

ETHNOLOGY

Tribe Has Strange Ways With Brides and Killers

Bridegroom Does Not See Bride Until They Have Been Nine Days Married; Young Girls Kept Locked Up

NEWS of a tribe that has strange ways with murderers, and stranger ways with brides, is brought by Dr. Vincenzo Petruccio, anthropologist explorer of the University Museum, recently returned from leading an expedition into Venezuela.

Protection of a powerful chieftain made it possible for the expedition to spend three months in actual contact with this little-known people, the Guajiro Indians, Dr. Petruccio declared in an exclusive interview. The expedition was conducted jointly by the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania, Columbia University and the Latin American Institute.

A Guajiro Indian of high degree pays a great deal for his wife—whom he has never laid eyes on, Dr. Petruccio learned. Marriageable girls are kept locked up, seen only by their families. At the marriage ceremony, the bridegroom still does not behold his bride. Nine days later, he sees her for the first time by daylight, although he has spent the nine nights after the ceremony with his wife, entering and leaving the room in darkness.

Guajiro Women "Go Modern"

But even Guajiro women are going modern, for Dr. Petruccio was told that this marriage custom is slowly being broken down by the women themselves.

Guajiro methods of handling crime were also found unusual. If a member of a Guajiro clan slays a member of another and friendly clan, it is the duty of the murderer's own clan to execute him. No disgrace is attached to such an execution, and the clans remain friendly. Failure to deal out justice in this way, however, is a signal for sharp reprisal. The group victimized by the murder sets out to kill the murderer's entire family, except the children, whom they take as slaves.

Originally, Guajiros lived by gathering wild plants, hunting, and perhaps some farming, Dr. Petruccio reports. But after Europeans brought horses, cattle, donkeys, sheep, and goats into South America, the culture of these Indians changed. They are now pastoral, farming a little

when there are rains in their sandy, semi-desert country.

A Guajiro measures wealth by the size of a man's herd and flocks, said the anthropologist, and these are acquired chiefly for social display at funeral feasts. Thousands of animals may be killed to feed the multitude of guests at one of these occasions.

Guajiros rival Arabs in horsemanship. In fact, Dr. Petruccio ranks Guajiro riders among the greatest horsemen of the world. Racing is their great sport, and they breed horses especially for that purpose.

ARCHAEOLOGY

Old Stone Age Men Were Farmers, Says Archaeologist

EUROPEANS were farmers back in the Old Stone Age, is the claim of an Austrian archaeologist, Col. F. Muhlhofer. He explored an Austrian cave inhabited in that chilly time, and found charred wheat grains in quantity. The wheat is botanically identified as a dwarf wheat particularly suited to rough climates such as the advance of glaciers from the North in those days imposed.

If men planted this wheat, then farming goes back thousands of years earlier than supposed. Heretofore, man has been credited with "discovering" agriculture no earlier than about 10,000 B.C.

Grain found in such early households would ordinarily be taken for wild grain, gathered and stored as food. But the Austrian archaeologist declares that paintings in the cave support his theory that the grain was planted.

Like many cave men of Europe, inhabitants of this cave painted and etched pictures on the walls showing bison, horses, and other figures. These are usually interpreted as hunting scenes.

But Col. Muhlhofer thinks in this case the cave art is a variation of the modern

Guajiro Indians never travel alone. A chieftain goes about with half a dozen well armed retainers, and if the trip is a long one and the chief very important, this body-guard may be increased. Important women likewise travel accompanied by large retinues of servants and slaves.

The University Museum expedition found, along the sea coast, numerous cemeteries of a race that inhabited the peninsula before the coming of the Guajiros. Digging into some of the graves revealed skeletons painted red.

This, Dr. Petruccio explains, means that these ancient people practised secondary burial. That is, they buried their dead twice, digging up a body after it had been reduced to a skeleton and painting and reburial of the bones.

Pottery that these earlier inhabitants made was found with the burials. The earlier people lived largely on mussels from the sea, Dr. Petruccio infers from finding great heaps of shells and from their nearness to the shore.

Science News Letter, February 8, 1936

scarecrow that frightens birds and beasts away from the farmer's corn.

The pictures are like this—judge for yourself: An array of points represents the planted field, by the archaeologist's interpretation. Numerous red hands and arrows are meant to prevent animals from entering man's fields. A horse coming too near the points is shown shot by an arrow. A bison approaches the field without regarding the red hand. In the next picture the bison turns and runs with an arrow in its body.

Such pictures, according to the theory, are not unlike modern safety-first posters. They seem to be a course in visual education for the animals: stay away from our fields, or else—!

As they are inside the cave, they could not be ordinary scarecrows for the animals to see, literally. Col. Muhlhofer thinks that the idea was similar to the cave man's sympathetic magic tricks for good hunting. That is, he would reproduce with art in his cave the event he wished to duplicate in real life with the animals, and then by religious or magic rites, the art scenes were expected to get results.

Science News Letter, February 8, 1936