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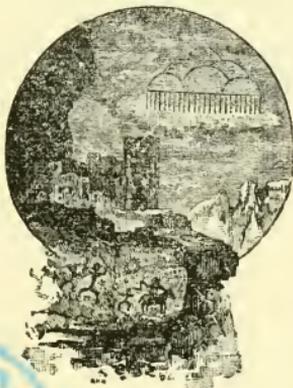
HANDBOOK
OF
SOUTH AMERICAN INDIANS

JULIAN H. STEWARD, *Editor*

Volume 1
THE MARGINAL TRIBES

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THE FULNIO

BY ALFRED MÉTRAUX

The *Fulnio* (*Carnijó*) are first mentioned under the name *Carnijó* in a document of 1758, when they lived in two villages under the Catholic priests (lat. 9° S., long. 37° W.). Little was known about them, however, until 1929 when a journalist, Mario Melo (1929), wrote a short first-hand description of the modern *Fulnio* of the district of Aguas Bellas (State of Pernambuco), near the Serra do Comonaty. Pompeu Sobrinho (1935 b) analyzed the few existing documents on their language—the *Iatê*—and concluded that *Fulnio* is an isolated tongue with no relationship to *Cariri*, with which it has been erroneously identified.

The modern *Fulnio*, mixed with Negroes and Mestizos, number about 700 persons (130 families).

The acculturated *Fulnio* preserve very little of their past culture. They live on the products of their fields and on the sale of a few basketry objects and cords of carua fibers. Children hunt birds with pellet bows and make simple traps.

During August, the *Fulnio* move their village to a circular clearing (ouricouri) where, under a sacred joazeiro tree (*Zizyphus joazeiro*), which women may not approach, the men meet to elect their chief. Perfect peace must prevail during the feast.

Puberty rites are celebrated in the clearing. That these ceremonies were complex is suggested by the names of special officers who presided over the different stages of the feast. One of the main festival events was the tolê dance, which modern *Fulnio* still perform in feather diadems and rhea-feather bracelets and belts. The chief performers are two men who dance, each with an arm over his partner's shoulder. They turn and jump to the time of a large and a small stamping tube, which they beat against the ground. Meanwhile, the spectators sing while two men shake their rattles. The dancers stop in front of two girls who follow, dancing around them. The various steps are named after animals (step of the urubú, step of the pigeon, step of the fish).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Branner, 1887; Melo, 1929; Pompeu Sobrinho, 1935 b.