

Peggy

For your interest - my reply.
Not, I fear, very helpful.
Stewart all the best.

164, Coulsdon Road,
Old Coulsdon,
Surrey Cr3 2LE

18th July, 1983

Weller 30/8/84

Professor J. Wren-Lewis,
47, Jalan Melor,
Taman Uda Jaya,
Ampang Jaya,
Selangor,
West Malaysia.

Dear Professor Wren-Lewis,

My difficulty in replying to your letter of June 28th which has been forwarded to me by Peggy Robertson is that I am at present working on a book on Dream Control for Allen & Unwin. This is based on my original unpublished book - the manuscript of which was mislaid during my absence in Borneo - and my own experience of writing a novel "Where Hornbills Fly" which was accomplished by a process of relaxation during the early morning call to prayer which called forth out of the unconscious a whole range of ideas which I could never have achieved by conscious, deliberate thinking. I cannot, obviously divulge in advance what I hope to publish, but, with this restraint in mind, I will answer your questions as best I can.

1. You use the term "Senoï" very freely. "Senoï", as I understand it, means 'people'. I have no knowledge of precognition from dreams among the Semai Senoi, only among the Temiar.

2. Perhaps a misunderstanding has arisen over the use of the words 'dream technique'. I have never seen any reference to such a term in writing; neither have I ever heard of Kilton Stewart. What he may have attempted to do was to rationalise Temiar behaviour, explaining it in his own psychological terms. Certainly, the Temiars themselves had no explanation for their dream sessions, apart from the need to heed spirit advice obtained in dreams. If any psychological explanation is needed, perhaps the nearest I can find to the Temiar state of mind is that of Professor Julian Jaynes in his book, "The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind" in which he suggests that primitive peoples and those who lived historically before the ancient Greeks, had no awareness of the 'ego' and merely reacted to advice from their Gods or from the priests who claimed to speak for their Gods. Jaynes does not mention the Temiars, but I imagine their minds are 'bicameral': they merely react to spirit voices heard in their dreams.

3. "Dream control" to me is an idea which I have superimposed on the Temiar experience of acting out their dreams. I am not an anthropologist nor a psychologist, but an ordinary writer who just happens to like the Temiar and was impressed

2.

by the way they spoke out their dreams each morning. It seemed to me this was a natural process, developed instinctively, like brushing your teeth every morning. It was not consciously contrived by the Temiars. In listening to them, sometimes giving me brief translations in Malay, I formed the view that they brought out everything from their sleeping minds, partly to get spirit advice - if any was going - and partly to make them feel more comfortable. Fears and guilt feelings were released in words spoken unselfconsciously. To them it was a kind of cleansing process and a lot of fun. I'm sure they felt better for it.

From my book on 'Trances' (Allen & Unwin Ltd) you will gather that I also felt they benefited greatly from the ~~xxxxxx~~ release of tensions made possible by trance dancing. It seemed to me that the Temiars had stumbled on a vital secret which, in my egoist state, I immediately applied to my own problems as a creative writer. Their example has been of immense help to me, but the 'technique' which I have worked out is entirely my own.

Your page 2. No. 2. I think my first visit was to the ~~Jend~~ Temiars at Kuala Betis, possibly in '52 or '53 when I walked all the way during the Monsoon from Gua Musang and lost my toe-nail in the process. I went with Tony Beamish in, I think, 1955 to a tribe up the Jendera River using a boat lent to us by Haji Bangs. On this occasion I organised the Temiar for filming while Tony shot the pictures. The film was called 'Timeless Temiar'. I do not have a copy. On the third occasion I went up a narrow river in Kelantan with a phyto-chemist to discover the Temiar names and uses of plants. I have plenty of pictures of the river and of the Temiars, but I regret I cannot remember names or places or how we got there. One or two of these pictures were published in 'Trances' and in the Readers' Digest Book of World Travel. Sorry to be so unhelpful.

No. 3. I spoke Malay to them at a simple level. The Temiar did not live in long houses.

No. 4. (a) They were casual but frequent. (b) yes; (c) No. (d) On three occasions their precognitive dreams were correct; otherwise I should not have been so impressed !

No. 5. Trance healing proved effective quite often but not always.

No. 6. Already dealt with.

No. 7. No. The manuscript is still with him unpublished. my book on Trances is long since out of print. You might still get it in Bangkok at a leading booksellers; otherwise it might be available at British local libraries and, of course, at the British Museum. As for "A Dream of Temiars", it was never published. Ernest Hecht of Souvenir Press advised against it. The manuscript was mislaid in one of my many moves to and from the Far East.

No. 8. No.

I imagine the Temiar 'dream culture' has by now disappeared.