
Stories of resistance

Photo: uncontactedtribes.org

1. A view from the recently contacted Jarawa

The Jarawa, from India's Andaman Islands have only had friendly contact with settlers living near their forest since 1998. Their sudden appearance out of the forest without their bows and arrows, after more than a century of hostility, is widely credited to Enmai, a young Jarawa man. In 1996 Enmai spent six months in hospital after being found by settlers with a broken leg.

He told a Shailesh Shekhar from the Hindustan Times, 'In the early days, we were afraid of you people, ...we would fear you...We had no idea about a world, about an existence beyond our jungle.'

Seven years after returning to his forest Enmai was critical of outsiders, 'They are bad men... They lure us to use us...Our standing on the roads and begging is not good. Drivers abuse us. All this is not good.'

He no longer goes out of the forest except for medical help, saying, 'The jungle is better. Even if I have to stay outside for a few days, I would like to return to my family in the jungle.'

Source: *Survival*, <http://www.survivalinternational.org/tribes/Jarawa>

2. Before contact: on the run

An unknown number of Ayoreo Indians live isolated in the Paraguayan Chaco, the vast scrub forest that extends south of the Amazon basin. Parojnai [pronounced Pow-hai] Picanerai, his wife Ibore and their five children had been on the run for many years. The area of forest they called home had been getting smaller and less safe. Landowners were buying up their forest and sending in bulldozers to clear the land, in defiance of national and international law.

The constant incursions of outsiders meant Parojnai and his family constantly had to move camp. Each sudden move meant the loss of the crops they had planted, and often their precious possessions such as cooking pots and tools.

Parojnai: 'We heard the noise of the bulldozer. We had to run away immediately, but luckily we were able to take all our things.'

'We spent the night up in the forest, but we had to get up before dawn because we were afraid, and as we were getting up we heard the noise of the bulldozer again.'

'It started to come closer to us. My wife had to leave the fruit of the najnuñane (carob tree) which she had already picked. We had to leave some other things as well to run faster because of the bulldozer.'

‘We ran from one place to another. It looked like the bulldozer was following us. I had to leave my tools, my bow, my rope to run faster. At last, the bulldozer left in another direction. When I realised that the bulldozer had gone in another direction, I found a trunk with a beehive in it, and I took the honey.

‘We thought that the bulldozer could see us. We had planted many crops in the garden [melon, beans, pumpkin and corn] because it was summer time. We thought that the bulldozer had seen our garden and came to eat the fruit – and to eat us too. The bulldozer opened a path up right beside our garden, that’s why we were so scared of it.

‘We have always seen airplanes, but we did not know that it was something useful of the cojñone [white people, literally strange people]. We also saw long clouds behind the plane which frightened us, because we thought that something might fall on us. When we saw these big planes with this white smoke behind, we thought they were stars.’

Parojnai died of tuberculosis in 2008.

Source: *Survival*, <http://www.survivalinternational.org/tribes/ayoreo>

3. Contact: a personal story

Ayoreo-Totobiegosode woman Ibore from Paraguay tells how, on 11 June 1998, their family risked everything and made contact.

‘We walked to a place where my husband Parojnai had sharpened a spear before. We stayed there, preparing our camp. After a while we heard the noise of a truck.

We went to get honey, because Parojnai had already found a tree with honey. Amajane [their eldest son] and I saw a bulldozer. We saw the bulldozer and we went near, no matter if the cojñone [white people, literally strange people] killed us, we did not care if they killed us.

There we saw a little house [this was actually a mobile trailer for a Paraguayan bulldozer-driver]. Amajane said to us, ‘Stay here, while I go and find out what the cojñone are like, if it is possible to contact them’. At that time we had no knowledge of how the cojñone were. When he came back Amajane said to us, ‘I saw some cojñone but I got scared and I could not go closer.’

Parojnai asked me if I was scared of the cojñone or not. I answered, ‘I am not scared, I am going to get closer to them.

Berui [their second-eldest son] said: ‘I’m going with you too.’ But I said to Berui, ‘I don’t want you to come with us. If the cojñone kill us, you are going to look after your little brothers [Tocoi and Aripei] and live with them. Berui obeyed and he stayed with his little brothers. We went along the side of a road, towards the cojñone.

We spotted the house of the cojñone. When we got to the little house Parojnai shouted, ‘I am Parojnai’. But it looked as if nobody was in the house. In that moment Amajane shouted also, ‘My name is Amajane. I haven’t come to kill you.’

Parojnai kept shouting, ‘I am Parojnai’, and suddenly a cojñoi came out and I saw what the cojñone are like; I saw that they are people like us. I told him again, ‘We don’t come to kill you, rather we

want to live with you.'

The man said 'Eha, eha, eha' and I noticed that he was very scared. He kept moving his head and looking behind himself, it looked like he wanted to run. He stepped back and I said to him, 'There's no reason to run, we are not going to kill you, we are good people.'

Amajane made signs to him to come closer. When he came closer I hugged him with one arm and Parojnai hugged him on the other side, and I said to him, 'Sit here'. I said, 'Don't be afraid of us' and I shouted to Parojnai, 'You hold him too, we don't want him to leave again', and always with the same words I said to him, 'Don't be afraid, don't be afraid of us, we are good people'. The man kept repeating, 'Eha, Eha, Eha'.

I kept repeating to him 'Don't be afraid'. The cojñoi held something in his hand [a shotgun] and I asked Parojnai, 'What is it that he has in his hand?' and Parojnai answered, 'It's a weapon'. And I said to the cojñoi, 'Don't be afraid of us, bring us something to eat, we are hungry'. The cojñoi went into the little house and brought a plate full of biscuits and he ate the biscuits in front of us. I tried too, but I did not like them.

