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THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

Australia. Governor-general

TERRITORY OF PAPUA.

ANNUAL REPORT

FOR THE

Year 1934-1935.

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THE NATIVE POINT OF VIEW.

A lot of books have been written of late by natives, which seem to me to have an especial value; for they give us a glimpse of what these people really think of us, and of the civilization which we are trying to impose upon them. Such books are *The Black Problem*, by Professor D. D. T. Jabavu, who is a B.A. of London, and a Professor of Bantu languages at the Native College of Fort Hare in South Africa; *An African Speaks for his People*, by P. C. Mockerie, a Kikuyu native from Kenya; *Man of Africa*, by Samuel Y. Ntara; and *The Autobiography of a Winnebago Indian*, by Paul Radin.

Mr. F. E. Williams, our Government Anthropologist, is now arranging for the publication of *Reminiscences*, by Ahuia Ova, a very well known native of Port Moresby, who has given the Government long and faithful service as Village Constable, and as Central Court Interpreter.

MR. F. E. WILLIAMS ON SORCERY.

The *Sociological Review* for April, 1935, contains a very useful article by Mr. Williams, entitled "Some Aspects of Papuan Sorcery." Mr. Williams winds up his article as follows:—"The punishment of overt sorcery is a temporary expedient, pending the happy, if far distant, time when wider education may make it unnecessary. But as an expedient I think that it is morally justified, and Papuan experience goes to show that it is practically effective."

ARTS AND CRAFTS OF PAPUA.

An appreciation of Art is one of the many gifts that have been denied to me, but the advantage which I lack has fallen to the lot of others; and included among these is our Government Anthropologist, who, at my request, has contributed the following on the subject of Papuan Art, and the desirability of preserving it:—

It is commonly agreed that we should do our best to maintain and develop the good features of native cultures as we find them, but this excellent rule, while often preached, is less often practised. The arts and crafts of the native villages represent what all would agree in calling a "good" feature. But while they languish, as they commonly do under the influence of European contact, we are mostly content with bewailing the loss and take no active measures to sustain or revive them. It is suggested here that by a definite policy of encouragement, in which Government and Mission combine, we may be able to restore the arts and crafts to their former standard, or even develop them along natural lines to a higher stage than they have hitherto reached.

The scheme here briefly outlined contemplates the training of young natives in the traditional arts and crafts and the introduction of the commercial interest as a necessary stimulus.

Under the first heading, that of Training, it is suggested that arts and crafts should be introduced into the curricula of the mission schools. However primitive and undeveloped they may be, each district has a number of specialities. Some people excel in wood-carving, others in the making of string bags, other in coconut carving, or bark-cloth painting, or bamboo poker-work, and so on. The missions that care to co-operate will naturally concentrate in particular on those arts and crafts that flourish (or used to flourish) in their own respective regions. It is not the idea to introduce foreign or European crafts, but to foster those of local origin. Further it is suggested that the traditional designs in all forms of decoration should be adhered to as closely as possible, and this for several reasons. First, the designs are admirable from the artistic point of view and possess an acknowledged fitness for the materials used and the things made; second, the native craftsman is already adept in their use and takes to them as a matter of course; thirdly, they are a distinctly Papuan possession, and it is essential to the scheme that the native should feel that he is at work on something of his own and take a pride in it; and, fourthly, there is the material consideration that when it comes to selling the goods, those with a definitely native stamp are likely to have every advantage over those which are merely made by a native after a European pattern.

There is no need to be ultra-conservative in this respect, however. Native designs, like all others, will admit of adaptation and development and it is hoped that they may be adjusted to new uses. Nor is there any need to stick too closely to the old tools and old materials if new ones, within the reach of the native, are found more suitable. Further, there should be room for co-operation between the trained native artisan of the Mission and the exponent of the traditional art of the village.

To give a concrete example. An occasional table turned out by a mission carpenter is merely a piece of native-made joinery. One carved with the old designs is immediately stamped as a piece of true Papuan work. The artist has a chance to express himself; he feels that he has contributed something that is definitely his own, both in a personal sense and also in what might be called a patriotic sense; and needless to say the table becomes more interesting and attractive to the buyer.

