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# NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC



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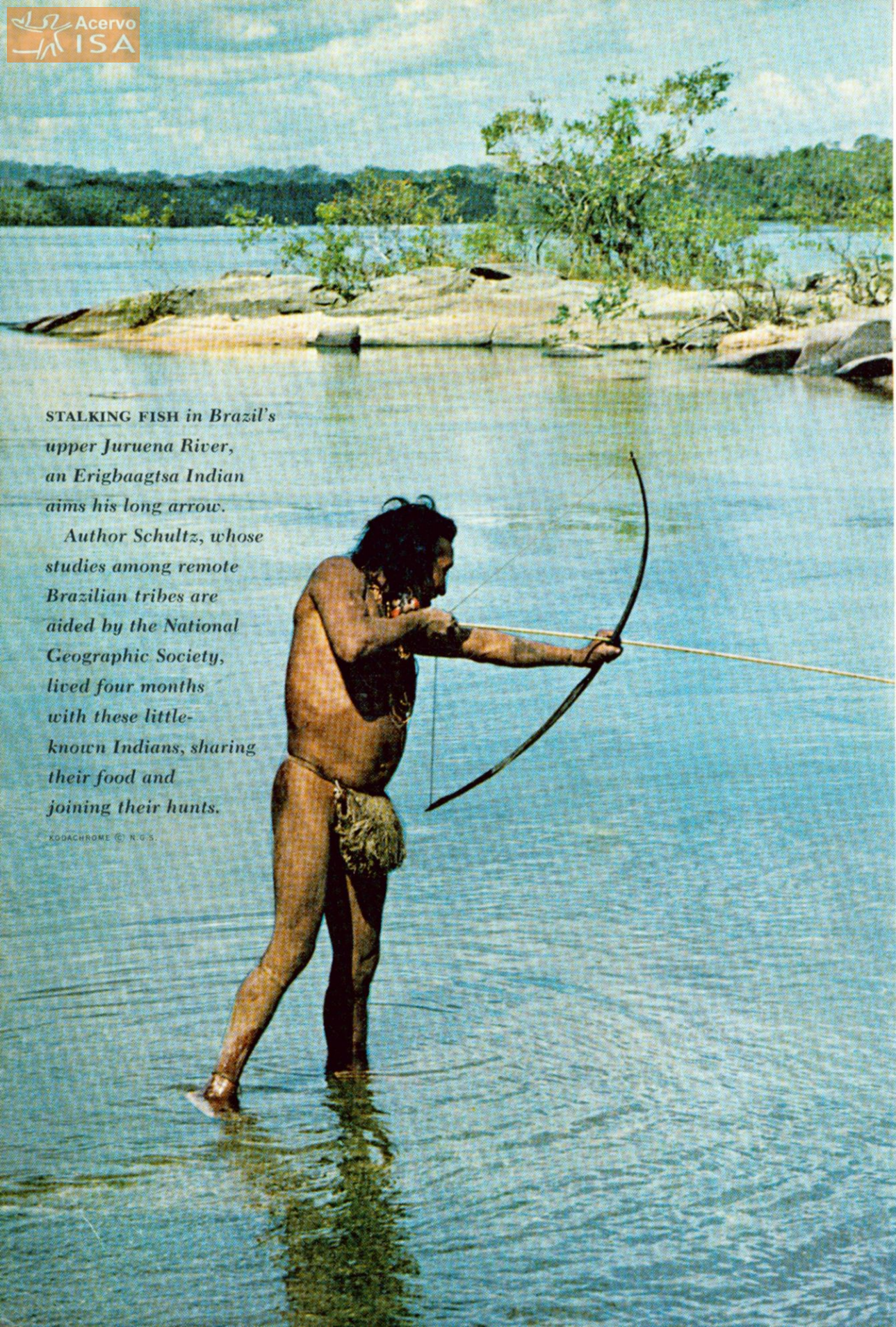
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*STALKING FISH in Brazil's  
upper Juruena River,  
an Erigbaagtsa Indian  
aims his long arrow.*

*Author Schultz, whose  
studies among remote  
Brazilian tribes are  
aided by the National  
Geographic Society,  
lived four months  
with these little-  
known Indians, sharing  
their food and  
joining their hunts.*

X00ACHROME © N.G.S.





# Indians of the Amazon Darkness

*Article and photographs by* HARALD SCHULTZ

**A**T DUSK WE BATHE, listen to our radio, and take to our hammocks early. With our Erigbaagtsa Indian friends, we are camped beside the upper Juruena River, in a little-explored region of Brazil's vast State of Mato Grosso.

How quiet it is in the jungle! Slight rustles herald the arrival of night-prowling monkeys. In the shadowy gloom they leap and cavort like a troupe of clowns. A margay—a small, spotted jungle cat—dashes through camp. Just as I am nodding off,

I hear the voice of Para, my young Brazilian guide of Indian descent. "Senhor Haraldo, are you asleep?"

"No. What's the matter?"

"Senhor Haraldo, do you have your pistol ready to hand?"

"Yes, I have it right here. What is it?"

"That sound—like a trumpeter bird calling. That is surely an Indian watching us. I have never seen trumpeter birds hereabouts."

Indians are wont to stalk in the dark around a camp they intend to attack. They imitate birds to cover up their noise. Before dawn, when everybody is asleep, they strike quickly and cruelly.

As a precaution, we break camp and move to an island. On shore, the ominous bird calls continue. We were wise to move, we think.

In the morning we return to our campsite. Nothing has been touched. The sounds *had* been made by trumpeter birds, after all, and we had been fooled.

"Bad Indians far away," says Radiokoobee, closest of my Erigbaagtsa friends.

### Tales of Cannibalism Persist

My wife Vilma and I, both scientists of the Museu Paulista of São Paulo, had come to this remote region to investigate the Erigbaagtsa, a people we had never before encountered in all our wanderings among the Brazilian jungle tribes. As on previous expeditions, we had been given generous assistance by the National Geographic Society.\*

For some months reports of Indians who ate other humans had been trickling back to São Paulo. They came mainly from diamond and gold prospectors returning from the upper Juruena and Aripuanã Rivers. The prospectors told of finding the remains of roasted human limbs at abandoned fire sites.

\*The author has described visits to other remote tribes in NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC. See "Children of the Sun and Moon," March, 1959; "Tukuna Maidens Come of Age," November, 1959; "Blue-eyed Indian," July, 1961; and "Brazil's Big-lipped Indians," January, 1962.

