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The Central Arawaks

In 1913, ethnologist and explorer William Curtis Farabee set out to document the Arawak tribes of northern Brazil and southern British Guiana, a three-year journey that led him far into the unmapped regions of the Amazon River basin. His meticulous observations comprise *The Central Arawaks*, first published in 1918 and still one of the most comprehensive accounts of the peoples living along the northern tributaries of the Amazon River. The Wapisiana, Ataroi, Taruma, and Mapidian tribes numbered fewer than 1,500 at the time of Farabee's voyage; his detailed record of their daily life preserves a vision of these vulnerable cultures at a crucial point in their history, offering insight into their languages, social structures, and cosmologies. A testament to an ethnologist whose achievements were once hailed as 'monumental', this reissued edition also brings renewed attention to William Farabee, whose influence on Anglo-American anthropological exploration is still felt today.

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WILLIAM CURTIS FARABEE



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THE CENTRAL ARAWAKS

BY

WILLIAM CURTIS FARABEE

PHILADELPHIA
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PREFACE

The material presented in the following pages was collected during the first year of field work of the University Museum's South American Expedition, 1913-1916. The work was done under the supervision of Dr. G. B. Gordon, Director of the Museum, and with the assistance in the field of Dr. Franklin H. Church, Sr. Joaquin Albuquerque and Mr. John Ogilvie.

The Arawak tribes, whose culture, somatic characteristics and language are here recorded, are in contact with numerous other tribes whom we visited and whose study will be presented at another time. As this is the first time that any detailed account of this group of tribes has been attempted, no doubt many mistakes have been made which will remain for future students to correct. The somatic data and much of the ethnological and linguistic material are based upon personal observation: the rest of the material was obtained from Mr. H. P. C. Melville and Mr. John Ogilvie or through them as interpreters. Mr. Melville has lived among the Wapisianas and Atarois for twenty-five years, Mr. Ogilvie for fourteen; both know the Indians intimately, speak their language perfectly and are reliable observers.¹

¹ For other published material from this expedition see:

1. The Museum Journal, Vol. VI, No. 1, March, 1915.
2. The Museum Journal, Vol. VII, No. 4, December, 1916.
3. The Museum Journal, Vol. VIII, No. 1, March, 1917.
4. The Museum Journal, Vol. VIII, No. 2, June, 1917.
5. Some South American Petroglyphs, Holmes Anniversary Volume, pp. 88-95, Washington, 1916.
6. A Pioneer in Amazonia, Bull. Geog. Soc. of Phila., Vol. XV, No. 2, April, 1917.
7. The South American Indian in relation to his Geographic Environments, Proc. Amer. Phil. Soc., Vol. LVI, pp. 281-288, Philadelphia, 1917.
8. The Central Arawaks, Am. Jour. of Phys. Anth., Vol. I, No. 4, 1918.

It gives me pleasure to take advantage of this opportunity to acknowledge my indebtedness to the following persons who contributed so largely to the success of the expedition: To Dr. G. B. Gordon, Director of the Museum, and to the Board of Managers for their liberal support and hearty coöperation; to Dr. Franklin H. Church, surgeon of the expedition, who not only looked after the health of our party but also administered to hundreds of Brazilians and Indians along the way; to Sr. Joaquin Albuquerque, who saved me money, time and trouble in dealing with the perplexing problems of transportation and labor; to Mr. H. P. C. Melville, Magistrate and Protector of Indians, for most valuable information and assistance and for many important photographs; to Mr. John Ogilvie who assisted in obtaining photographs, physical measurements, astronomical observations, language, etc., and whose knowledge of the interior made our journey to the forest tribes possible; to Mr. B. W. Merwin for working out tables and indices of the measurements and for proof-reading.

WM. CURTIS FARABEE.

June 12, 1918.