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ETHNIC FOLKWAYS RECORDS FE 4237

Music of the Miskito Indians of Honduras & Nicaragua



COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

SIDE 1

| | | |
|---------|--|------|
| Band 1: | "Tawalia di Pawalili Guiermo "KIYAT" | 2:52 |
| Band 2: | "Luniko Waikna" Guiermo "KIYAT" | 3:33 |
| Band 3: | "Simian" Guiermo "Kiyat" | 2:31 |
| Band 4: | "Communist Oulabi" Guiermo "KIYAT" | 4:29 |
| Band 5: | "Natinia Plikisna" Rex Cooper, Barley Daison | 2:32 |
| Band 6: | "Bal ta ki ta muni" Rex Cooper, Barley Daison | 4:15 |
| Band 7: | "Sirpi Mairin" Rex Cooper, Barley Daison | 4:56 |

SIDE 2

| | | |
|---------|---|------|
| Band 1: | "Nanalika a mah Kowni" Rex Cooper, Barley Daison | 4:29 |
| Band 2: | "Mna Kainam ra" Henrici Anderson, Colin Alvarez | 4:00 |
| Band 3: | "Norvil Norvil Norvilita" Henrici Anderson, Sebastion Wilson | 3:44 |
| Band 4: | "DuPali Padaling" Henrici Anderson, Sebastion Wilson | 2:48 |
| Band 5: | "Dawan" Maclauth, Papmo, Tellet, Enale Abe Triste | 2:40 |
| Band 6: | "Yang Sibrin Lukrasni Heavenra Dimamni" Maclauth, Papmo, Tellet, Enale Abe Triste | 2:38 |
| Band 7: | "Gloria A Dios me Libertad" Maclauth, Papmo, Tellet, Enale Abe Triste | 2:00 |
| Band 8: | "Asla Dauki Ai Mawan Ra" Maclauth, Papmo, Tellet, Enale Abe Triste | 1:58 |

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DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

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MUSIC OF THE MISKITO INDIANS OF
HONDURAS & NICARAGUA

--David Blair Stiffler

First contacted from the outside world by Columbus on his fourth and final voyage in 1502, the Miskito Indians have been able to maintain their culture despite the influx of a variety of different races by absorbing and integrating newcomers into their society.

Living on the eastern coast of Honduras and Nicaragua that faces the Caribbean Ocean in a territory named after them, the Miskito have developed a way of life directly linked to their reliance on the abundant wildlife that inhabits the rivers and ocean as well as the land that they cultivate in the tropical forests and clearings in the interior.

Formerly known as the Kiribi (Corobici), according to a legend (from Hale), the Miskito have had a history of being forced from their homeland.

Originally inhabiting the narrow isthmus between Lake Nicaragua and the Pacific coast, they were driven to the eastern shore of the lake by a tribe of immigrant Indians. About a century later they were again compelled to migrate, possibly by the Sumu or Matagalpa Indians, to a territory on the Atlantic shore where they felt at least they found a safe or permanent home. It was then that they gave themselves the name "DIS-KITWAS-NANI" meaning "they that cannot be dislodged" which was later corrupted into MISKITO.

The Spaniards made several attempts to take possession of the Mosquito Coast, but were unsuccessful and the natives were able to maintain their independence. (The Spaniards were in search of loot and since no gold was found and the Indians gave them so much trouble, they concentrated on the Pacific coast.) Later the English entered into friendly relations with the Miskito and gradually formed a protectorate over the area, which also became a refuge for the Buccaneers in their raids against the Spanish settlements. (The alliance between the English helped to expand their aboriginal territory and modified their culture. A Miskito governor

general was crowned King of the territory by the English partly to legitimize their own existence there.

In 1641, or there abouts, a wrecked Portuguese slave ship at Cabo Gracias a Dios introduced the Negro into the Bawihka-Mosquito culture. (The Negroes who were able to survive the wreck were captured and reduced to slavery, however they intermarried with their masters



COCO BILLA
Honduras

and their children grew up as freed members of the tribe.) The Miskito readily intermarry with foreigners and assimilate all races; the children always speak the language of the mother and grow up Miskito.

The neighboring tribes such as the Sumo, Rama and Paya are diminishing while the Miskito, owing to an influx of new blood, are holding their own and are even expanding due to improved economics and medical conditions. The Miskitos are often called "Zambos" by the Spaniards or ladinos, meaning Negro and Indian half breed.