The multiplying reports all pointed to a tribe known generally as the Canoeiros, a name meaning "travelers in boats," though the ones we visited have no boats. These people call themselves Erigbaagtsa. This, to the best of my knowledge, means simply "we ourselves," like many tribal names.

While we pondered the prospectors' tales and planned our expedition, we knew that much of the Erigbaagtsa region had already been penetrated—indeed, pacified—by the Reverend Johann Dornstauder, an Austrian Jesuit missionary stationed at the Mato Grosso village of Utariiti. Father Dornstauder's most gruesome find was a number of human skulls enclosed in basketwork and dangling from the roof of an Erigbaagtsa hut.

Were these people cannibals? That was one of the things we hoped to find out.

To take advantage of the jungle dry season, we set out in May, 1962. We flew to Cuiabá, capital of Mato Grosso, and then jounced 350 miles by truck across savanna and over narrow jungle trails to Pôrto dos Gauchos, last outpost of civilization on the Arinos River, a tributary of the Juruena (map, page 740).

At Pôrto dos Gauchos live about 500 families—mostly of German and Portuguese extraction, with a few White Russians, Japanese, and Chinese. They have migrated from southern Brazil to help clear the jungle for one of the country's largest rubber plantations.

The habitat of the Erigbaagtsa lies a few days' journey farther downstream, on the upper Juruena. Anyone attempting to run the fierce rapids without an expert local guide would court disaster.

Para is one of the best white-water men in these parts. With calm skill he pilots our heavily laden craft through gorges and rapids, shoals and whirlpools.

Each time we reach a particularly hazardous stretch, Vilma and Roberto, Para's helper, leave the boat. They carry cameras and other precious gear over winding paths through the forest, and rejoin us below the rapids.

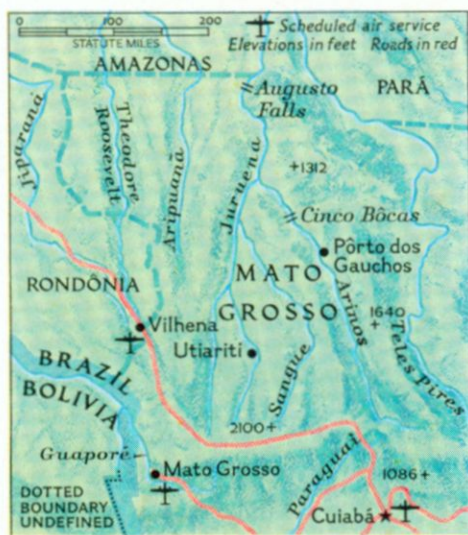


KODACHROMES BY HARALD SCHULTZ © NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

**Grim hunting trophies**, the skulls of wild pigs and monkeys crown poles near a hut. Indians roasted and ate the heads.

**Author's Erigbaagtsa friend**, Radiokoobee, displays the bright plumage of a macaw, which his wife will pluck and cook. Long quills will fletch bamboo arrows tipped with notched palmwood. Feathers of earlier kills hang from slits in Radiokoobee's ears; only breast and wing feathers are used for personal adornment. Beads are pierced grass seeds.





Upper Juruena River borders the remote home of the Erigbaagtsa visited by the author. From Cuiabá he rode by truck over savanna and jungle trails to Pôrto dos Gauchos, then traveled by boat down the Arinos. He reports the tribe dwindling rapidly and estimates its present numbers at only 300.

Thick layers of babassu palm fronds thatch a *maloca*, single-room home for two Indian families and a bachelor. Larger dwellings may shelter five or more families. Entrances stay tightly closed to bar bloodsucking flies. To escape the gnat-size pests, the Erigbaagtsa spend much of their lives indoors, venturing into daylight only to hunt and fish, bathe, and fetch wood and water. Here Radiokoobee, bidding his son stay home, sets out for a hunt in the jungle.

Smiling mother dandles baby in a clearing outside the maloca. Dusk draws the Indians outdoors for play and gossip. Small calabashes, nuts, seeds, and red berries of the necklace tree, *Ormosia coccinea*, serve as beads.

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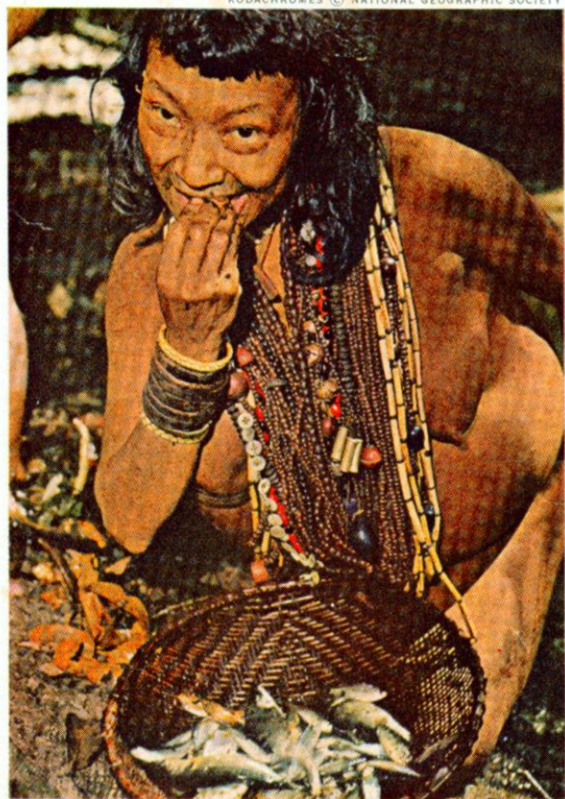




Juruena River provides sparkling water for a latherless shampoo, but its banks are a favored habitat of bloodthirsty flies. Basket sieve holds small fish captured in drying water holes.

Quick bite kills a fish, the first step in cleaning.

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On the second day we approach the dread Cinco Bôcas, or "five mouths." Only one of these water passages is navigable. Para, alert at the tiller, steers expertly between the boulders, which are almost near enough to touch. Suddenly our metal boat describes an arc and shoots through foaming waves with loud crashes onto the rocks, crunching, thumping, pounding, and trembling, then comes to rest on dry ground. A few yards away one of the five torrents foams past us in a smother of white spray.

Para gives a cry of alarm.

"Senhor Haraldo! Our engine is smashed!"

It is true. The hull is intact, but the 12-horsepower outboard motor is damaged beyond repair. Para is ashamed.

"For five years," he says, "I have been navigating boats through these rapids, carrying provisions to the rubber tappers. I have never before had an accident!"

