use by the priest on his infrequent visits. As a rule, the farms are some distance from the village, and the Indians go in groups each day to work the fields. At least one manzana is always planted in corn, the rest being planted in rice, sugarcane, plantains, and yuca. In addition, some farmers grow cacao, bananas, and tobacco. Their farming methods are predominately Spanish as are their major implements, the machete and hoe. At one time, the women were the principal agriculturalists, but this situation is changing.

The Indians are best known for their weaving and are the only tribe in the country which continues to practice this skill. Even among this tribe, the craft is disappearing and is now practiced by only a few women producing items for the small tourist trade. The tribe grows some cotton to make into thread, including a famous brown-colored cotton. The weavers employ a single-faced weft patterned weave that allows the design to appear on only one side. This pattern of weave is also prevalent in Ecuador and may indicate a historical connection between the two areas.

Most of the pre-Columbian life cycle ceremonies have fallen into disuse or have been forgotten and not replaced by new customs. At birth, a child's umbilical cord is cut with a cane knife and buried at the place where he was born. He is then bathed in a solution made from boiling three specific plants, which ensure him strength and good luck. Finally, he is given a bracelet or necklace of jaguar and caiman teeth or, in many instances, of coins. At 9 or 10 months the child is weaned. There are no puberty ceremonies. Both sexes attend

school for a time and in addition are taught the tasks for which they will be responsible as adults. Almost all marriage customs have disappeared, and only a small percentage are arranged by the parents. A trial marriage usually precedes the event, and for a while the young man moves in with the girl's family, sharing the workload. When both have agreed that they are compatible, they leave the parental home and build their own. During the half-yearly visit of the priest, weddings are performed, but many couples remain in common-law unions. Monogamy is the rule, but promiscuity is prevalent and is generally accepted. As a man grows older, his respect in the village increases, and the oldest members are generally the informal leaders of the tribe. Death is accompanied by few ceremonies, and the Boruca never weep at funerals. The major funeral observance is a wake, at which coffee and *chicha*, a corn beer, are served. The body is placed on a wooden plank or table and covered with a cloth; three candles are placed around it. Prayers are said throughout the night, and at dawn the body is carried to the church for a mass and then to the cemetery. A year later a remembrance ceremony is held.

In addition to their life cycle ceremonies, the Borucas have lost almost all traces of their pre-Columbian political organization. Today the police agent, an Indian appointed by the Costa Rican government, is the central authority. For full support from the tribe, however, he needs the informal approval of a council of elders which at one time exercised all tribal authority. Composed of five or six of the oldest men, this group no longer functions except at fiestas. They annually appoint two major-domos to care for the church and two women to cook for the fiestas. During the visit of the priest and during the fiestas, the council is convened but afterwards is disbanded.

All members of the tribe are professed Roman Catholics, and the few remnants of their old religion that remain have been completely syncretized with Catholicism. The most important holy event occurs on the 8th of December, when the priest comes to celebrate the day of Nuestra Señora de la Concepción de Boruca. A mass is said, followed by a solemn procession, after which a food bazaar is held in the village square. The only traditional part of the service is the dance of the *negritos* (blackmen), dating from the colonial era.

Pre-Columbian superstitions, however, are still prevalent. The Indians believe that a large hill to the south of their villages is the Hill of the Sorcerer, where the supernatural being, Tatica Cuazam, lives. He supposedly protects the tribe, but he also punishes wrongdoers and thus is widely feared. At one time, the hill was a site for secret tribal meetings, but today it is avoided. The Indians also believe that thunder is a bad omen, and when it is heard to the south it means the two pejibaye trees on the hill are angry. When it is heard to the north, the Borucas believe that a large snake is moving its tail. Another superstition is manifested at planting time when the Indians water newly sown seeds with a mixture of water and soil from the cemetery. This supposedly prevents rats from harming the crop.

Years ago, the Borucas had practicing shamans called *bruk bri*, but no member of the tribe now possesses this knowledge. When the powers of a shaman are needed, in times of illness or misfortune, the Borucas send for one from among the Talamancan tribes. The latter call their shaman *sukia*, and the one who visits the Borucas is called *cacique sukia*. It is widely believed that in 1930 one of these men caused game to reappear in the Boruca territory after many thought that all the animals had disappeared. The *sukia* went to the Hill of the Sorcerer, and after he returned wild peccary were found in the area.

Although the Borucas have no medicine men, certain women of the tribe have preserved pre-Columbian lore concerning curing and sorcery and are known by the Spanish word *curanderas* (witch doctors). Only a few families perpetuate this knowledge, for a woman usually teaches it only to her daughter, but if none of her children have the right psychological bent for the profession, she may adopt a girl. The most famous knowledge that these women possess is the ability to control birth. It has long been known that Boruca women have children only when they want them, and it appears that the *curandera* provides a liquid to prevent conception and another to counteract this when desired. The Church and the Costa Rican government are attempting to eliminate the practice, so the ingredients of the two liquids are now a closely guarded secret.

