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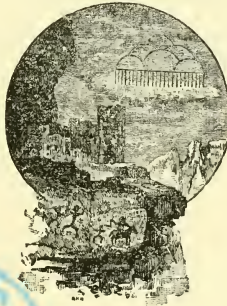
HANDBOOK
OF
SOUTH AMERICAN INDIANS

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Volume 1
THE MARGINAL TRIBES

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THE TEREMEMBÉ

By ALFRED MÉTRAUX

HISTORY

The *Teremembé* (*Tremembé, Tremembaiz, Taramembés, Teremembis*) have been erroneously classified in the *Tupí-Guaraní* linguistic family by Martius (1867, p. 197). Their language is unknown, but certainly differed from *Tupí*. Judging from the few data on their culture, they seemed to have belonged to the primitive tribes which occupied the Brazilian coast before the *Tupí* migrations. (Lat. 4° S., long. 40° W.)

In the 17th century, the *Teremembé* lived on the seashore from the mouth of the Gurupy River or of the Tury River in the east to the mouth of the Paranyha River. Claude d'Abbeville (1614, fol. 189) gives the Jaguaribe or Mossoró River as their western limit. In the State of Ceará they seemed to have lived mainly along the Acaraí River and in the Serra Grande. They were bitter enemies of the *Tupinamba*, whom they attacked whenever they could ambush them. In 1674, because *Teremembé* had killed shipwrecked Portuguese sailors, the colonists led a bloody punitive expedition against them (Betendorf, 1910, pp. 316-322). At the end of the 17th century the remnants of the tribe were settled by the Jesuits in missions. At the beginning of the 19th century the *Teremembé* were almost extinct. A few of them, mixed with the local population, lived in Nossa Senhora de Conceição d'Almofalla and in Villa de Sobral.

CULTURE

The *Teremembé* were nomad hunters and fishermen. They wandered in small groups along the coast carrying their bows and arrows, axes, gourds, and pots. They had spears tipped with shark teeth.

Like the *Canella*, they used crescentic stone axes, the famous "anchor axes" which have been found archeologically along the Brazilian coast. They employed these as battle-axes, but whenever they had killed an enemy with one they left it on the corpse. Yves d'Evreux (1864, pp. 141-142) gives some interesting data on the cere-

monial manufacture of these axes. At the first appearance of the crescent moon, the *Teremembé* spent a whole night shaping these axes, not stopping until they were perfect, because they believed that if they carried them to war, they could never be defeated. While men made these axes, the women and girls stayed outside the huts singing and dancing, their faces turned toward the crescent moon.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Betendorf, 1910; Claude d'Abbeville, 1614; Martius, 1867; Pinto, 1935; Studart, 1931; Yves d'Evreux, 1864.