We get the boat back into the water, shoot down the rapids without power, and continue with our spare three-horsepower motor.

#### Rubber Tappers Prowl Deep Jungles

The rubber tappers, most of them bachelors, lead lonely lives along these rivers in central Brazil. They penetrate the jungle on narrow paths, tapping the trees so that the liquid latex sap flows into little cups. Sometimes they go for weeks without meeting



another human being, with only a dog or a parrot to talk to. Most of these men are friendly and peaceable, but also among them are rowdy specimens, fugitives from justice.

From a large island near the mouth of the Arinos River, two men and a woman wave to us, and we bring our boat alongside.

These people, rubber tappers, say some Erigbaagtsa came through here the previous day. One of the Indians quarreled with another rubber tapper living here. He threatened him, whereupon the tapper shot him dead. The other Indians moved off, threatening to augment their forces and return for revenge.

The rubber tapper fled in his small boat, after burying the Indian, and these friends arrived to protect his abandoned dwelling.

As darkness falls we tie up to shore, set up camp, spread mosquito nets over our hammocks, and light a supper fire.

Until late at night we hear the sounds of many shots—the rubber tappers warning the Indians away. The Indians do not return; somewhere in the jungle, they mourn for their dead companion.

On the fourth day we halt on the bank of the upper Juruena. A few hundred yards away a *maloca*, or communal hut, looms like an immense haystack. We find it empty.

Rubber tappers tell us the Indians moved out weeks ago. Each year in May or June, when the dry season begins, they head for the upper reaches of small rivers to cut bamboo canes for arrow shafts.

We turn back and look for other huts that are inhabited. The next day, in a hut well back from the river, we encounter our first Erigbaagtsa—Radio-koobee, his brother Barari, their wives, and three children.

One of the women, struck by a falling tree trunk, has a serious leg wound. That is why these Indians did not go with the others to cut bamboo. The injured woman looks wretched and thin as a skeleton.

"Must I die?" she asks, her eyes large and filled with fear.

"No, you'll get well," I reply, using some of the Erigbaagtsa

words I learned from rubber tappers. She smiles, showing beautifully even teeth.

Her husband, Radio-koobee, is the most solicitous I have ever seen. He hunts and cooks, cares for his infant son, clears the ground, sows, plants, hoes, and harvests singlehanded, and tends his wife with patient and loving care.

When we stay too long in the forest, hunting, he says, "I must turn back—my child is crying." He imitates the crying, makes signs for the words "turn back" and "at home." We understand each other quickly.

We give the woman a light sedative and with a razor blade open the infected wound. She recovers very quickly.

After a few weeks we leave with Radio-koobee and Barari. They have offered to lead us to the hut of Ipatoto, an Erigbaagtsa chief

**Expertly flinging water** onto his tongue, a tired hunter drinks from a brook. When the author tried the hand-to-mouth method, he soaked his shirt. Shredded bark provides a G-string for the Erigbaagtsa; he believes bark-fiber armllets enhance his strength.

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**Spinning home-grown cotton** into thread, Radiokoobee's mother twirls a palmwood spindle whose beeswax weight turns inside a shallow clay bowl. She will knit the thread around strands of twisted palm-leaf fibers to make a hammock, such as the one in which she reclines. Spoons hanging above baskets at upper left were given her by Mr. Schultz.



**Artisan Uses Author's Knife to Adorn Fish-shaped Shells**

Women grind mussels to resemble fish, and men incise the scales. If no knife is available, the men use stones. Strung with tough strands of bark fiber, the necklaces rattle rhythmically when women dance at festivals. This carver sits in a dark maloca, where a pencil-thin shaft of sunlight falls on his work. Camera flash lights the picture.

now believed to have returned from cutting bamboo.

The river is a mass of rapids. On the bank we spy a white object. We steer over to have a look. It is part of a human skull.

"Boema!" exclaim Barari and Radiokoobe. Boema is a feared chieftain of the Erigbaagtsa tribe. He lives 15 days' march away in the jungle between the Juruena and Aripuanã. Indians of other Erigbaagtsa groups dare not go there. He has not yet made peace with the white men, and now he is also an enemy of his own tribesmen.

My friends say the owner of the skull was an Erigbaagtsa, and they believe he was killed by Boema. Parts of the body may have been eaten—who knows?

A month ago two Indians were beaten to death in a battle of rival Erigbaagtsa groups at the bank of the Juruena.

"Did they devour these dead?" I ask Barari and Radiokoobe. They laugh out loud.

As we press them they consent—apparently with pleasure—to tell stories that may be made up only to satisfy the white man's curiosity. Or are they?

With much mimicry and few words Radiokoobe demonstrates how, during an Indian festival, the guests practiced malevolent sorcery. With tiny bows they shot tiny arrows in the direction of their hosts—at a great distance away, of course. Soon many of the hosts became ill and died.

Then the survivors fell upon their erstwhile guests, killing several with arrows bearing broad dagger-shaped wooden heads.

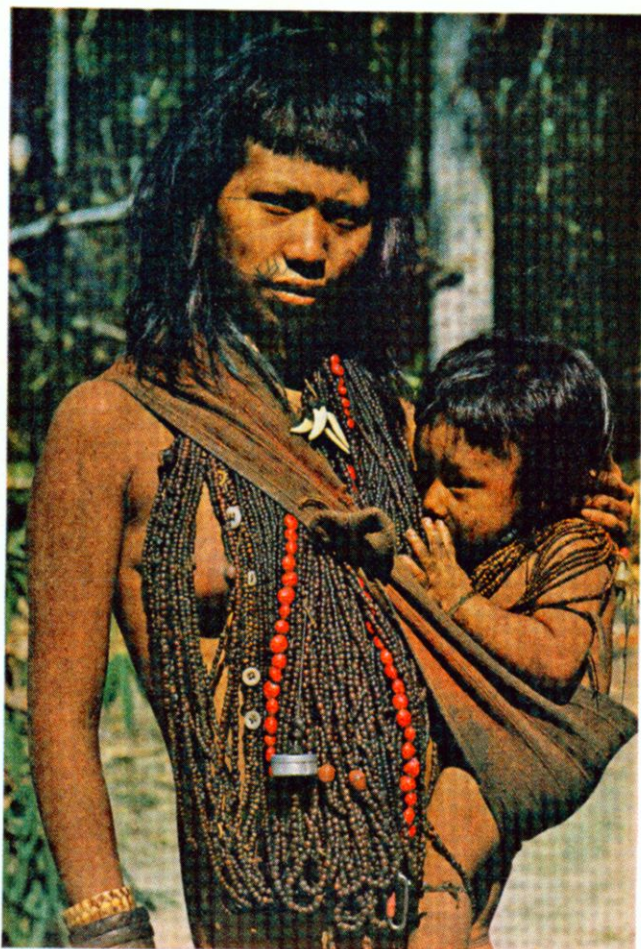
Radiokoobe imitates the cries and imprecations of those who had been struck. Then, he says, the Erigbaagtsa cut off their enemies' heads, roasted parts of their bodies over an open fire, and ate them. Afterward the skulls, with flesh and brain removed, were encased in woven baskets and hung in the huts.

