

YAQUI DANCES



The PASCOLA MUSIC of the YAQUI
INDIANS of NORTHERN MEXICO

Recorded by SAMUEL B. CHARTERS
Notes by JEAN ZEIGER

FOLKWAYS RECORDS, N. Y.

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1957

MUSIC LP

YAQUI DANCES

HERAGUA LOQUO: Vera Cruz dance. Harp and Rattle

PALOMA. Harp

PAPUSA. Harp and Violin

MUNDO. Harp and Violin

AGUEDADA. Harp and Violin

PALOMA. Harp and Violin

MARIA LORETA. Harp and Violin

Harp and Violin

DESCRIPTIVE NOTES INSIDE POCKET

FOLKWAYS RECORDS FW 6957

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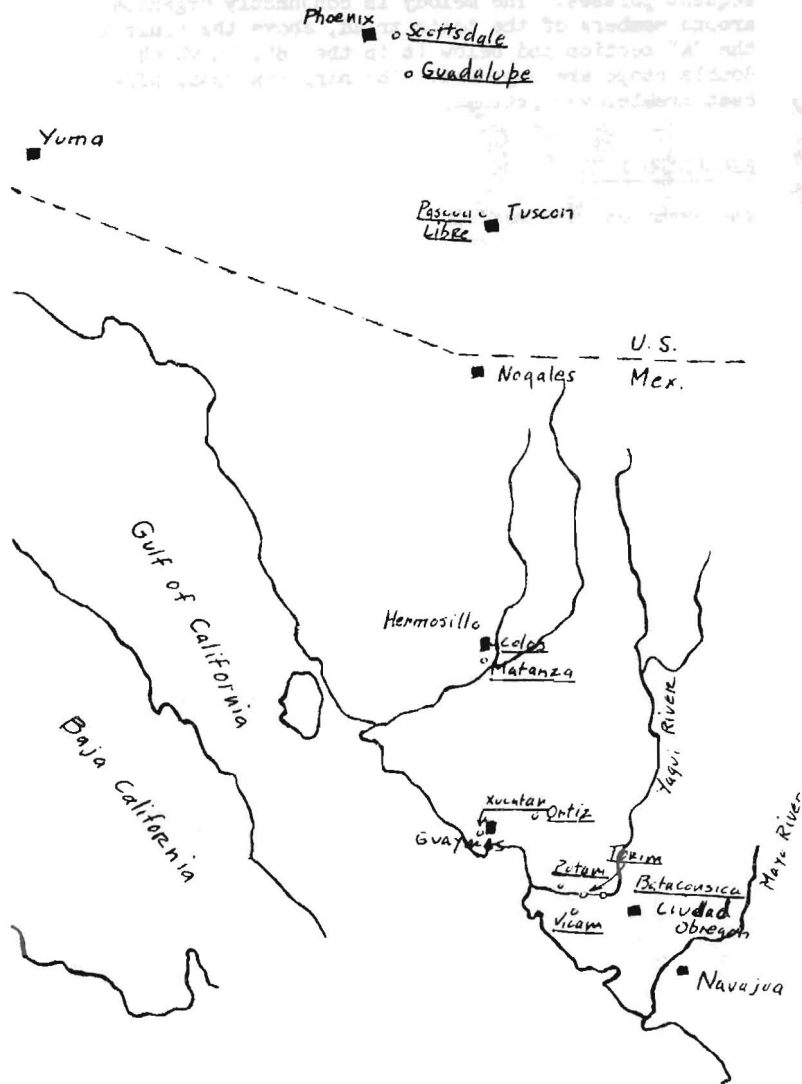
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MAXIMILIANO VALENCIA - HARP
RAYMONDO LORI - VIOLIN



PRINCIPAL YAQUI SETTLEMENTS, ARIZONA AND SONORA, 1947

Yaqui settlements underlined. From Spicer. see bbl.