There are five recognized Miskito dialects of which four are indigenous to Nicaragua: Wangki Bila, Tawara Bila, Baldam Bila and Kabo Bila while the remaining Mam bila live in Honduras.

Navigation on water plays an important factor in the commerce, survival and economy of the Indians. The ocean and numerous rivers are the life lines to

the Miskitos and they have built special types of boats or dugout canoes suited for each purpose: The pitpan or flat bottom canoe, narrow with a thick bottom in order to sustain rough handling over the rocks at rapids and falls are particularly fitted to navigate shallow creeks and streams.

The Dori or keeled sea canoe used to navigate the ocean is heavy and cranky, (usually cut from a single tree), is hollowed out with an adze, usually attains a length of 40 feet and is a fast sailer.

The Miskito on the coast are excellent and courageous seamen and frequently accompanied the Pirates or Buccaneers on their voyages in their early days.

The Miskitos in the interior practice slash and burn agriculture and keep pigs, sheep, goats, cattle and horses. A plantation in the forest is made close to a navigable stream and generally is cleared out at the beginning of the dry season (February or March) by felling the trees with the exception of the large hardwood trees which are left standing. Toward the beginning of May the ground is prepared by burning the felled and dried brush and trees. Planting is done by both men and women. The harvesting is done by the females.

A practice which is dying out is the production of Bark cloth or Tunu, used previously for blankets and clothing and has generally been replaced by imported fabric. Bark cloth is made from the inner bark of a tree closely related to the rubber tree by soaking the bark and pounding it with a wooden mallet to obtain a soft, pliable consistency.

The chief food staples are manioc, bananas and turtle meat. Traditional Miskito practices have been largely replaced by Christian ritual, however, there still exists a rich lore and tradition in the Miskito culture.

The prior religious system of the Miskito has disintegrated although they have always had a belief in a Supreme Deity called Wan-Aisi or "Dawan" meaning master or Lord. They have also had their various supernatural tribal heroes that they considered to have lived on the earth formerly as men, such as the following: The Sun--Yu; Thunder--Alwani; the Moon--Kati; rainbow--Kumadora; the Stars and planets--Slilma; and the Pleides--AP Pup-wihta.

According to a myth a bright planet called by the Miskito, Kati-Maya, "The Moons Wife" which seen just above the new moon, was originally a girl who was raised by her fingertips by UDO, the moon god.

Prior to Christianity, Shamanism was widely practiced and the shaman or Sukya held an important position in the community; his chief function being one of a healer or curer, and a diviner of poisons and recoverer of lost or stolen goods. Cures were achieved by first dreaming the diagnosis then singing and blowing smoke over the affected area.

Group ceremonies were conducted and were comprised of dancing with extensive drinking of an intoxicating beverage called "mishla." Funerals and rituals called "Sikro" took place one year after death to commemorate the dead.

The Supreme Sukya, equivalent to a pope (there could only be one at a time), who was revered even by Indians of other tribes, was called the "Okuli" (the last one died at the end of the 1800's). His special position was that of a representative to the "Lasas" or evil spirits controlling thunder and air. (The God of wind and air called Aubya, sends the hurricanes and great inundations which destroy the plantations and kill the live stock.) Alwani was confused with God among the heathen Miskito. According to some, he created the world and governed it by the seasons; others say that he lived on earth formerly and was the first man. When it thunders it is to warn man that a flood is coming. Some Indians wear a Kangbaiya or charm to guard the body. The Indian is, however, reluctant to reveal his religious ideas, especially if he expects ridicule. Today, where the shaman or traditional practices are performed, they are done in private.

The "Spirit Healer" who makes the sign of the cross uses Christian concepts (calling on Christian supernaturals such as angels and sings Christian hymns). The spirit healer beats upon the patient's body and is seized with shaking through the presence of spirits.

Dreams are taken quite seriously and are used as a method to converse with the deceased or absent.

The Christian concept of the devil is equated with the "lasas." Many consider Easter and Good Friday

as times when supernatural forces are most likely to be encountered.

The Shaman has largely been replaced with the "lay Pastor." At this time, three major evangelizing forces are at work in Mosquitia: the Anglican, the Catholics and the Moravians. The latter has the greatest influence and popularity. The Moravian or Unitas Fratrum, who first came to the coast in 1849 have succeeded in evangelizing most of the Miskito in church and in school.

