As the narrative begins, we find Petrullo and his companion, Arthur Rossi, encamped on the banks of the Kusum River. Among the local groups who gathered around the camp, attracted by the strangers, were the Yawalapiti.

The Yawalapiti renewed their request that I visit their village. They indicated with pride that they were not afraid to reveal to me their secret waterway. I decided to go with them. As we drew away from the Kamayura, the Yawalapiti could not contain their joy. The rest of the journey to the village became a joyous picnic. Everything combined to make it an idyll. The crystal clear water teeming with fish, turtles and some snakes, the perfect reflection of the tall bountiful palms and sky, the flowering bushes, the hundreds of brightly plumaged birds, the gay insects and of course, the people themselves. They talked, laughed, produced visual calls by whistling in perfect imitation of the birds. They stood up in their canoes and shot fish, laughing when one was missed, laughing when the fish was transfixed...

The joy and merrymaking of the Yawalapiti seemed to mount the nearer we came to their village, until it reached a point that made me wonder. It could not be sheer because we had elected to go to their village instead of to the Kamayura's. Rossi had an explanation.

"They're acting as if they're going to throw us into the stew pot," he said. "I don't like the way they're looking at me. Jim, find out how to say 'rough meat.'"

"Jim" was Petrullo's nickname. "Maybe if I convince them that this cameraman is too strong, they'll pick on one of these tender, juicy maidens instead of us to the meat."

But the Yawalapiti had no intention of eating us, only to honor and please us in every possible way. It was an idyllic trip of primitive beauty and joy... Finally, we entered an amphitheater of dark water with walls of tall dark forest broken by a crack through which a shaft of sunlight came to play lightly on the water. Some white cranes perched on the bushes, looked on solemnly, took to key flight to come to rest again a little higher.

We beached the canoes. Everybody plunged into the water. What a picture! The canoes unloaded, we took up the march to the village. First went two men, then I, with Tapi [Petrullo's fox terrier] close by, and then the rest in single file. The guides immediately began a chant which rose in intensity and loudness as we reached the edge of the village clearing a hundred yards away and fell again to a murmur as we walked to the center. Coming from the obscurity of the forest, the entrance to the clearing, being in intense sunlight, was, as usual, dramatic by its very sallowness. No one was about. It was almost like entering a dead city.

Not for long. We had not sat on the log long when from two of the houses came the chiefs, chanting as they walked towards us. Each one was freshly painted and oiled and wore a jaguar band around his head. Each carried a steel curved in the shape of a bird. Behind each came several men and women. On arriving before Rossi and me, they offered us the stools, and then, as everybody because silent, one of them, a tall, powerful individual, made a long speech of welcome. Frequently he pointed to the sky and traced a path in the air with his hand. He was talking about the plane, of course. Occasionally, he pointed to the women and indicated that they had wept in fear... The speech over, women and children filled from each house. They came forward, knelt before Rossi and me and offered us huge calabashes filled with a
mixture of manioc flour and water. We drank and passed them on to our men. They offered huijna (unleavened manioc bread), manioc bread and toasted manioc. But I made a speech there, but, in this case, there was no one to interpret what I said. They listened attentively, though, and at the end, indicated by signs that we should enter the men’s house to rest in the hammocks which they had put up for us. We entered the house, and soon all of the Yawalapiti were leaning on their own in the semi-darkness and coolness of the house.

We lay down and were commenting to each other on the fine treatment we were receiving when we heard soft singing outside. We rose and peered through the grass wall. The women had formed in a long line, arms linked. They were dancing slowly, taking three steps forward and three back, beating time with the right foot as they sang softly, a sweet song natural to the jungle that rose from every side of the village. It was almost a lullaby, and we returned to our hammocks to swing in them gently, wondering at these gentle folk, feeling almost shy at the attention we were receiving until tranquil sleep came upon both of us, and Topi, who had curled up beneath my hammock. For the first time since the departure from Simoe Lopes, I felt completely at peace and secure. We were among friends, and I was among the people who had called me away from the classroom. I was happy.

Topi groaned, and I awoke. Some men were entering the hut… They stood still by the wall, hardly breathing. It seemed, watching us… One of them reached up the wall to take down a bundle wrapped in a mat. Topi, who must have been eyeing them, rose up and barked. I rolled over and called him. The men laughed softly and easily. They showed me the contents of the bundle, bright feather head-dresses, glasses of cotton string dyed red and yellow which they indicated was to be worn around the waist, a dance which they seemed to hold in veneration, and a few more oddities and ends. They took three large flutes… and, in pantomime, told me that these were sacred and that no woman should ever look upon them. The breaking of this tabu was death.

More men crowded into the house, including my Bakuri and the Mehnaku who had accompanied us. Three of the men began to play on the flutes… The men played and danced a little. They talked to me, so eager to make me understand. I tried hard to do so, but it was so difficult, Arawak, Garib, Portuguese and gestures. It took so long, and when what they said finally reached me, I received only the barest facts, the general meaning.

After a while, we went outside. A stool was brought for me, and I sat in the middle of a happy people while Rossi took pictures. The women brought more to drink and to eat. The men brought us fish. One of the Bakuri was at my side with a sack filled with fruit goods… I began to distribute what we had. I gave the chiefs a long knife each. Then to each man, woman and child… even to the infants, I gave something. Their joy and gratitude was overwhelming… So effective was the demonstration that I wondered and was puzzled. In their attitude there was more than curiosity, more than happiness at receiving a few trinkets. They not only showered me with food but with attentions which almost amounted to veneration. Topi was included, though he, the rascal that he was, persisted in holding himself aloof.