The Yaqui Indians of the state of Sonora in northwest Mexico are a strong, proud desert people living as farmers along the banks of the Yaqui River in central Sonora. The villages are scattered between the towns of Ciudad Obregon and Guaymas, and the Indians use both towns as market centers. They are given respectful attention by the townspeople. They have been peaceful less than thirty years and are still armed. They stand by themselves in the markets; tall, slim people, with light skin and fine dark eyes. A few of the older people live in the towns, usually men who are not able to work in the fields.

A Yaqui in his fifties named Maximiliano Valencia lives in Guaymas. He took part in the 1927 rebellion, was captured, conscripted into the army, and sent to the state of Vera Cruz with thousands of other Yaquis. He learned to play the harp in Vera Cruz, where it is a popular instrument, and brought it to Sonora. He plays the traditional music of the Yaquis on the harp. The harp has become so popular in Sonora that harp and violin have almost replaced the older flute and drum in Yaqui music.

I first met Maximiliano on a hot Sunday afternoon outside of Guaymas. He was carrying his harp and there were two small boys with him carrying a cloth bag filled with rattles. They were going to play in the lobby of a hotel on the beach, to try and earn a little money. He was a bulky, strong looking man, with a deep scar across the left side of his face. He was wearing a faded cotton shirt, work trousers, and hide sandals. He talked easily, in heavily accented Spanish. In the next few weeks he became a good friend, and recorded two groups of Yaqui music in Guaymas. The first group was recorded with harp and rattles, the second group with harp and violin. The violinist was a younger Yaqui man from a village near the river. He spoke no Spanish. Maximiliano sent word to him through Yaquis marketing in Guaymas, and two days later he reached Guaymas, late in the afternoon, wearing his best clothes and without a violin. Maximiliano rented a violin from a local mariachi musician and they played into the darkness; until the mariachi man came and got his violin so he could go to work. People in the neighborhood stopped a moment to listen to them play, passing on the news. "Yaquis . . Yaquis."

The Yaqui Indians were flourishing in pre-colonial times, guarding their land on the northwest coast of Mexico with a fierce zeal that impressed even the Aztecs. They were evidently not hostile to outsiders, for the Jesuits later converted about half the tribe,

praising their loyalty and honesty. As in other areas, the Jesuits worked with the existing culture, adapting indigenous customs to Christian purposes and superimposing Christian beliefs on a pagan society. It was in this period, the late 17th century, that the cultural traditions which are now known as Yaqui crystallized.

These traditions were modified during centuries of conflict with the Mexicans and by the end of the 19th century had become a distinct adaptation of the common culture. It is this mixture of aboriginal Indian, 17th century Spanish, and Mexican that the Yaquis now consider their priceless cultural heritage.

After the Jesuits were removed in the 18th century the Yaquis carried on a series of wars with the Mexican government. They fought to keep their traditional lands and to establish an independent Yaqui nation. This was a continuing source of friction between the Yaquis and the government. In 1886 they were decisively defeated and their leader, Cajeme, executed. Many of the Indians were shipped to farms in Sonora to work as slaves. A few carried on guerrilla warfare from the rugged Bacatete Mountains; some became peaceful farmers in the Yaquis River valley. By 1900 the Diaz government had decided to eliminate all Yaquis, peaceful or belligerent. Many were killed; prisoners were sent to southern Mexico or to Yucatan, where the Yaquis quickly aroused the Mayas to revolt. The Yaquis in Sonora either fled to the United States, establishing settlements in Arizona, or continued fighting from the mountains.

The overthrow of Diaz in 1910 ended the military pressure, but thousands voluntarily left the area to join Obregon's revolutionary army. In 1900 about 20,000 Yaquis were living in the valley, and in 1920 only five or six thousand remained.

This number was further reduced by an unsuccessful clash with Obregon in 1926 and 1927, and the resulting conscription of the Indians for military service in Yucatan or Vera Cruz.

In 1936 the government had a radical change of heart, and personnel. The Cardenas government encouraged the Yaquis to return to their traditional pueblos on the river and to revitalize their culture. There are now about 10,000 Yaquis in the valley. They have returned voluntarily, in many cases leaving a more "advanced" culture, convinced that their own customs and beliefs are better than the others they have known.

