

MUSIC FROM MATO GROSSO, BRAZIL

SIDE I
BANDS 1 - 7: CAMAYURÁ
BAND 8: CHAVANTE
BANDS 9 - 10: KAYABÍ
SIDE II
BANDS 1 - 4: IWALAPETÍ
BANDS 5 - 7: CABOCLO

DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

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RECORDED BY EDWARD M. WEYER, JR. / ETHNIC FOLKWAYS LIBRARY FE 4446

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-- CAMAYURA PLAYING GIANT FLUTES

MUSIC FROM MATO GROSSO



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Recorded by Edward M. Weyer, Jr.

INTRODUCTION BY HARRY TSCHOPIK, Jr.

The very name "Mato Grosso," or "Thick Forest" as it means in Portuguese, epitomizes the unknown and the unexplored. In the present century this obscure Brazilian wilderness, situated almost in the geographical center of the South American continent, gained worldwide interest with the disappearance of Colonel Fawcett and his party in 1926. Even today, though it may be reached by plane from Rio de Janeiro in less than a day, Mato Grosso is only just beginning to become known to the civilized world. The Upper Xingú River, which is the area of Mato Grosso with which this album is mainly concerned, was first explored by Karl von den Steinen as recently as 1884, and the Chavante Indians were only just peacefully contacted by white men in 1946.

The three principal rivers of northern Mato Grosso--the region here considered--are the Rio das Mortes, the Paranatinga, and the Xingú system. The Xingú is one of the great tributaries of the Amazon River, flowing northward from its sources in the sandstone plateaus of northern Mato Grosso to join the Amazon just to the west of its delta. The headwaters of this river include five tributary streams fanned out to form a triangular drainage basin. These streams originate in a semi-arid plateau of grasslands and scrub forest, but on its northward course the Xingú gradually enters the dense rain forest typical of the Amazon lowlands, its descent being broken by numerous rapids. In much of the Upper Xingú and adjoining regions, gallery forests of tropical luxuriance alternate with broad expanses of grassy savanna, so that the name "Thick Forest" is actually a misnomer throughout large parts of the area. During the rainy winter the rivers flood miles of jungle and grassland, but during the dry summer the savannas are too parched and barren to sustain life.

The Upper Xingú, and Mato Grosso generally, comprise a refuge area thinly populated by primitive tribesmen of diverse origin who, through the centuries, have been pushed into this isolated region by the culturally more advanced aborigines of the tropical forest. As is typical of most "refuge areas" of the world, the linguistic situation here is extraordinarily complex, the physical type is archaic, and the culture is primitive as compared with that of the neighboring jungle tribes.

All three of the most widespread Amazonian languages are represented in northern Mato

Grosso: Tupi is spoken by the Camayurá and by the Kayabí of the Paranatinga River; Arawak by the Iwalapetí; and Carib by the Calapalo (not represented in the present album). The Chavante, who live along the Rio das Mortes to the south of the Xingú headwaters, speak a Ge dialect related to the speech of the Brazilian highlands. Other languages of this isolated region are unrelated to any known South American tongues.

Physically the Indians of the Upper Xingú, and of Mato Grosso generally, appear to be near relatives of the earliest known aboriginal inhabitants of Brazil whose ancient remains have been discovered in the caves of Lagoa Santa. Generally speaking, they are short, long-headed, powerfully built people with low foreheads and broad, flat noses.

The native culture of northern Mato Grosso has just begun to be studied systematically by ethnologists so that, at the present time, it can only be outlined in the most general terms. Chavante culture has not been described, and most other groups are poorly known. The best known tribe is the Camayurá, and the cultural sketch that follows has been drawn largely from this group. Ethnologists who have explored the region, however, write that there is a basic cultural similarity among the several tribes of the Upper Xingú basin, and that their way of life is sufficiently distinctive to warrant classing it as a separate sub-culture area.

Although sharp physical barriers isolate the Upper Xingú basin from adjoining areas, the complex network of rivers and waterways makes for easy communication within the basin proper. Thus, in spite of linguistic differences, the various tribes of the Upper Xingú trade with one another, visit back and forth, intermarry, and gather together for ceremonials. For the most part they live in peace with one another, but they are surrounded on all sides by their enemies--the Chavante, Cayabí, and Cayapó.