The Borucas closest neighbors are 131 remaining members of the Terrabas tribe. The latter are grouped on the basis of matrilineal clans, and the culture of these people was at one time closer to that of the Talamancan tribes. In recent years, however, they have become more acculturated and have acquired many mestizo habits. Land is privately owned by individuals, although the custom of maintaining a small piece for communal use still exists. The men often hire out as *peones* to earn extra money. They have also adopted many Boruca customs, although the two tribes do not generally get along well. They live in similarly built houses and bury their dead in the same fashion. The Terrabas are monogamous, but as in the Boruca tribe, promiscuity is accepted. They are nominally Roman Catholic and, through the efforts of the priest and the government school, the younger generation are becoming more conscious of the tenets of

their religion. As a consequence, many of the tribal customs, such as trial marriage, are being abandoned. Their native language has also fallen into disuse, and from the age of 10 onward, the Terrabas speak Spanish.

The Indians of the North

The Indians in northern Costa Rica have experienced the brunt of the acculturation process. The fragments of the Bribri and Cabécar tribes, which were placed there in the 18th century, have been completely assimilated. There is some debate whether the Chorotegas, or Chorotega-Mangues as they are now called, can ever be classified as Indians, since it is difficult to distinguish them from their mestizo neighbors. The Guatusos responded differently to the Spanish influx; they began retreating into more isolated areas and have never stopped moving. In 1969 they were a culturally disoriented tribe of refugees and numbered less than 200.

The Nicoya peninsula is the home of the small number of Chorotega-Mangues who can tentatively be identified as Indians. They are found predominately in the villages of Matambu, Matambuiguito, Refundores, Pilangosta, Las Guacas, Las Casetas, and Curime. No member of these villages can speak his pre-Columbian tongue, Mangue, a Mexican language. All are proficient in Spanish, speaking it with a Nicaraguan accent as do most of the Guanacaste inhabitants. There is no trace of their ancient political and social organizations, and most of their pre-Columbian religious beliefs have disappeared except for the practice of wrapping the dead in *petates*, (sleeping mats). The only other religious observance that separates them from their mestizo neighbors is the *confradía* (religious brotherhood). This was begun in the colonial era in order to perpetuate Christianity in the absence of the Catholic priests. Surprisingly, many of their traditional agricultural practices have survived, including the digging stick and the *macana* (club).

The Guatusos are descendants of the pre-Columbian tribes, the Corobicies and Votos. They are found in the southeast of the district of San Rafael de Guatuso in three small, isolated villages called Margarita, El Sol, and Tonjibe. In recent years their population has been rapidly declining as a result of starvation and the generally poor health of the tribe. The Costa Rican government is attempting to help them but so far has not been successful. Much of their culture has been lost, since their constant retreat into the uninhabited areas forced a different pattern of life upon them. All continue to speak their own language, however, and know a very bad Spanish.

They still cultivate tubers, bananas, and the famous white cacao much as they did 400 years ago, and land is still regarded as communal. Their agriculture is subsistence, but on rare occasions when they have a surplus they sell to neighbors. Farming is supplemented by hunting, by which the Guatusos use reed snares and holes in the ground. They are the only Costa Rican Indians who do not eat deer, since they regard the latter as their reincarnations.

The tribe still practices polyandry on a limited scale, as did their pre-Columbian ancestors, the Votos, who were ruled by women. The most important person among the Guatusos, however, is the physically largest male. He is widely respected and given the title "presidente." Nonetheless, his power is mainly informal, and the members of the tribe do not always follow his advice. When a man marries, he goes to the home of his wife, where families of two or three generations, including the husbands and children of sisters, all live in a large dwelling called a *palenque*. This structure has no walls, but the sloping roof almost touches the ground.

When a member of the family dies, he is buried within his home, separated from the sleeping quarters by a small partition. The body is dressed in new clothes if possible, wrapped in *mastate* (bark cloth), and placed in a shallow grave. Cacao and matches are buried with the corpse. If the deceased died from a snakebite, however, his grave is placed some distance from the *palenque* and is ignored.

Governmental Attitudes

An active and benevolent Indian program was first begun in 1939. The Government declared that certain zones would become the permanent and inalienable property of the Indian inhabitants. This law was extended in 1945, when the Council for Protection of the Native Races of the Nations was created with the purpose of not only protecting Indian territory but providing health and educational facilities for the various tribes. Since that time, the council has expanded its program, the major emphasis being placed upon integrating the Indians into Costa Rica society without destroying their native culture. It has been more successful in the former case than the latter.