#### "I Have Eaten Vilma"

"Nowadays we do not kill white man any longer—only hostile Indians of other groups," says Radiokoobe. "We have thrown the skulls away."

He and Barari laugh, and we get the impression that the entire tale is only a joke. But is it? I ask:

"Radiokoobe, make me a magic bow." But my friend misunderstands me. He



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**Profusion of seed necklaces and pendant of wild pigs' teeth adorn Shebah, a tattooed mother, who carries her son in a cotton sling. Buttons and a pillbox, acquired by trade, embellish her bead tunic, the only covering worn by the women. Dark, woody bracelets are cut from Brazil-nut pods (page 751). Armored tail of a giant armadillo supplied the ivorylike wristlet.**

thinks I want him to shoot me with a magic arrow. Shocked, he answers emphatically:

"No! You would get violent headaches, and your back would become ill!"

One day I return to camp and cannot immediately find my wife.

"You are looking for Vilma?" asks Radiokoobe. "I have killed Vilma, and roasted her and eaten her." He grins mischievously.

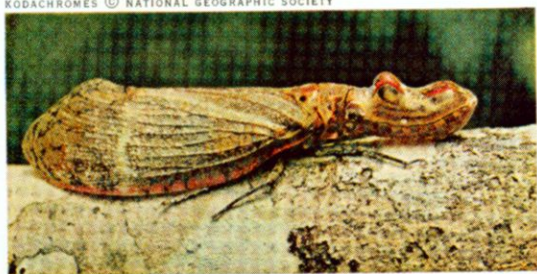
I smile too—as Vilma appears.

For years, we learn, the Erigbaagtsa looked upon rubber tappers and other white men as enemies, and frequently attacked them. Gradually, enmity died out, so that today Indians and whites generally enjoy cordial relations.

The Erigbaagtsa claim it was they who pacified the whites, not the other way round.



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**Sitting at the river's edge**, a raven-haired child curiously examines a kite swallowtail butterfly (*Eurytides*). Innocent of either cruelty or gentleness, Erigbaagtsa children handle such helpless captives matter-of-factly.

Three-inch lantern fly (upper right) rests its crocodile-like head on a branch; *Fulgora*'s ugly features give rise to a false belief that its bite is venomous. Bristly poisonous ant (*Paraponera clavata*) grows to nearly an inch in length; its vicious sting causes intense pain. Katydid (*Thliboscelus hypericifolius*) mimics the leaf on which it feeds.

"We Indians," says Radiokoobee, "were afraid of the thundering weapons. We wanted peace in our forests. We watched the rubber tapper go from tree to tree, make a deep cut in the bark, and then put there a cup which began to fill up. We walked quietly behind him, so that he couldn't see us, and collected these fine cups and took them to our huts."

Radiokoobee crooked his fingers in succession, saying "*Nipa . . . nipa*," meaning sleep once, sleep once more—passage of time.

"After a few days, when the liquid had hardened, the tapper returned to collect the little rubber balls—and couldn't find his cups!

"We hid behind large tree trunks and watched how angry he was. A young fellow

wanted to approach the tapper, but Mapatati, the chieftain, was much afraid and said no."

Radiokoobee bent double with laughter as he told this. Fear is a disgrace to an Indian. He continued:

"A young fellow leaped from behind the tree trunks and shouted, 'Rubber tappers are good—the Erigbaagtsa are also good!'"

Thus trouble was averted, and the rubber tapper went away in peace. These same words, I learned, are still a greeting today between the Erigbaagtsa and rubber tappers.

One day we see rubber tappers in small boats paddling up the Juruena in such a hurry that they do not even talk. Only one of them spends the night with us.

"There are hostile Indians farther down in the jungle," he reports. "They are coming through the forest, following the river upstream. We are afraid to be alone in the forest. We are seeking refuge upstream where there are no bad Indians."

Rumor follows rumor. Nobody has actually seen the hostile Indians, but excitement mounts, and I decide to be more careful.

That was the night we were fooled by the trumpeter-bird calls and moved to an island.

"Bad Indians far away," say our Erigbaagtsa friends, laughing.

#### Tiny Flies Rule River by Day

Along these shores of the upper Juruena the air is filled from dawn to dusk with dense clouds of tiny black bloodsucking flies called *piums*. When they bite, they leave swellings that itch strongly and soon turn black.

Bathing is out of the question by day. Vilma and I wear long trousers and pull stockings over cuffs to protect our ankles. On our hands we wear socks with holes cut for fingers. Our shirts have long sleeves, and our necks and heads are covered by cheesecloth veils.

The Indians, who wear no clothes, also fear these pests and avoid the river. They work their fields of corn, maniõc (cassava), and cotton before dawn. When the sun rises, they return to the dark of their huts, which so tightly shut out light that the *piums* can't pursue them. *Piums* are creatures of the sun.

The day after the false alarm we trek for two hours over a winding path through the forest. We come upon a large straw house in a small clearing. In each of the four walls there is an opening closed off by a thick layer of palm leaves. There is a rustling when someone lifts the leaves to squeeze through into the single room. I enter into the darkness, feeling as if someone has blindfolded me with a black cloth.

Small fires flicker on the ground. After a while I make out the hammocks slung next to the fires. In these hammocks lie women with their babies. They spin cotton into cord for hammocks, roast corn, and cook monkey meat or wild pork.

Boys and men squat on tree trunks that form a rectangle, chatting as they make arrows. Over a fire roasts a huge boar's head.

Friendly hands sling our hammocks at the far end of the hut. There a young, powerful man with an expressive, intelligent face lies stretched out.

"*Ikia Ipatoto?*—Are you Ipatoto?"

"*Uta Ipatoto,*" he answers.