The fusion of Spanish and Indian elements, and the diverse backgrounds of the present Yaqui group are reflected in their music. Only a small portion is "typically" Indian, with chant-like melodies and irregular rhythms. It is a blend of Indian, Spanish and Mexican music, made distinctively Yaqui by their fierce pride in their way of life.

All the music on this recording is probably of post-colonial origin. It is played on European instruments, and its metrical rhythm and tonal orientation are derived from European music. The Yaqui, however, maintain that this is Yaqui music, and no exception can be taken to this assertion in the light of the relatively small European contribution to traditions vigorously maintained as Yaqui. The music is used for Pascola dances. While ritualized, as are all Yaqui dances, the Pascola dances are the most secular of all Yaqui dances and may be performed for pay apart from religious ceremonies. They are accompanied either by the older flutes and drums, or by stringed instruments of European origin. Harp and violin, as in the present examples, are now most commonly used.

The dances are performed by a single male dancer who wears ankle rattles and an elaborate sash of metal rattles hanging from a wide leather band. Usually more than one dancer performs during a dance, but the dancer carefully unties the sash and hands it to the next dancer who ties it on before he dances. The dancing is a rhythmical stamping, strongly accented and quite fast. The body is almost motionless, the hands dangling at the sides, the head bowed. There are occasional hops and a tight brush step, but the dance is very closely limited. It is very different from the more widely known Yaqui dance, the Deer Dance. This dance is performed to drum, gourd scraper, and voice accompaniment, and is an elaborate, complex dance allegory. Folkways Record P413, Indian Music of Mexico, contains a fine example of the Deer Dance.

The harp used by Maximiliano is a type common in Vera Cruz. His instrument, a small one about three feet high made of Spanish guitar wood, was about sixty years old. Hand-made wooden pegs secured 27 commercial gut strings, tuned diatonically. In playing position the harp is tilted on two horizontal extensions of the body. In the sound-box is a hole in which money is put when he is playing on the street. Plucking the strings with long hard fingernails rather than the fingers may be a practice peculiar with Maximiliano. The added percussive quality gives considerable rhythmic definition. His concentration on the ostinato bass in the left hand, even in the harp solos, may be because of his habitual concern with the rhythm of the dancing of the two boys who perform with him on the streets.

The boys dance immediately in front of the harp, with heads lowered and arms hanging loosely. Maximiliano's son, Pipo, age 9, danced with ankle rattles made of cocoons. The larva are removed and shot or gravel inserted. The cocoons are sewn to narrow leather strips and the strips wrapped around the ankles and lower legs. Pipo was small, and they reached almost to his knees. The other

boy, Manuelo Garcia, age 15, used a sash of cocoon rattles and gourd rattles in each hand.

Raymondo, the violin player, and Maximiliano had rented the violin from a local mariachi musician. It was strung with gut strings, rather than the usual Yaqui set of steel strings, and had a much more resonant sound than the Yaqui instruments. He held it against his chest in typical "country fiddler" fashion. His right leg was crossed over his left, and the left elbow rested on his knee. He played with very few shifts of fingering positions. In the pauses between numbers he "noodled" in double stops, mostly sixths.

Many of the same musical characteristics may be observed in all the present selections, including that from Vera Cruz. Clearly tonal, they are closely allied to European musical tradition. An 'ostinato bass emphasizes tonic, subdominant, and dominant, or the modal degrees of submediant and supertonic. All are in major mode, with the use of the flatted seventh in the melody. None of the selections modulates.

The forms are varied or unvaried binary types, with alternation of two contrasting sections, ending with a "coda" of arpeggiated tonic. This final flourish seems to be characteristic and the players and dancers make a game of trying to finish together. There are often "bridges" between sections; multiple repetitions of a short melodic fragment in the treble over a bass ostinato.