The effect created upon the Indians has largely been a positive one. They serve as a unifying factor in the villages and provide much needed medical help and care. The most important facility is located in Ahuas and is run by Dr. Gerald Marx.

Today the Moravians also operate an airline within Mosquito territory from Ahuas, which is part of the worldwide missionary Aviation fellowship. (In Honduras it is called "Alas de Socorro"--or "wings of hope".) The airline provides emergency airlift and evacuation as its priority but manages to serve in a commercial capacity to help cover maintenance and operating expenses.



COCO BILLA
Honduras

The missionaries have introduced certain cash crops and other elements into the society geared to improve the standard of living. The Population is now growing due to the reduction of infant mortalities and better medical care.

Today friction caused by the political instability throughout Central America has had its effect on the lives of the Indians. The controversy arisen over

the exact border and territory between Honduras and Nicaragua has caused ill will and death. The Miskito culture, never becoming fully integrated with either the Honduran or Nicaraguan society (Ladino), has had to bear the consequences of the political situations and conflicts.

An arbitrated settlement of the border dispute or the "Traslado" by the World Court in 1960 has caused forced relocation and has aggravated the long-standing prejudice against the Spanish by the Misquito. In Nicaragua, Cuban medical specialists have replaced the Moravian general practitioner in the hospital, causing some distrust. (While the Miskito have always trusted the English-speaking people, they always felt that the Spanish-speaking only wanted to take advantage of them.)

The Nicaraguan government is concerned with Indian problems and has periodicals in the Miskito language aimed at creating a greater unity. The Miskito's natural aversion to the Spanish will, however, make this a difficult transition.

The music recorded herein was recorded at two basic locations: the first at Ahuas near the Patuca River in Honduras--first on a Saturday night in an open field, while the religious music was recorded in a church on Palm Sunday at choir practice and later that evening at church service (which consisted entirely of singing). The last selections were recorded at Cocobilla on a narrow and very beautiful stretch of beach that faced the Caribbean ocean and backed a beautiful lagoon with a large and picturesque mountain looming in the distance. The village conjured up images very reminiscent of Gauguin's adventures in the Pacific South Seas.

The composition of the songs were generally spontaneous narratives with lyrics made up on the spot and usually the theme was some common or personal situation or about some love affair or one's attitude toward life.

The church music is clearly evident and the theme is one religion and salvation wonderfully brought alive by the harmonies.

Much of the music defies translation (the meanings are obscure) as traditionally, Miskito music utilizes antiquated phrases and expressions.

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Recorded in April 1981 with a Sony TCD5M stereo
by David Blair Stiffler

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Side 1 Band 3.

"Communist aulabi" (is coming) "Guiermo "Kiyat"

damra wals - you better watch out
saurakiri - very bad
they are ruining the lord's name
communist are coming in
Their name is sandinists
bad rules they are bringing
they are oppressing the Miskito
they are killing the Miskito
they are killing the sumo (indians)
they have very good rifles
they didn't bring food
the miskito are hungry and are dying
Nicaragua is ruined from the time they came in
no medicine just guns
for a long time a bad law will be there
listen get up we don't want communist in the miskito land
get rid of them, they come to Nicaragua
don't let them come to Honduras we don't want them in Honduras
Just to kill, should be aware that this is all they bring
is to kill

Band 4

"Simian"

"Kiyat"

song about a man his name is Simian Coleman
"Simian is coming under your coconuts
under your mosquito net
he's bad and tells lies, he is not very nice
get him (pleik aus)
lie to the woman, dance and all kind things."

Band 5

"Natimia Plikisna"

Rex Cooper, Barley Daison

looking for something all day and all night
(Obscure meaning)

Side 1. Band 6 Rex Cooper

"Bal ta ki ta ba muni"

Song of hardship and despair

Bal ta ki ba muni
ai aisisi wara
pri tam ba bou ki
ai kyki kabra
Bal ta ta ba muni
Bal ta ta ba ai yi
man sau ra dakrum ya
tani tani man daukrum nan
my ky kil mi wisiki
dalkan man mai wisiki
tams bakum dalkan man

Pruiaaya Camara

my looki
natim yah minerera
man kum ya puikranma
wapi ba
mai ky ki
yang man kai kainamra
koupi wa

Band 7

"Sirpi Mairin" (small girl) Rex Cooper, Barley Daison

she is no good
you ask me
I went to your house
all I have done is carry your sorrow
he is sad he is crying because she is so bad
I liked you when you were small
I liked you better when you grew
He liked her and she turned out no good

Side 2

Band 1.