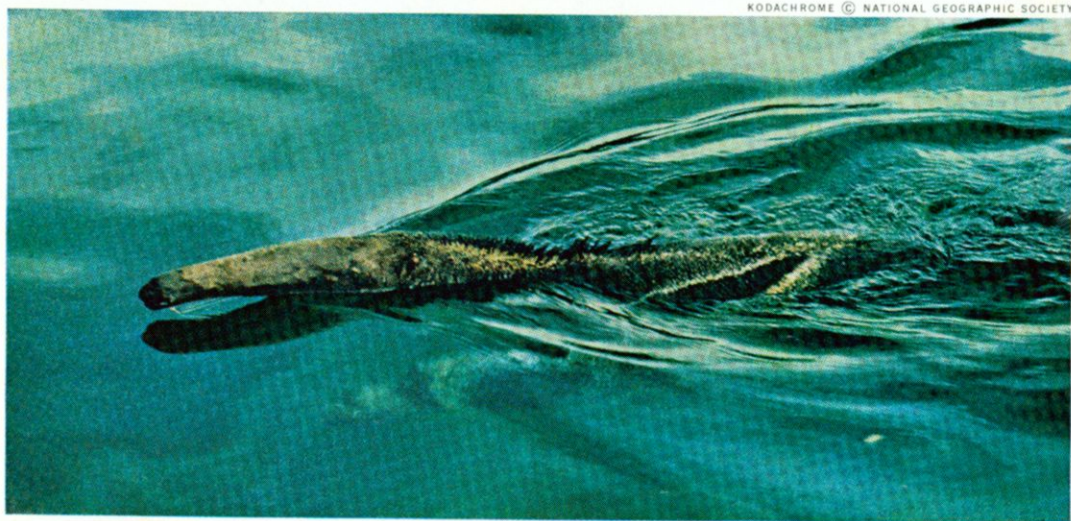
"*Uta Harald?*—My name is Harald."

Beside Ipatoto an older woman roasts kernels of corn in a clay dish over the embers of a fire. Ipatoto speaks to her and she fetches ripe bananas from the rafters of the hut. Ipatoto places the bananas and the dish of corn on the ground before me.

"*Mamutixana*—eat!"

#### Giant Anteater Swimming the Juruena River Snorkels With Its Long Snout

This toothless mammal feeds by ripping into logs and anthills with powerful foreclaws and then probing for termites and ants with a slender, sticky tongue. The author photographed the four-foot specimen of *Myrmecophaga jubata* from a boat. "Do you want to eat this animal?" he asked the Indians. They answered flatly no—"bahai."



One of the young lads brings a large clay vessel. Ipatoto drinks first, using a gourd cut in two. Then he fills the gourd for me.

"*Pete pihi*—honey water!"

Delicious!

In this Indian hut, deep in the forest, we settle down for a few weeks.

Adults and children spend nearly the entire day in the darkness of the maloca, or communal hut. Because of the insects, only rarely do they venture out to fetch wood or water.

Five families live in the maloca. The men are blood relations. Each family has its own area in the one large common room. There are no separating partitions.

A man and his wife will sling their hammocks on either side of their little fire. Small children sleep in their mothers' arms, the older ones in their own hammocks. Nights are cool, but all sleep in the nude.

Harmony prevails. Everyone is friendly and speaks in a low voice.

The bachelors and young boys sleep apart, in hammocks slung from rafters. In the center of the log rectangle—the area reserved for menfolk—they keep a fire going.

The log rectangle is the men's meeting place, their club. Here they eat their meals together, make bows and arrows and feather decorations, and talk away the hours. No woman ever ventures inside the rectangle.

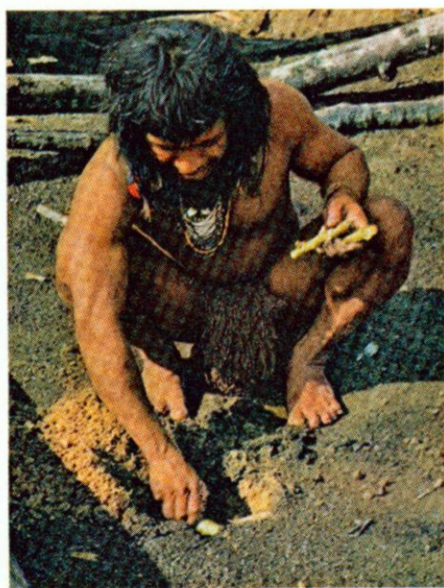
### Forest Shades Sandy Playgrounds

One afternoon two little girls go into the forest, carrying their baby sisters on their hips. Vilma goes along. At a shady spot in the forest, there are three sandy open spaces—playgrounds. In one stands a palm-leaf hut, just large enough for the little girls to crawl inside. In the sand lie small baskets and paddles for fanning a fire—the girls' toys.

When they come home later, they bring along small baskets of fruit. At home they play with baby *jacus*, or jungle chickens, feeding them grains of corn which they have first chewed.

A very small girl drags a bundle of corn straw around with her and treats it as a doll, holding it in her arms or rocking it in a hammock. There are no other toys.

Never in our twenty years of trekking



through the forest have we seen any quarrel-  
ing Indian children.

At dusk all work stops. Women and children meet in the narrow village gathering place bordering the jungle. They squat on the ground, chat, help one another in picking the bothersome insects out of their hair, and play with the children. The men sit on logs, apart from the women, talking, cracking jokes, and teasing one another.

To show the strength of his palmwood bow, Ipatoto draws it so far back that it forms a semicircle. His bamboo arrow speeds straight and high into the air. Then, in a graceful curve, it drops in the forest nearby.

Radiokoobee, who has accompanied me to Ipatoto's hut, owns a much smaller bow.

I tease him. "Why, that bow is for children."

Radiokoobee only smiles. Then he shoots his arrow higher still, almost out of sight.

Radiokoobee shows me how, with this short, light bow pressed tightly to his side, he can dash through the forest after wild pigs, without being impeded by trees or vines.

#### Fireflies Glow in Two Colors

A succession of rainy nights stirs up snakes, lizards, and insects. Tree frogs hammer and sing, crickets and cicadas hum. Brilliant butterflies flutter about, seeking shining flowers.

With darkness, large fireflies glow among the trees, seemingly chasing each other and sometimes getting into the hut. Children and grownups enjoy their glow, reddish in flight, greenish while at rest. The Indians catch the insects, then let them fly off again.