Phrases, especially in the "A" sections, are usually of four or multiples of four measures, often a four-measure antecedent followed by a four-measure consequent phrase. Irregularity of phrase length may be achieved by overlap of 4-measure increments or by a "cadential" extension. Some of the music is constructed in phrases of 3 or 6 measures.

These dances are all clearly metrical with no change of meter within a piece. This is in contrast to many Yaqui songs, which exhibit a freedom from all the regularities associated with 18th century European music and are related to the non-Christian elements of Yaqui culture. The pieces chosen by the harp player are all in duple meter, with the exception of the Vera Cruz dance in triple meter. The return to tonic on downbeats emphasizes metrical regularity, while off-beat and syncopated treble adds rhythmic interest. Some of the pieces for harp and violin sound much like jigs, with the characteristic compound meter and phrase repetitions.

SIDE 1, Band 1: HERAGUA LOQUO: Vera Cruz dance. Harp and Rattle.

This dance, in lilting 3/4 meter, is one of the favorites for street dancing. Like the Yaqui "Jigs", there is no contrasting "B" section. It is a long series of 2-measure phrases - melodic variations in a typical off-beat treble over an unchanging IV-V-I ostinato. The boys take turns; Pipo dancing with anklets and Manuelo using the gourds.

PALOMA. Harp.

One of the favorite Yaqui pieces, this has the typical alternation of "A" and "B" sections, with a coda ad. lib. Each section is made of four measure phrases with an ostinato I-IV-I-V or I-II-I-V in the "A" section, while that of the "B" stress "modal" degrees II-VI. The treble of "A" is an off-beat pattern, with syncopated flourishes as melody for the "B" section.

PAPUSA. Harp and violin.

The simplicity of form and harmonic basis of the melody are evident. A triadic rise, then stepwise descent is contrasted with descending melodic lines. Melodic rather than harmonic contrast differentiates the material.

MUNDO. Harp and violin.

Another jig-like tune, which after a short introduction, consists of one repeated section. The melody begins high and descends to tonic, with many repetitions of a cadential figure. Double-stops in the violin thicken the texture.

SIDE 2

AGUEDADA. Harp and violin.

Although similar in its lively duple meter, this is not identical to the Aguedada played by harp alone. The modal-sounding "B" section is unusual in its four measure extension of the last phrase to balance the two four-measure sequences before it and in its subsequent overlap into the beginning of the next repetition.

PALOMA. Harp and violin.

Another version of the Yaqui favorite, with violin playing the melody. This is not so rigidly sectionalized, nor is the ostinato so rigid as in the harp version. Each section is made up of four measure phrases with many repetitions of melodic material. The melody, oriented around tonic triad, is more disjunct than those of the jigs and contains repeated notes.

MARIA LORETA. Harp and violin.

This jig-like piece, said to be about three hundred years old, is in binary form over ostinati of I-V or I-IV-V and II-V. The melody is a very simple conjunct line moving from the third degree to tonic and characterized by up-beat patterns and a snapping rhythm of short-long values. Octave transpositions of the sections, as well as additions of appoggiatura and rhythmic variations add interest to the repetitions. The final "coda" is a typical example of the improvisatory extension of tonic, with an element of follow-the-leader play.

Harp and violin.

This song-like piece is clearly differentiated into two alternating sections of complementary material, each divided into four measure antecedent and consequent phrases. The melody is conjunctly organized around members of the tonic triad, above the tonic in the "A" section and below it in the "B", in which double stops are employed. The harp has usual off-beat treble over ostinati.

RECORDING DATA

The examples were recorded in July, 1956 at 102 Ave. Serdan, Guaymas, Sonora. Harp, Maximiliano Valencia; rattles, Francisco "Pipo" Valencia and Manualo Garcia; violin, Raymondo Nocameya Lori. Pentron equipment, ElectroVoice 360 microphone. Tape speed $7\frac{1}{2}$ " per second. Recorded by S.B. Charters.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Historical material from Spicer in the American Anthropologist, no. 77: August 1954-April 1955.