The teachers are to hand in the persons of these native artists and craftsmen who still survive to carry on the old traditions. The missions may be able to institute art classes in the schools under fairly free-and-easy discipline, and to employ such men as instructors. The European missionary need not, perhaps should not, interfere to any great extent, save to ensure symmetry and finish in the work done, to give some guidance where it is really needed, and to offer suggestions for the application of the old art to new forms. The things made would be, in part, purely native objects, for preference such as would make attractive curios, and, in part, objects of utility to Europeans produced by native techniques and embellished by native art, such as walking sticks, cigarette boxes, paper knives, dishes, bags, belts, mats, bead-work, pottery, and so on. There is hardly any end to the list of forms which imagination could supply. The work of instructors and pupils whether done in school or out of it would belong to them. If we can induce the villager, through purely aesthetic motives, to make and decorate objects of daily use as well as, or better than, he used to, then so much the better. But I think we shall do well to offer him a new incentive, viz., that of commercial interest, and this leads us to the second part of the scheme, the selling of the work done.

If it is of sufficient merit, and the owner wishes to sell, then we should do our best to sell it for him. This would

have happened in the old days under native custom. But this is mere conjecture on my part, and native opinion on sexual subjects is sometimes hard to understand. And in this particular instance the facts are complicated by the question of age. Age, with natives, is generally a matter of guess-work, and I have almost invariably found, where there is reliable evidence of age, that a girl is older than she looks. Dr. W. M. Strong, our Chief Medical Officer, tells me that his experience agrees with mine; he has written a very interesting pamphlet on the possibility of determining the age of children by their teeth.

A NOVEL BIRTH THEORY.

In the Abau district a married woman was suspected of having committed adultery, not, it appeared, without reason; for she was obviously about to give birth to a child, and the circumstances of time and place were such that her husband who was in gaol, could not be the father. However, she stoutly denied the charge, and explained that her condition was due to the action of her father-in-law, who had uttered the words "Bubuisa Abuisa" and so caused the expected birth. In this she was borne out by the father-in-law, who maintained that he could, by these words, cause any women to bear at least one child, and perhaps two; he had practised his art upon his daughter-in-law, he said, to pay her out for losing an axe of his.

It appears, however, that the husband is but moderately satisfied with the explanation, and that legal proceedings are probable.

ADULTERY AS AN OFFENCE.

For in Papua adultery is regarded as a crime when committed by two natives, though among Europeans we merely denounce it as a sin, and leave it at that, with a possible claim for damages in the Divorce Court. Adultery and Sorcery are among the very few instances in which native custom has compelled its recognition by the criminal law; and in punishing them as crimes we are acting in complete accordance with the principle of Indirect Rule. It appears that the same two offences have modified British law elsewhere (e.g., in Rhodesia) and in the same way (see *Modern Industry and the African*, by J. Merle Davis, pages 240-1.)

TRADE IN WIVES IN THE DELTA.

Adultery is punishable under a Native Regulation, and it appears that in the Purari Delta it is a common practice for a man to hire out his wife to another, and then, by threat of enforcing the Regulation, to exact a higher price than that agreed upon. The practice of hiring out wives may be derived from a similar custom called Amina, which is described by the Papuan Government Anthropologist, Mr. F. E. Williams, at page 210 of his book, *The Natives of the Purari Delta* (Government Printer, Port Moresby). The practice is defended by the husbands, and Ainka, one of the husbands, went so far as to say, "If the Government stop it our Gods will be wild and we shall die." It is curious to find that a similar reason was given by a Lake Murray native, who acted as guide to Messrs. Hides and O'Malley on the Strickland, as an excuse for head hunting; head hunting, it appears, is pleasing to Situmu, the God of the coconut people.

The explanation in the case of the Purari women, according to Mr. Humphries, Resident Magistrate, is that the gifts which they receive from their lovers are applied *in pios usus*—i.e. as offerings to the Kaiaimunu.

PUBLIC SPIRITED PAPUANS.

It is with great regret that I have at times to report occasional lapses from grace on the part of our Papuan fellow subjects, and instances of misplaced ingenuity, such, for instance, as contriving to open a Yale lock with the key of a meat tin; and it is with all the more pleasure that I have this year found two really good actions to put to their credit. One of these was the payment by Councillor Domingo of £6 out of his own pocket (if indeed he has one) to buy a tank for the people of his village of Panavaravan, and £6 is a lot of money for a native, representing, as it does a year's wage for a plantation labourer; and the other was the act of Sisia Vake of Port Moresby. This native was a carpenter and was in regular work at a wage of £5 a month, and he gave up his employment to take a contract for building an isolation hospital at Hanuabada. He lost money over the job, and when this was pointed out to him he said, "very likely. But I was not looking for profit. I wanted to build this hospital for my village."

Public spirit of this kind is not universal, even in the higher culture. It has been said that the psychology of the Samoans revolves round their stomach (see Keesing, *Modern Samoa*, page 29), and I have heard much the same thing said, though in less scientific language, of the Papuans.

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