#### Charred Branches Strew a Fresh Field That Fire Has Prepared for Planting

The Erigbaagtsa know only a primitive agriculture. Each year in May or June—start of the dry season, the Indians' summer—they abandon the past season's weed-choked fields and wrest new cropland from dense jungle by felling trees and cutting underbrush. Before the first rains in September or October, they set blazes to clear the land. This woman uses a pole to dig holes for corn kernels. Men will drop the seed and cover it.

**Squatting farmer** plants cassava stems. Edible roots will be ready in six months.

**Singeing and scraping** bristles from the rib cage, a cook prepares to roast a wild pig.

Before dawn the women add wood to the fires, roast corn for breakfast, and fetch water.

The hunters test the spring of their bows, then tighten palm-fiber bowstrings. They take up their rustling bundles of arrows.

"Haraldo, come, get your rifle!" says Ipatoto. "I know where the monkeys eat much ripe fruit. Very sweet fruit!"

The forest is still quite dark. But soon silver arrows of light penetrate the leafy bower. They strike dripping-wet leaves in a shimmer of green. Day spreads through the forest.

Near the hut, atop a row of poles stuck in the ground, sit the skulls of many monkeys and wild pigs—hunting trophies (page 738). The skulls are split open; head and brain are special delicacies for all Indians.

Every Indian settlement is surrounded by a strip of forest or savanna in which game has been exterminated or driven away. The hunter must go farther and farther afield to find plentiful game. Therefore, Indian tribes prefer to move their settlements from time to time to new hunting grounds.

It is silent in the forest; only now and then is there a screech from a pair of flying macaws. We are surrounded by eternal and boundless green. Moldering leaves shine on the ground in bright yellows and browns, in patterns like the markings of a jaguar.

We hear rumbling noises; then all is silent again. The noises sound as if they were produced by some dangerous large animal.

But it is only a black bird, glossy as silk and big as a well-fed rooster. It is still invisible to us, but I know it is a bush turkey, with

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velvety eyes and a bright red knob on its upper beak. The Brazilians call it *mutum*. It is a shy quarry that usually spots the hunter long before he sees it.

"Wait!" murmurs Radiokoobee, and begins cautiously to cut palm leaves. With them he builds a blind, and we squat behind it.

Radiokoobee purses his lips and makes gentle, endearing, whistling sounds, like the love call of a female *mutum*.

The rumbling noise, a deep bass, comes again from the forest. Then strong beats of wings and a heavy thud, as if somebody had leaped to the ground.

Radiokoobee again sends out delicate fluting sounds, winding up with a sharp tone that gradually fades away. There is rustling in the dead leaves.

"The bird is coming," Radiokoobee laughs.

And there he is . . . a black bird scampering

on strong legs directly toward our hiding place, blind in his search for the female which has come into his domain.

The point of an arrow barely protrudes from the screen of leaves. The taut bowstring sings. The amorous bird collapses.

#### Bird Sounds Jaguar Alarm

We push deeper and deeper into the jungle, following winding narrow paths for miles and miles. It grows dark, and then heavy rain gushes down, transforming the barely discernible path into a brook.

The two hunters break off palm leaves and tie the stems together to make splendid umbrellas. Soon sunlight dances again on the leaves, shimmering in green through the rain drops. A bird twitters. It sounds alarmed. Radiokoobee and Ipatoto stop dead. They place arrows to bowstrings. They listen.





"Onça—jaguar," says Radiokoobee. Time goes by. Nothing happens. The hunters relax. "The jaguar has gone," says Ipatoto.

Now the two break into a run. They leap through the underbrush and beckon to me. "Come! Quick!"

"Monkeys," one of them says when they finally halt. "They are passing up there in the treetops."

Branches rustle and snap, quivering under the weight of many monkeys. A band of sakis keeps emitting reedy, quavering whistles, almost like a whine. Silently following them are some woolly monkeys, which with the sakis are among the largest monkeys in the Brazilian jungles. Adult males lead. Females follow, their young clinging tightly to their fur. Then come the adolescents and finally a single straggler, apparently a youngster on his own for the first time.

Ipatoto shoots an arrow straight up. A saki cries out, falls, but holds on with hands, feet, and long prehensile tail. Only after three more arrows does he fall.

Again we run through the forest and halt breathless. The Indians know exactly where the monkeys will pass again, for the animals follow established "highways" in the treetops. We must be there ahead of them.

We repeat this game a third time. After that the animals are so frightened that they scatter in all directions.

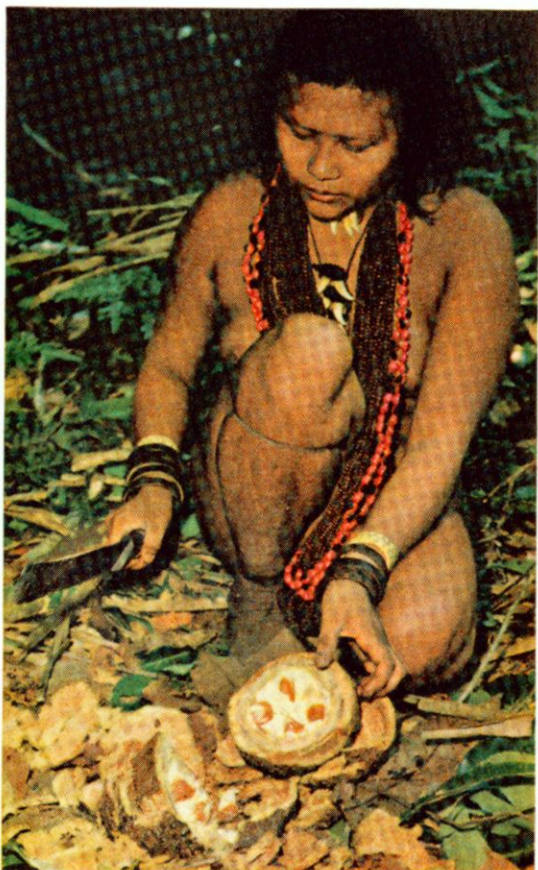
We have bagged two fat woolly monkeys and a male black saki with long beard and powerful fangs. Recovering them from undergrowth, we find a young one clinging to one of the woolly monkeys. As I free it from the mother's fur and take it on my arm, it breaks into heart-rending cries. It quiets down only after I have talked to it for a long time. That

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Using fire tongs of lashed saplings, a woman rakes a charred pod of Brazil nuts from a bed of coals. To get the jungle delicacy, which the Indians enjoy half ripe, women and girls burned down a 125-foot-high *Bertholletia* tree that bore hundreds of nut-filled capsules.