For this reason, although all the Upper Xingú tribes are river people, villages are seldom located on the banks of the main streams. Both for defensive purposes, and to escape the annual floods, most villages are built on high ground along small tributary streams. Typically, a village consists of a circle or oval of large dome-shaped, grass-covered houses arranged around a central flute house, where the sacred flutes are kept.

Around the village are cultivated fields of manioc, sweet potatoes, corn, and peanuts. Fruit trees, as well as cotton, tobacco, gourds, and urucú shrubs (for red paint), are also

planted. Pancakes of manioc flour cooked on large pottery griddles form the staple of diet of the Upper Xingú tribesmen, but fishing is of almost equal importance. Fish are shot with bows and arrows from bark canoes, trapped in weirs and basketry traps, or stupefied with a drug called timbó. The numerous streams also yield an abundance of turtles and turtle eggs.

Since, for magico-religious reasons such large animals as tapirs, peccaries, and deer are not eaten, hunting plays a very minor role in the economy of these Indians. Occasionally monkeys and agoutis are eaten by the old men, but, generally speaking, birds are far more important than animals, and are hunted for both their flesh and feathers. In addition, many birds are kept around the houses as pets.

The material culture of the northern Mato Grosso tribesmen is extremely simple. Clothing as such is non-existent: women wear only a small bark pubic cover, and men are entirely nude. Occasionally, for every-day dress, a string of snail-shell discs is worn, but nothing more. On ceremonial occasions men don colorful feather diadems, ear ornaments, cotton arm bands, and wind their ankles with yards of bark fiber. They also paint their faces and bodies in fanciful designs in black and red. The balance of material possessions in the Upper Xingú is limited almost entirely to combs, hammocks, wooden stools, mortars and pestles, fiber sieves, gourd vessels, baskets, and pots, some of which have zoomorphic forms.

Social life is equally uncomplicated. The ex-



-- CAMAYURA INDIANS WRESTLING

tended family, occupying a single house, is the basic social unit. Each village has a chief who directs important economic activities and acts as ceremonial leader, but who otherwise has little authority. The tribe is essentially a kinship society (there were, for example, only 110 Camayurá in 1948).

Religion centers around belief in animal, bird, and other spirits, and the objective of ceremonial is to perpetuate the tribe and to insure the abundance of food. Most important, in the belief of the Upper Xingú Indians, is a group of spirits who live in the forest and in the air, and who protect the Indians and promote the growth of useful plants and animals. The shamans, or medicine men, possess special spirits which enable them to cure disease. In curing, the shaman smokes tobacco and falls into a trance while the smoke summons his spirit helpers.

The ceremonial center of the village is the house where the ritual masks, rattles, bull-roarers, and sacred flutes are kept. These end-blown flutes of cane, about a yard in length, are thought to have powerful spirits, and to have been given to the Indians in the mythical past by the sun. The flutes and the other most sacred objects may not be seen nor handled by women.

An important ceremonial of the Upper Xingu tribes is performed by the men at the beginning of the dry season in April to celebrate the spirits of fish, and to promote their abundance. At this time the men wear masks and play the sacred flutes and rattles while the women and children remain indoors. A second important festival is held at the beginning of the rainy season in late August in honor of the ancestor spirits as well as the recent dead. During another ceremonial of a more secular nature, a pair of men jog around the village, playing long double flutes in each of the houses. In this rite the women are allowed to participate. Other secular ceremonials, that appear to be more in the nature of sports than rites, are wrestling and spear-throwing contests. During the latter, which are often intertribal events, the contestants strive to hit each other with blunt spears hurled with a throwing stick.

From the above it should be clear that, with the exception of unbound, five-tube pan-pipes that are played on social occasions, all other musical instruments of the Upper Xingu Indians are sacred and linked with ceremonials. The drum appears not to be used by these tribesmen.

Until 1943 northern Mato Grosso was exclusively Indian territory. Since that year, however,



conditions have begun to change. Although the Brazilian Indian Service is doing everything to protect the primitive tribesmen of the region, in 1942 the Central Brazilian Foundation was established to open the vast, uninhabited territory of central Brazil by constructing roads, founding settlements and frontier posts, and by building airfields that will eventually connect Rio de Janeiro with Caracas, Venezuela, in a straight line. The result has been the establishment deep in the jungle of modern towns that are linked with the outside world only by airplane and the radio.

The town of Chavantina is an example of these curious twentieth century frontier towns.

