

From John Wren-Lewis

c/o 1, Jalan SS 1/22B

March 13th 1983

Petaling Jaya

Selangor, West Malaysia

Dear Mr. Robertson,

I am writing to you at the suggestion of Ivan Polunin in Singapore, who assures me that you are the author of the enclosed notes. If by any mischance he is mistaken, I should be most grateful if you could give me any clues about the identity and whereabouts of your namesake, who must have been invovd with the Malaya Broadcasting Corporation during the same period as yourself. If you are the author, I should be interested in any recollections you can possibly give me of H.D.Noone and of his views on the subject of Temiar dream-cults. And in the hope that I am in luck here, I will explain my interest in getting this information.

First, to introduce myself - it is possible that you may actually recognise my name, since I did a great deal of broadcasting for the BBC Overseas Service in the days when you were involved in running it. At that time I was managing research for ICI, but did a lot of writing on the side about other things, mainly in the area of science and religion, though my broadcasts from Bush House were in the field of current affairs. In 1972 I left ICI and crossed the Atlantic to devote myself full time to writing and teaching, initially at the University of California, and I became heavily involved with the then burgeoning science of dream psychology through marrying Dr. Ann Faraday, author of two standard works on the subject. (She also did many broadcasts from Bush in the ~~early~~ early 70s, in Francis Crowdy's programme As I See It.) Our current visit to Malaysia is in pursuit of the truth behind the legend of the "dream tribe" of the Malaysian highlands, and you come in because the name of E.D. Robertson is being bandied about all over the United States just now as one of the major sources of information about this tribe.

The bandyers (if that is the right word) are the proponents of what is known as "Senoi dream control therapy", which is a million-dollar business that has grown up over the past decade on the basis of some writings put out by the late Kilton Stewart in the 1950. Stewart claimed to derive his theories from studies of the Temiar (actually just three very brief field trips) with H.D.Noone in the 1930s, but recent work in dream psychology has cast grave doubt on the wisdom of trying to control one's dreams along the lines he recommended, and at the same time the current anthropological experts on the Temiar (who normally don't read books on ~~R~~ pop psychology) have begun to protest that Stewart's ideas bear no relationship to Temiar practice. A million-dollar business doesn't take such challenges lying down, however, and the proponents of "Senoi psychology" are now trying to discredit such anthropologists as Dr. Benjamin of the National University of Singapore by arguing that he has seen only postwar Temiar, who have been brainwashed out of their old culture. Stewart was not alone, ~~in~~ they say, in attributing a unique dream cult to the Temiar before the war; he can claim the support of Noone, who was known as a careful ethnographer - but unfortunately Noone himself committed not a word to print on the subject of Temiar dreams apart from the enclosed notes. (The views attributed to him in Dennis Holman's books are virtually paraphrases of much later publications by Stewart). So the "Temiar Dream Songs" record has become something of a cult object, and the name of E.D.Robertson is cited as an independant witness that "It's all true" - a classic non sequitur, since no-one has tried to deny that the Temiar get inspiration for songs from dreams. One San Francisco writer, by the way, describes Robertson as Eric Davis's opposite number at the FMS Museum - ie., Noone's boss, though I find no



evidence for any such identification in the enclosed notes.

From all this you will see why those of us who are interested in that old-fashioned commodity, truth, are extremely interested to find out who E.D. Robertson really was - or is - and what he recalls about Noone and his ideas about the Temiar, especially about Temiar dream practices. If you are indeed he, do please write and tell us anything you can - and in any event I should appreciate at least a brief reply to this letter as soon as possible, since I am not sure that we can stay in Malaysia beyond the beginning of April, and our destination thereafter is at present uncertain. If a brief reply reaches me before ~~th~~ then, I shall by that time be more certain of our future plans and be able to let you have an address for further communications later. I am sending this letter via Tony Beamish, since Ivan Polunin could not find your address but recalls that you were a neighbor of Tony's in Cornwall. Ivan, by the way, asks especially to be remembered to Peggy.

To conclude (since I have now spilt over on to a second page despite all my efforts to keep this letter short), anything you can tell us about Noone would now be extremely interesting academically, since his whole interest in the "dream people" is beset by mysteries, and there are very few people still around who can cast any light on the subject. For instance, his brother's book The Rape of the Dream People (which is almost word for word the same as an earlier book, Noone of the ulu by Dennis Holman) states that Pat was all set to deliver a PhD thesis on Temiar dream psychology when war broke out, but Dr. Benjamin has searched the records at Cambridge and can find no trace of Noone being registered for a PhD, nor of any of the meetings at which he is reported to have read summaries of his thesis to the accompaniment of great acclaim. Again, Stewart says that at one of these Cambridge meetings, a professor asked Noone how he could be sure that the Temiar were giving him true reports of their dreams, whereupon Noone replied that he had heard them singing in their sleep and had verified that the tunes were precisely the same as the ones they claimed they had dreamed on waking. To dream psychologists this is a very mysterious statement, since it has now been scientifically established that the vocal muscles are paralysed during dreaming periods, allowing of nothing more intelligible than a strangled gurgle (sleep talking takes place during non-dreaming sleep). So we should be very interested, for example, to know if Noone ever told you this story when he was discussing Temiar dream songs. And we should also be quite interested to know the circumstances in which he wrote his part of the enclosed document - did he dash it off for you in the jungle right there when you made the recording, or did you have later sessions with him afterwards?

Looking forward very much indeed to hearing from you,

Yours sincerely

John W. Lewis