Machete bares Brazil nuts in a spongy paste.





**Gathering wild honey**, an Erigbaagtsa chops into an ax-felled tree to remove a bees' nest. Angry insects, driven out by the blazing fire, beset his companion. The bees, of the genus *Melipona*, lack poison stingers but inflict painful bites.

**Grimacing from bee bites**, a woman ladles wild honey into a bamboo pipe. She obtained the metal cup from rubber tappers. Baby girl, clutching honeycomb and wearing a necklace given to her by the author, shields her face from the darting bees.

**Youngster packs honeycomb** in a leaf basket laced with fiber.

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night it sleeps in a basket with my pet spider monkey. Before dawn the baby crawls into my hammock, seeking protection and love.

The slain animals have been eviscerated, then neatly trussed with bark fiber and carried home on the hunters' backs.

Back at the hut, the spoils are turned over to the women. They stir the fires, throw on new logs, and wait until the flames burn high. They sing and scrape off the fur, leaving the skin to be eaten with the meat. The tail goes to the lucky hunter. He shares it with his hunting companions.

Often many days go by without game to speak of. On those days we eat corn, bananas, wild honey, Brazil nuts, sweet potatoes, manioc, and corn mush. When the rainy season comes, the forest is full of sweet fruits, which are eaten raw or cooked into a soup sweetened with honey.

Near the maloca stands a gigantic *Bertholletia*, or Brazil-nut tree. It rises about 125 feet, and at ground level the trunk is a good ten feet in diameter. In its leafy green crown

are hundreds of *ouriços*, the large fruits containing Brazil nuts.

At this season of the year the *ouriços* have not yet ripened. It will be another few months before they fall to the ground. But our friends want to harvest their Brazil nuts now; they enjoy them half ripe.

Three women and a few little girls stuff pieces of firewood into a small hole in the trunk and kindle a fire there. The women and girls blow on it until flames shoot out.

#### Fallen Giant Gives Indians a Feast

This operation is repeated for four days, while the hole in the trunk grows larger, and the fire becomes so powerful that the entire tree trembles. At last there is a tremendous crash as the tree falls.

The women jump for joy and children shout "*Pitsi! Pitsi!*"—their word for Brazil nuts.

The falling trunk has ripped a clearing in the jungle, tearing down other trees. These catch fire, but the flames soon go out.

The fall has hurled *ouriços* as far as 300





**Hard-won honey** sweetens a big kettle of corn mush. To prepare the mixture, women crush corn kernels with mortar and pestle, sieve the mash into a clay pot, add water, and boil. Cooking done, the Indians add honey. Palm-leaf strainer traps bee larvae and wax.

### **Bamboo Trumpets Sound the Planting Season's Start**

Simple instruments are fitted with slender pipes adjusted to vary the tone. A rectangle of logs marks off the men's club within the community house. Here the males eat, make bows and arrows, and spend hours in talk. Clay pot holds honey thinned with water.



feet. The women pile them into great heaps. They beat them on the ground with heavy clubs, breaking open the outer woody tissue. Inside is a very hard shell containing the Brazil nuts.

Now the women light a fire. Into it they throw the shells divested of their outer husks, and leave them in the embers until they are charred. Then, with tongs fashioned of two sticks lashed together, they fish the blackened shells out of the embers (page 750).

After they have cooled, the shells can be opened with a machete or smashed by being thrown vigorously to the ground. The tasty nuts are then picked out with a sharpened sliver of wood.

The women weave baskets of young palm fronds in which to carry the nuts home. For

days everybody gorges on the Brazil nuts.

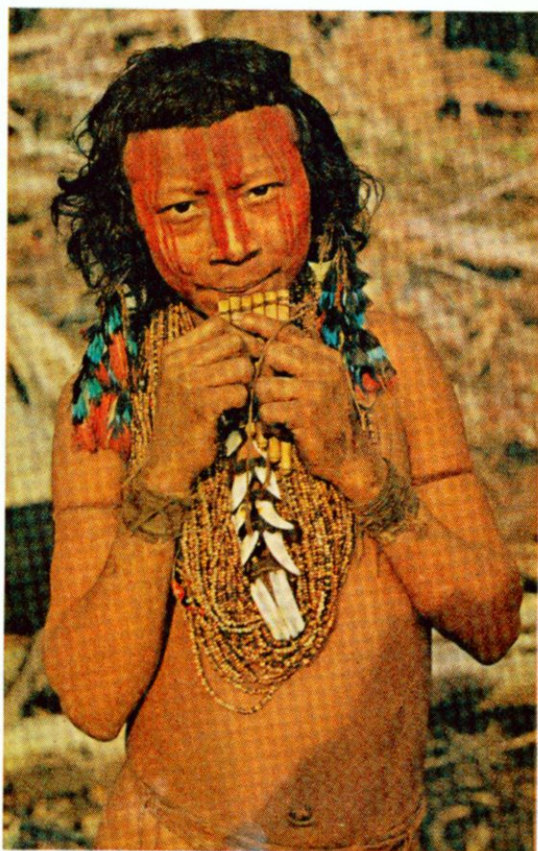
Because of the bloodthirsty flies the Erigbaagtsa only rarely go down to the river to fish. When they do, they catch many varieties, such as the *pintados*, a spotted catfish that grows to nearly a yard in length and weighs 20 pounds or more.

Missing are the vicious piranhas, as well as the notorious sting rays and electric eels, all denizens of Amazon waters. These are kept from the upper Juruena by Augusto Falls and by rapids extending hundreds of miles along the lower river.

The Erigbaagtsa soundlessly take up positions in trees that swing out over the river. Holding their bows and arrows at the ready, they chew on fruits and let scraps fall into the water. As soon as a fish approaches for a



**Painted youth** whistles a reedy solo on a primitive Panpipe of bamboo stems. Red dye squeezed from the pulpy seeds of the annatto tree stains his face. Toucan feathers dangle from slits in the upper edge of his ears. Bark-fiber bracelets gird his wrists. An Erigbaagtsa's hair never knows a comb.



### Innocent of Clothing, Motherless Sister and Little Brother Rest

No partitions hide hammocks inside a maloca, a hut that many people may share. Five families—the men all blood relatives—occupied the one-room dwelling where Mr. and Mrs. Schultz stayed. Despite the lack of privacy, friendliness and harmony prevailed.

Children usually sleep with their mothers until they grow too large; then they get hammocks of their own. Bachelors keep a night fire blazing to drive away the chill.