In 1950 four schools were established in the Pacific area, in Boruca, Térraba, Salitre, and Ujarrás. In 1956 these same areas plus that of China Kichá were made Indian reservations. In 1961 the Ministry of Public Education commenced a teacher's training program in these areas, instructing many Costa Ricans in the problem of community development. The result was the creation of six new schools throughout the country, placed at areas where there were large concentrations of Indians. Thus in 1961 there were Indian schools in Cabagra, Currés, and China Kichá in the south; Ureña and Amubrí in the northeast; and Palenque Margarita in the Nicoya peninsula.

In 1961 another program was begun under two land acts, which was an attempt to resettle groups of Indians in agrarian centers where they are given free title to a certain amount of land. The family can be moved at government expense, upon request. The Indians must take the initiative under this program, since an extensive program of recruitment has been planned but not yet implemented.

In 1969 there were eight major government agencies involved in the administration of Indian affairs. They were continually plagued by a lack of funds, but have been fairly successful in integrating certain tribes, such as the Borucas, into national life. The council is the most important Indianist organization, but it is closely followed by the Ministry of Public Education, which sponsors the educational program. This includes the administration of the Indian schools, the continuation of the teacher's training course, and the allocation of scholarships to highland schools. The Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock prevents non-Indians from settling on reservations and also conducts a community development program that demonstrates the beneficial effects of new techniques in cultivation and animal breeding. The Ministry of Public Health administers a complete health program with periodic vaccinations and hospitalization when necessary. In addition, the public health authorities have begun a hygiene course that is included in the regular school curriculum.

The Ministry of Interior and Police appoints the Indian who serves as the police agent in a village or area of concentration, and the Ministry of Public Works provides building materials and know-how in the construction of schools and bridges. The Ministry of Treasury prevents the economic exploitation of the Indians by means of strong fiscal controls on those who are allowed to sell to the various tribes and also forbids the sale of strong liquors to the Indians. The Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare has been mainly concerned with the Guatusos but has studied ways of providing better living conditions for all the tribes.

LANGUAGES

Spanish is the national language and is spoken by a majority of the population. Costa Ricans are proud of their pronunciation and vocabulary, claiming that they have remained more faithful to Iberian Spanish than any other Central American country. This is partially true, since there was no large Indian population to influence pronunciation or to substitute names for domestic articles and foods. The word for apricots, for example, is *albaricoque* in both Costa Rica and Spain, but in Guatemala, Mexico, and some South American countries, an Indian word is used. Nonetheless, the separation of approximately 400 years has created considerable differences between the Spanish spoken by modern Costa Ricans and that of their counterparts in Andalucía and Extremadura. They are mutually intelligible and share the same grammatical structure, but the isolation of one from the other has produced marked differences in vocabulary and the speech rhythm.

As a result of the pattern of settlement in the early days of the colony, members of the highland communities pronounce their Spanish in a pattern similar to Guatemalans. Both are known for their assibilated double *rr*, and their assibilated single *r*, when the latter is final. Among the upper classes, it was fashionable for a time to speak with an Argentine accent, since many were educated in Argentina, but this practice is dying out. The inhabitants of Guanacaste Province, on the other hand, speak with a marked Nicaraguan accent, which considering their recent political history is understandable. As contact between the two sections is increased, however, their speech habits are becoming more and more similar. Both groups, for instance, consistently use the plural pronoun *vos* for "you" rather than the singular *tu*, the latter practice a noted Costa Rican characteristic.

English is the second most important language in the country, since it is spoken by the largest minority group, the 30,000 Negroes, found primarily in Limón Province. The first generation, which immigrated from Jamaica to the banana plantations, had little if any contact with the highlanders, and therefore no need of Spanish since their employers also spoke English. Their children remained in Limón and attended English-speaking schools, at which Spanish was taught as a second language. Most, however, could only speak it poorly, if at all. The present generation consider themselves Costa Rican. They use English and Spanish interchangeably, and since each language influences the other, their syntax is often poor. The English of all three generations is a Jamaican dialect, which is almost unintelligible to an English speaker from Great Britain or the United States. In the last 20 years the highlanders have become more conscious of English as the nation's second language, which is used extensively in business and industry.

The various remaining Indian languages in the country all belong to the Chibcha family of Colombia. Despite this common parent language, the tribes do not understand one another, and even the Bribri do not understand the language of the Cabécar. Most of the languages have changed considerably since the conquest, and one, the Boruca tongue, is a mixture of five or six tribal languages. In recent years the native dialects have been rapidly disappearing as the various tribes are assimilated into the dominant society and adopt Span-

ish as their maternal language. This happened to the Chorotega early in the colonial era, and their pre-Columbian tongue, Mangue, has been completely lost. The Guatusos and the Talamancan tribes on the Atlantic side continue to speak their own language and have little, if any, knowledge of Spanish. The Bribri and Cabécar on the Pacific coast, however, are learning Spanish at the government school and, although they continue to speak their native tongue among themselves, the men, particularly, can converse with nonindigenous Costa Ricans. Among the Terrabas, only 15 could speak Terraba, and among the Boruca, only 51 knew their native dialect.