The settlers- Whites, Negroes, and Caboclos or mestizos--arrived by plane. They built a town complete with electric lights, running water, sawmills, and three automobiles. Except for gasoline and a few manufactured articles flown in by plane, these modern frontiersmen make most of the things that they use, and hunt and farm for food. In their town they lead a secure and civilized existence. Yet just a few miles away, in the forests and savannas across the Rio das Mortes, stand the villages of the still-wild Chavante Indians.

Brazilian name, and the scientific name of the species is given:

- a. A quail-like bird, Urú (*Odontophorus capueira*).
- b. Poor-me-One, Urutão (*Nyctibius grandis*).
- c. Saki monkey, Macaco cuxiu (*Chiripotes* sp.).
- d. Spider monkey, Macao preto (*Ateles* sp.).
- e. Giant otter, Ariranha (*Pteronura brasiliensis*).
- f. Cebus monkey, Macaco prego (*Cebus niger*).
- g. Slater's Curassow, Mutum (*Crax fasciolata*).

NOTES ON THE RECORDINGS

SIDE I, BAND 1: CAMAYURÁ. Social music sung by women in a village on Lake Ipavú.

SIDE I, BAND 2: CAMAYURÁ. Informal evening singing by women in a village on Lake Ipavú.

SIDE I, BAND 3: CAMAYURÁ. Chorus of men singing social music in a village on Lake Ipavú.

SIDE I, BAND 4: CAMAYURÁ. Giant double flutes tuning up for the uruá dance. One tube of this giant double pipe is 7 feet in length; the other 5 feet long. The tubes, about 2 inches in diameter, are made by fitting two halves of bamboo together with pitch and lashings.

SIDE I, BAND 5: CAMAYURÁ. A chorus of men, accompanied by rattles, singing social music.

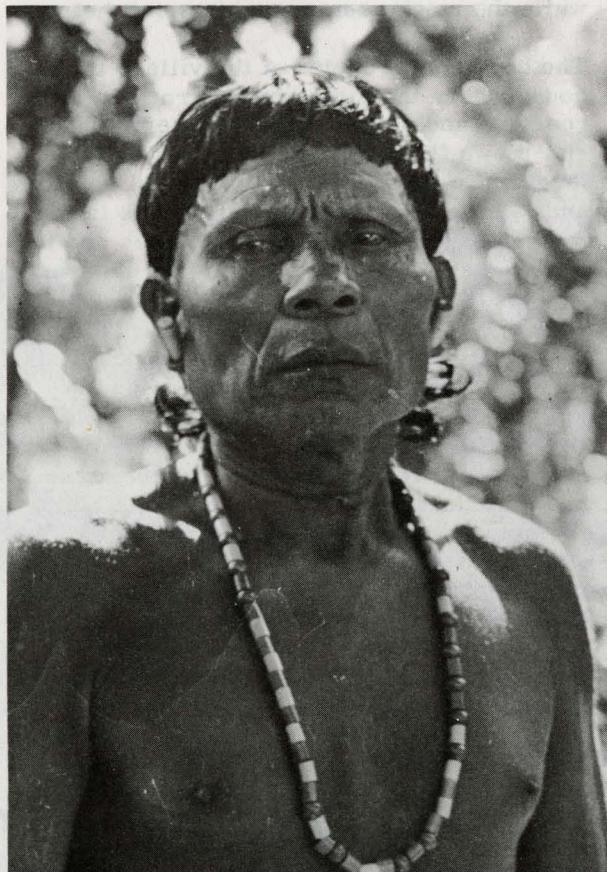
SIDE I, BAND 6: CAMAYURÁ. An informal evening "jamboree," consisting of shouts, laughter, and falsetto chanting.

SIDE I, BAND 7: CAMAYURÁ. Music of the uruá ceremony performed by two men playing giant double flutes.

SIDE I, BAND 8: CHAVANTE. An excited, whispered conversation between two men. It was the first time that one of them had had contact with a white man.

SIDE I, BAND 9: KAYABÍ. A ceremonial song sung as an invocation to the spirits.

SIDE I, BAND 10: KAYABÍ. Animal and bird imitations performed by two men. Wherever possible, the common English name, the



-- CHAVANTE CHIEF
RIO DAS MORTES REGION

- h. Jaguar, Onca (*Felis onza*).
- j. Trumpeter, Jacami (*Psophia viridis*).

SIDE II, BAND 1: IWALAPETÍ. Men, accompanied by rattles, sing a ceremonial song recounting a portion of the creation legend and invoking the spirits of the dead.