When grown, this boy will stand little more than five feet tall. He faces an average life span of only 25 years. Few Erigbaagtsa reach the age of 60, says Mr. Schultz.



nibble, it is struck by an arrow. The hunters then leap in and seize their prizes.

More often the Indians fish in the gloom of the forest, in water holes that are about to dry up. These holes, connected with the river by ditches, are populated by fish during the rainy season. After the rains end, some of the fish do not retreat promptly enough.

#### Fish Caught in Baskets

The women waded into the deep mud, dragging small baskets through the murky water to catch small fish. They pitch the fish shoreward in a high arc. Naked little girls collect them and crack the spines with their teeth to kill them (page 742). Another quick bite just below the gills, and with one motion the inwards are ripped out and discarded.

Then the fish are wrapped in green banana leaves and placed in hot ashes. In a short while they are cooked.

Para, an expert hunter and fisherman, frequently supplies us and our Indian friends with game and fish. We accompany him to the mouth of a small tributary, where small river turtles abound. Slowly our boat circles. Para stands in the bow, wearing only trunks and seemingly indifferent to insect bites.

A turtle pokes its head above the surface for air and immediately disappears again. Para leaps long and dives deep, staying 20 or 30 seconds under water. Then he emerges, laughing, holding an overturned turtle in the palm of his hand.

We catch several for our table. Roasted in their shells, they are a great delicacy.



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We stop at a rocky islet. Ipatoto wades into the shallow water and brings back a thin rod to which a cluster of fish roe adheres. It is from a pair of cichlids, similar to sunfish, which had been standing guard over the eggs but now had fled.

Ipatoto scrapes this caviar off with his teeth and eats it.

"Try it, Haraldo," he urges. I do, and find it good.

Para collects turtle eggs, poking his fingertips into the sand to locate the nests. The eggs are eaten gladly by everyone. They are a special treat for our Erigbaagtsa friends, who have never learned to find turtle eggs.

We catch a huge black catfish. Smaller and tastier fish are plentiful; so the Indians eat only the monster's fat, throwing the rest

to the vultures. They also enjoy the liquid fat of tapirs, monkeys, and other animals.

"Come, Vilma," say the women, "eat with us some of the delicious fat." My wife hardly knows how to convince her friends she couldn't possibly get the stuff down.

#### "Evil Bees" Yield Good Honey

Almost every day we go out to collect wild honey. An Indian need only remember a bee tree, and he will find it in the trackless forest days and even weeks later.

These bees have no stingers. Some, however, bite with sharp mandibles. The bees often swarm by the hundreds in a victim's hair, over his whole body, and pinch him to distraction.

When the Erigbaagtsa want to smoke out

*pete brabo*—"evil bees"—the women generally stay home!

Usually the bees live in giant nests built onto the outside of large tree trunks. Joining my friends on a bee hunt, I watch them locate a nest and then help make torches of dried palm leaves tied to long sticks.

As soon as the torches are afire, the Indians run with them under the nest. The bees attack at once. They swarm around the Indians, humming all the while, and bite furiously. The Indians' skin is thicker and more resistant than ours, but still they swat furiously, and often they retreat from the scene of action.

Having felled the tree, the Indians again and again singe the nest, kill hundreds of bees, and smoke them out (page 752). Repeatedly they are put to flight by hosts of bees.

Later, at the fallen tree, all is quiet. The nest still smolders. We feast on honey, dipping the combs, which still contain larvae, into the sweet fluid, chewing the dark combs, and eating the pollen, which has a pungent taste. Finally the honeycombs are packed into clay jars or wrapped in palm leaves to be taken home.

#### Medicine Aids Spider's Victim

One of the women lies in her hammock, crying and groaning loudly. Her husband squats on the ground near her. All the inhabitants of the maloca show their sympathy for her pain. They are serious and worried.

"What happened?" I ask.

"She was bitten by a *shou*."

We learn that a *shou* is a spider.

"Will she die?"

Ipatoto smiles. "No, but it is very painful."

None of the Indians makes a move. There is no treatment—only wordless waiting and grieving. We give the patient a painkiller. She takes it without hesitation. Soon the groans cease. The maloca resounds once more with happy laughter.

Before the Erigbaagtsa set out on their long march through forest and savanna at the beginning of the four-month dry season, to gather arrow shafts, they clear a new section of forest. They let it dry thoroughly, and set fire to it when they return in August or September, just before the start of the rains.

Flames shoot high, and the column of smoke is visible for many miles. The ashes fertilize the jungle soil for planting, which comes right after the first winter rains.

The field is cleared only superficially. Small

underbrush is removed, but the big trunks of forest giants are left to char slowly, and palm trees lie strewn hit or miss (page 748). Between the fallen trees the Indians plant corn, manioc, beans, sweet potatoes, squash, peppers, cotton, and tobacco. Rubber tappers have given the Indians a few stalks of sugar cane. Bananas are also in favor.

As chieftain of the large family community, Ipatoto discusses with his men which section of the new clearing should be planted first. Then the work is tackled together, Ipatoto working as hard as the rest.

With pointed sticks the women poke holes in the soft ground. The men follow, pouring a few kernels of corn into the holes and then tamping the soil flat with a foot.

Next the men plant manioc. Three or four slips are placed horizontally in a hole, then covered. In six months everybody will be eating slender manioc roots.

#### Trumpets Play for a Feast

At the sound of a deep and long-drawn-out tooting, everybody stops work. We proceed to the maloca and take our places on the rectangle of logs on the ground—our club. The women hand us large earthenware jars of sweet corn mush and honey water.

Tauama, the younger brother of Ipatoto, is the first to drink the honey water. He then passes the half gourd filled with the cool beverage to the others in turn.

Now there begins a strange woodwind concert. Long trumpets—simple bamboo tubes—sound off in even rhythm, short-long-long-short. Each instrument is tuned to a different key, by moving a slender bamboo pipe fitted inside the larger tube.

There is laughter and gay babble. Then everybody drinks again of the honey water and eats of the corn mush, the diners dipping mussel shells into the food.

By October the rain has set in again. It is a blessing for the seed in the ground. Corn grows quickly. In a couple of months the first green ears can be harvested. Then there will again be a trumpet concert, honey water, and corn mush sweetened with honey. There will be singing and dancing.

The rains grow heavier. Soon everything soaks through. The rivulets in the primeval forest fill up. The patter of rain is everywhere. We must be getting home.

Are these people cannibals? To us they are gentle friends.