There was a tremendous coming and going as they emptied their houses of new baskets, manioc, bows, arrows, manioc
In broad form, manioc as dry toasted flour, manioc in dry mash, all of which they laid at my feet. Every one brought me some of their children, and the other at the breast. It seemed as if they were giving me to the entire village with themselves included, as indeed they were! They made numerous attempts to tell me something in connection with the plane. If only we had a map! A glowing sunset caught us still in the village. They tried to look at it, and I looked at it, and then at them. I lacked one or two colors. They had pointed to it often and then at themselves. I had gathered that the ges-string which they wore and the lom-string that the women wore were things which they believed they had been given by the sun originally, possibly as magical, protective amulets. Now they sat or stood there with me in the stillness that comes upon the jungle at the end of the day, looking at the eerie glow in the west and the gentle shades of the sky above us. Only the gold-bird broke upon us with its shrill whistle, and then there was silence again.

One does not sleep much at night in the jungles of Matto Grosso....I awoke one night in the Tucupi men's house. I was cold and mosquitoes were bothering me somewhat, but what made me roll out of my hammock, in hand, was the sound of a subdued voice near the house and an even-hooping beat from farther away. I crawled under the wall and out into the open. Tupi with me. I stood close to the house, but I could see nothing. From somewhere in the clearing a man was chanting, accompanying his song on some drum-like instrument. In the course of the day, I learned that the oldest chief in the village awakened his people that way. His song urged them not to be lazy, to rise from the hammock, to bathe, and to continue the day's work; they must not shame their ancestors by lying in their hammocks when they should be up and doing, especially since in the village, they had with them a great visitor and friend.

The song and accompaniment were resumed at intervals until dawn broke in the sky. To the sound of the 'drum' beat was added that of the manioc beaters, with a stick with the women. They, too, started a soft chant. The men moved away from the village to the fish, and as they paddled away in different directions, they kept up a continuous harmonious calling back and forth to each other with perfect imitations of the songs of the various birds which contributed their bit until there was a symphony of music rising, as it were, from the jungle itself. It seemed as if the tall banyans, the vines, the palms, the trees, and the noise of the strain...
The men who had been out on the river came back at night and told them what they had seen. At first, nobody believed them when they said that men dressed in strange ways came out of the birds' belly and ate food. They told of seeing a white dog. Then they showed the bag filled with strange things. They talked in the men's house all night. The women sat outside crying and very much afraid. The shaman made magic. They sang, and they played the flutes. The women danced, but they did this because they were afraid. In the morning, they decided to get what had fallen onto the tree. Two young men climbed up and brought it down. They looked into it. They found strange things which they had never seen before. They found knives, beautiful beads, cloth. They were marvelous things. They talked about them and decided to put them away in the men's house with the sacred objects. They realized now that the men in the bird were not enemies. That night the shaman made magic and dreamed. He said that the men in the bird were powerful magicians, or maybe even gods, who had come to pay a visit, but because we had shot the arrows at them, they were angry. They were so angry that they might come back to kill us. So they danced and sang. In the morning, the women prepared much iñi and mamoc water. The men went fishing. They prepared their dance dress, and every day they faced the south and called out to the bird to please come back. They placed all the food out in the clearing of the village, and they danced all night while the shaman made magic sometimes in the men's house and sometimes outside. He wore his mask and his dress. They did this for many days, and because the bird did not come back, they thought it was angry with them. At last, they gave up hope, and...
Figure 22. Colubus containers collected from the Yurucupitá (nos. 10 and 12) and their neighbors along the headwaters of the Upper Xingu River. Petrollo shipped back hundreds of items of material culture from the Matto Grosso, among them body ornaments and ceremonial dress, flutes, clay pots, domestic equipment, hunting and fishing paraphernalia, weapons, and the Buroro jaguar robe shown in Fig. 6. (See also Fig. 22.)


Bibliography


Fieldwork in Brazil

they were very sad.

"Then one day the noise was heard again, and soon the bird was in the river again. This time they were not afraid. They got into their canoes and with food offerings, paddled swiftly out to the river. When they saw the bird, they were afraid again. It was resting on the bank, but it was so very big. But after a while, they went up to the men who came out of its belly. They gave them food, and the men gave them more marvelous things. Then they came down the river in canoes. They recognized you and the dog.

"They were very happy. They say they will give you food, will dance and sing because they are happy. They want you to stay in the village all the time. They will give you wives. The women will make kboa. The men will bring you much fish."

"I told them that you must go back to your people. They said they will go with you then. They don't want you to leave them."

Can we place ourselves for the moment in the position of these primitive people whose mechanical appliances are limited to the fire drill and the bow when they saw and heard descending upon them from the high heavens, as if about to destroy them, the huge plane? What fear would we suffer, were we, with our knowledge of physical laws, to see a satellite come crashing down on us? How are we to gauge the courage of that handful of men who, instead of running away in terror, went for their bows and arrows and defied the unknown peril? The tale impressed me and always has. The mystery of my reception was explained, but what was more important, I received a lesson in human courage which made me feel humble.