



(LAS 7295)

ARGENTINA THE INDIANS OF THE GRAN CHACO

INTRODUCTION:

The first knowledge of existing native tribes in the Gran Chaco (Argentina) comes from expeditions completed by Spanish conquerors. Some of them, Ulrich Schmidel and Pedro Hernandez left interesting accounts of the initial contacts between Europeans and the natives. Prior to accounts of these missionaries; Barzana, Lozano, Del Techo and Dobritzcho, the reconstruction of some characteristics is revealed. After a period of little documentation, new explorers; Nordenskiold, Von Rosen, Karsten, Metraux, and Palavecino, all centered their attention primarily on ethnological interests.

Up until the end of the 19th century, advancement of western culture was most evident in the *chaquenos habitat. Not until the penetration of colonists, military and missionary expeditions was there secure evidence of this. The native economy was fundamentally based on the production of sugar and wildlife resources.

The actual Mataco and Charote population (which pertains to the linguistic family, Mataco-Mataguayo) is estimated at around 8500 in the in the provinces of Salta (Mataco and Charote) and approximately 1300 in Formosa (Mataco). The scarcity of bibliographic statistics is the reason for such approximate information.

NOTES ON TRACKS:

1) THE DAILY MUSICAL EXPERIENCE AND MALE-FEMALE RELATIONS

Numerous authors have documented their observations of the different “Chaquense” dances, whether they were performed by both sexes or not. Much is mentioned concerning the magic feeling of a ritual or ceremony and the importance of a song-dance unity (a song is only considered as a “Song for Dance”).

Among the “Mataco” night dances are the most important for the male-female relationship. The men begin the dance and the women follow by placing themselves beside or behind the elected partner. The sexual aspect is stressed. The sexual dances are still in effect among the Mataco.

2) THE TIME FOR FEASTING (Tojkuiek)

The Chaco festivities coincide with the rebirth of nature and the ripening of Carob (Algarrobo). Everyone engages in the festivities, the adults of the both sexes. Individual songs performed by men and women are quite different structurally than those pertaining to dances.

3) THE MUSICAL MANIFESTATIONS OF THE SHAMANS

The music relates to the musical concert: The worlds of the sea, land, and sky are all reigned over different gods. The people who have “Shamanic Vocation” manifest it so by singing these songs whose repetitious words elevate their state of mind. The first two songs are vivid examples of this. Quite different from the Chacos, the Matacos give extreme importance to dance, which is essential for the cure of sickness.

The religious characteristics of those songs is linked to “Hunting Villages”, establishing a direct relationship between human beings and animals. The relationship with animals is crucial, they represent a sacred form of life.

4) THE MUSICAL THERAPY OF THE SHAMANS

The musical manifestations of Shamanistic Therapy is based on the concept of illness. The main Shaman figure is the one who has the power to cure. This potential is exercised by a series of actions with music as the fundamental part.

By way of “Ecstasy” the Shamans maintain communication with the “Lord”, until the illness has terminated. When there is a prolonged illness the Matacos will unite with several Shamans to act simultaneously to reinforce the power of this ceremony. This act is exemplified in the last band.

5) THE MUSICAL EXPRESSIONS OF THE SHAMANS

The musical activities of the Chorote Shaman is very similar to those of the Mataco group. The two tribes have conceptualized the world in basically the same manner.

6) CONTROL OF ATMOSPHERIC PHENOMENA

The Shaman's control over rain is of great importance to his tribe. During a prolonged dry spell the Shaman will seclude himself in his dwelling. He then begins to chant without the aid of musical instruments and rattles. The rattles are always used in similar ceremonies by Chaco groups, never by the Chorote Shaman.

7) THE MUSICAL CUSTOM IN MYTHICAL NARRATION

The Chorotes often gather together to retell stories of events in prehistoric times. These reunions did not deal with simple narrations but with myths. The songs of this band were obtained during a narration about a Shaman who questions the powers of another. The object of this story and its presentation is the synthesis of songs into the narrative. The first song is by the shaman who communicates with the wind. The following two are directed to aiding illness.

8) MUSICAL THERAPY OF THE SHAMANS

The Shaman does not dance or use any instruments, the only musical expression is vocal.

Throughout this vocal/chanting session, the doctor remains seated next to the patient, who lies on the floor. The patient's soul is then released and his life is dependent upon the success of this magical flight. The blending of melodies is so perfected that one can differentiate and follow step by step the stages of this ecstatic experience.

9) SONGS BASED ON DEATH

During times of death, the Chorote will express themselves musically. The pain of parents and friends is manifested by means of both weeping and singing. "SONGS FOR WEEPING" is an excellent example of the diverse sentiments displayed in a unique musical manner.

10) THE MUSICAL EXPRESSIONS IN A RITUAL OF FEMININE INITIATION

The pimpin (water drum) has become popular in the western zone of the Chaco. These particular natives reserve the use of the drums exclusively for ceremonies concerning the female. This ritual deals with the maturation of a young woman. The adolescent is expected to assume a new role in the group. The climax of this initiation occurs when the young woman takes part in the dance/chant finale. This dance/chant is accompanied by the water drum. This initiation of the female by the men has held a permanent position in the culture of the native Chaco.

11) THE EXPRESSIONS OF THE DANCE/CHANT

Both Mataco and Chorote participate in the dance/chant. Their expressions do not differ in content or choreography. For this reason youngsters from different regions will sometimes participate together. This participation is probably most common near sugar refineries where there is a diverse group of natives. [Although there are now many circumstantial changes, the traditional musicals of each group do not suffer any alterations] many individuals can recite with precision the songs of other groups, however they are not incorporated in their own repertoire.

TRACKS AND TIMES:

- 01 Feminine Solo Chant 0:50
- 02 Masculine Solo Chant 0:56
- 03 Dance/Chant Ring of Men 0:34
- 04 Song/Masculine Solo Chant 0:56
- 05 Dance/Chant Ring of Men 1:35
- 06 Control of Atmosphere 1:22
- 07 Dance/Chant Ring of Men 1:33
- 08 Instrumental - Jaw Harp 1:03
- 09 Instrumental - Jaw Harp 1:39
- 10 Instrumental - Jaw Harp 0:30
- 11 Instrumental - String Instr. 0:53
- 12 Shaman Initiation Song/Chant 0:32
- 13 Shaman Initiation Song/Chant 0:47
- 14 Poisonous Bites Song 0:40
- 15 Rains Song/Chant & Drums 1:11
- 16 Rain Song/Masculine 10:05
- 17 Rain Song/Masculine 0:51
- 18 Wind Song 0:55
- 19 Song Asking Lamoh to Cure 1:11
- 20 Song Asking Lamoh to Cure 0:38
- 21 Song to go on Horseback 0:36
- 22 Song to go on Horseback 0:39
- 23 Song to go on Horseback 1:06
- 24 Song to go on Horseback 0:45
- 25 Entering Area Where Soul Rests 0:39
- 26 Song to Rescue the Soul 0:37
- 27 Song for Return of Shaman to Earth 0:26
- 28 Song to Deliver Soul to Patient 1:01
- 29 Weeping Ritual Song 1:13
- 30 Burial Song 1:23
- 31 Mourning Song 1:26
- 32 "Pimpim" Song/Ring of Men 1:49
- 33 Dance Chant/Ring of Men 2:39



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