

*The Apinayé, one of the Gé tribes of eastern Brazilia*

*The following experience was told to the anthropologist Curt Nimuendaju by an Apinayé village chief.*

I was hunting near the sources of the Botica creek. All along the journey there I had been agitated and was constantly startled without knowing why.

'Suddenly I saw him standing under the drooping branches of a big steppe tree. He was standing there erect. His club was braced against the ground beside him, his hand he held on the hilt. He was tall and light-skinned, and his hair nearly descended to the ground behind him. His whole body was painted, and on the outer side of his legs were broad red stripes. His eyes were exactly like two stars. He was very handsome.

I recognized at once that it was he. Then I lost all courage. My hair stood on end, and my knees were trembling. I put my gun aside, for I thought to myself that I should have to address him, but I could not utter a sound because he was looking at me unwaveringly. Then I lowered my head in order to get hold of myself and stood thus for a long time. When I had grown somewhat calmer, I raised my head. He was still standing and looking at me. Then I pulled myself together and walked several steps toward him, then I could not go any further for my knees gave way. I again remained standing for a long time, then lowered my head, and tried again to regain composure. When I raised my eyes again, he had already turned away and was slowly walking through the steppe.

'Then I grew very sad. I kept standing there for a long time after he had vanished, then I walked under the tree where he had stood. I saw his footprints, painted red with urucú at the edges; beside them was the print of his clubhead. I picked up my gun and returned to the village. On the way I managed to kill two deer, which approached me without the least shyness. At home I told my father everything. Then all scolded me for not having had the courage to talk to him.

'At night while I was asleep he reappeared to me. I addressed him, and he said he had been waiting for me in the steppe to talk to me, but since I had not approached he had gone away. He led me some distance behind the house and there showed me a spot on the ground where, he said, something was lying in storage for me. Then he vanished.

'The next morning I immediately went there and touched the ground with the tip of my foot, perceiving something hard buried there. But others came to call me to go hunting. I was ashamed to stay behind and joined them. When we returned, I at once went back to the site he had shown me, but did not find anything any more.

'Today I know that I was very stupid then. I should certainly have received from him great self-assurance (*segurança*) if I had been able to

talk to him. But I was still very young then; today I should act quite differently.'

Curt Nimuendaju, *The Apinayé* (Washington, D.C., 1939), 136-7