

ANTHROPOLOGY

Brazil's Tribes Dying Out

Native tribes in wild and isolated forest regions of Brazil are found to be disappearing by scientists from Smithsonian Institution.

► IT IS MORE than 25 years since the British engineer, Col. Faucett, entered the forest swamps of Brazil's Mato Grosso in search of a city of gold only to disappear without a trace. Now the Indian tribes he found there are on the way to disappearance, too.

This wild and isolated region, extending over hundreds of square miles in the basin of the Xingu River, is now inhabited by fewer than a thousand Indians. They belong to at least 13 distinct tribes and speak languages in four almost completely unrelated linguistic families. These tribes are remnants of groups once much larger and more powerful.

One dwindling group now consists of only one woman and her son. Several others have been reduced to only four or five.

The practically unknown people of the upper Xingu River have just been visited and studied by a party from the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, and the Escola de Sociologia e Politica of Sao Paulo, Brazil. A description of their interesting lives and customs is contained in a Smithsonian report, "Indian Tribes of Northern Mato Grosso, Brazil," by Dr. Kalervo Oberg, anthropologist.

Although they live in constant fear of surrounding Indian tribes who are openly hostile, the people of the Xingu Basin have been called by missionaries the League of Nations because they have such peaceful and affectionate ways with each other and with the visiting scientists.

Dr. Oberg described the intimate conditions under which the head of the camp had to prepare his reports:

"Seated on a wooden bench, he was bent over a makeshift table and was calmly smoking a pipe and writing while two boys with their arms around him were seated on either side. In his lap he held a year-old child, with the mother bending over his shoulder and a few more children milling around his feet. To top it all, his favorite parrot sat on his shoulder and a bemtevi (a yellow-breasted bird about the size of a robin) kept hopping on and off his head."

"At first it was a little embarrassing," Dr. Oberg admitted, "to be completely surrounded by about 30 naked men, women and children, each of whom insisted upon opening our shirt fronts, putting their hands in our pockets, pulling out and examining each item, pulling up our trousers to feel the hair on our legs, or repeatedly untying and tying our shoelaces. After trying on my glasses and sun helmet, one Indian put his fingers to my mouth, wanting to know whether I could pull my teeth out."

The many different peoples of this region have some customs in common which set them off from other Indians. One such is the "uluri," a small triangular piece of cloth made from wood fibers.

Science News Letter, June 6, 1953

NUTRITION

Recipe for Potato Salad Served Ike

► YOU CAN serve your family potato salad from a recipe by the same experts who prepared the recipe for the salad served President Eisenhower at a Department of Agriculture research luncheon recently.

For the President and his party the potato salad was made from a recipe developed by the Bureau of Human Nutrition and Home Economics for school lunches and other large quantity cookery. Here is the same bureau's recipe for salad for four:

Ingredients: three cups cubed cooked potatoes chilled; one tablespoon minced onion; one cup thick salad dressing; one teaspoon salt; one-fourth cup chopped green pepper; one-half cup finely cut celery; one-fourth cup chopped pickles or cucumber.

Gently mix potatoes, onion, dressing and salt, taking care to blend well yet not break up the potatoes. Chill the mixture until serving time. Then add the rest of the ingredients, mixing lightly and adding more dressing if needed. Serve on lettuce garnished with tomatoes cut in wedges.

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