The man passed the biscuits around and laughed, 'hi, hi, hi', and he brought some stew on another plate. Just like the biscuits, he ate it in front of us, I also tried it, and I didn't like it.

Parojnai said, 'Bring us water, I'm thirsty, I want to drink water'. We saw a bucket and there was water inside and we drank. Amajane arrived just when we had already found water from the cojñoi. Amajane was afraid of the water and poured it out. I said to him, 'You should not pour out the water.'

The cojnoi went into his little house and brought out a weapon. Amajane and his father stayed beside this man for the whole time, they followed him step by step. Suddenly, he shot in the air.

I got scared, thinking that he was shooting at my son and my husband. And I shouted, 'Heeee' out of fear, and suddenly the man took off his shirt and he passed me his shirt, laughing. And then I went to give him a necklace of purucode [black seeds] and I put it around his neck. Parojnai also brought out a necklace of purucode and he also put it around his neck.

In photos taken the next day, Ibore can be seen wearing the man's red football shirt. Ibore and her children now live in a small Ayoreo community on the edge of the forest. Parojnai contracted flu and tuberculosis soon after contact, and died of tuberculosis in 2008.

Source: *Survival*, <http://www.survivalinternational.org/tribes/ayoreo>

4. The 'Last of his Tribe'

It is believed that this lone man is the last survivor of his people, who were probably massacred by cattle ranchers occupying the region of Tanaru in Rondônia state, similar to that of his near neighbours, the last five surviving Akuntsu. When they were first contacted in 1995, they told how their people were massacred at the hands of ranchers' gunmen, who bulldozed their huts into oblivion and shot those who tried escape.

The man lives on his own and is constantly on the run. We do not know his name, what tribe he belongs to or what language he speaks.

He is sometimes known only as 'the Man of the Hole' because of the big holes he digs either to trap animals or to hide in.

He totally rejects any type of contact.

Brazil's indigenous affairs department has formally recognized a small patch of rainforest for his protection. This is entirely surrounded by cattle ranchers.

Source: *Survival*, www.survivalinternational.org/tribes/uncontacted-brazil

5. Karapiru Awá, Maranhão, Brazil

as told to Survival, 2000

Most of those Awá who have been contacted - and many who have not - are the survivors of brutal massacres, which have left them mentally and physically scarred. One such survivor is Karapiru, whose incredible story illustrates the resilience of the Awá people. He spent about 10 years alone on the run, and eventually established friendly contact with villagers in Bahia. He had travelled some 1,000 kms from his home. Much later he was reunited with his son, Tiramucum, who had survived the massacre.

'At the time of the massacre, I was the only survivor of the family – I hid in the forest, and escaped from the karaí [non-Indians]. They killed my mother, my brothers and sisters and my wife. I lived, always managing to escape from the ranchers. I walked a long, long way, always hiding in the forest. I was very hungry and it was very hard to survive. I ate small birds; later, when I travelled far from the place where the massacre happened, I began to take animals from the white people here or there, but I would then always flee. I ate honey. I found a machete, and I would always carry that with me – it was a weapon and also helped me get the honey.

'When I was shot during the massacre, I suffered a great deal because I couldn't put any medicine on my back. I couldn't see the wound: it was amazing that I escaped – it was through the Tupã [spirit]. I spent days wandering around in pain, with the lead shot in my back, bleeding. I don't know how it didn't get full of insects. But I managed to escape from the whites.

'I spent a long time in the forest, hungry and being chased by ranchers. I was always running away, on my own. I had no family to help me, to talk to. So I went deeper and deeper into the forest. Today I couldn't tell you where I went. It was very sad and there are times when I don't like to remember all that happened to me, that time I spent in the forest. I feel good here with the other Awá. And I have found my son after many years.

'I hope when my daughter grows up she won't face any of the difficulties I've had. I hope everything will be better for her. I hope the same things that happened to me won't happen to her. I hope she will grow up very healthy. I hope it won't be like in my time.'

Source: *Survival*, <http://www.survivalinternational.org/awa>

6. A view from Wamaxué Awá, Maranhão state, Brazil

as told to Survival in 2010

Wamaxuá is an Awá man who with his mother and several other Awá, was contacted by a group of contacted Awá. He and his mother now live in an Awá community. The other Awá decided to return to their nomadic life in the forest.

‘Some Awá used to see us in the forest. They must have asked themselves: where do they live? Some of them went looking and found our house in the forest.

I grew up in the forest. I often went out alone to hunt.

The *karaí* [non-Indians] have been in the forest for a while, cutting down trees. We used to walk in the forest and see that they had passed. The first time I saw them, I was still little. My father was still alive. He was very scared of the non-Indians

Three Awá who came with me [at the time of contact with other contacted Awá] went back to live in the forest. They stayed here for a while. They performed the ritual, and slept here for some days but they did not want to stay.

There are still Awá living in the forest. They live fleeing from the non-Indians. They find their tracks and they escape from them, scared.

They break babaçu coconut and cut trees quietly, so noone notices they are there. They hunt monkey and other game at night time, hidden.

Sometimes they are hungry during the day time. I know because I have lived in the forest. Before coming here, I went through all that in the forest. Just like I used to do, they must still be hiding, living on the run.

The non-Indians are still in the forest! What will happen to them? The non-Indians are taking too long to leave, they have been moving around for a long time. Unfortunately, they are still destroying the forest. It's tragic! I'm very worried.

What will become of them, my brothers who still live there? They'll probably continue to escape. We were scared of the loggers when we lived in the forest, and still now, living here, I fear their presence. They are going to destroy our forest.'

Source: *Survival*, <http://www.survivalinternational.org/awa>