"Nanalika a mah Kowni" "Bal Taki ai manra ai aisis waraw"

You left after you had talked to me
I am giving you a bad law



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Band 2.

"Mna kai nam ra" Henrici Anderson, Colin Alvarez

Big room in front of you
the time passed and you didn't come
I came to your door like an old frog
my mother died, I was an orphan when I was small

Band 3.

"Norvil Norvil Norvilita" Henrici Anderson, Colin Alvarez

The song is about a girl named Norvil (Goff)
who was training in the village and then left.

Norvil norvil Norvilita mairin ka mairin ka
Nampa ba tas ay kara kumi byi kris wankar
manki ay wisiki mybri by warikar
bilwas ba piskara mybri by wari kar
taimki by daukri kai em sero sero
nampa by lilksi kuliswaba by yapiakan
nampa by lilksi plakasinki by yapiakan
nampa by lilksi kurislana by yapiakan
bibil lis waldi man mamka bi waldi
zoran priwaldiman mamka bi waldi
e lakwa waldiman

Band 4.

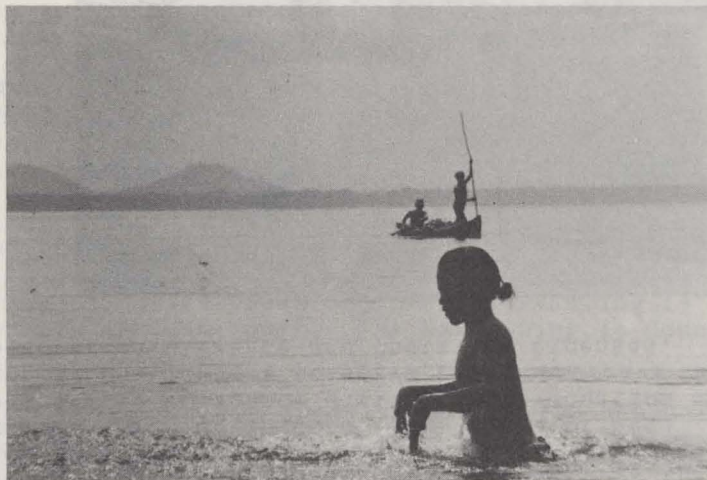
"Du Pali pa Daling" Henrici Anderson, Sebastian Wilson

sood pandgin pa grawi
ay munta diwas pa gin pa rawi mangara manlukyanma
du pa dali
ya papaprin pa grawi
ya papa prin mama mairin na kee
ya papa prin paisni mairin na kee
ya papa prin daling mairin na kee

Band 4. (cont.)

Yabara ba bawi ki papa mairin na kee
Yabara ba wi ki taki mairin na kee
Yabara ba wi ki rapi mairin na kee

no literal translation of dupali
The boy asks for the girl's hand from the mother, father.



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Band 5.

"Dawan"
or Lord

Rosulo Maclauth, Neda Papmo, Priscilla Tellet,
Pastor Enal Abe Triste

Dawan man pri ai sakram
Yarka man uplikam walia
wayunia
nanara yang pri

Lord you set me free
Oh that your people would listen
and praise you
now I am free

Band 6.

"Nabris Krasni" "Yang Sibrin lukrasni heavenra dimamni"

Rosulo Maclauth, Neda Papmo, Priscilla Tellet,
Pastor Enal Abe Triste

I have no fear I'm going to heaven
Yang Saurki nani Dikansa
All of my sins have been forgiven and erased
Trostki aibapaan
At the end I will have no fear
Ai talia Laikan sa - he poured his blood
Yang wini winbiz - he will call me
Ai laka daukana - I'm going to do his will

Band 7

"Gloria a Dios me Libertad" (in Spanish)

Rosulo Maclauth, Neda Papmo, Priscilla Tellet,
Pastor Enal Abe Triste

Glory to God he has set me free

Band 8

"Asla Dauki Ai mawan ra "

Rosulo Maclauth, Neda Papmo, Priscilla Tellet,
Pastor Enal Abe Triste

We will be made one in his presence
Christ's second coming we will be gathered in it.



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