

From John Wren-Lewis

c/o 1, Jalan SS 1/22B

April 4th 1983

Petaling Jaya

Selangor

West Malaysia

Dear Mr. Robertson,

Thank you very much indeed for your prompt and cheering reply to my letter. Your generous offer to provide us with more information has been instrumental in deciding us to ask Malaysian Immigration for a further three months' stay here, which has been granted, so the above address will hold good for the further correspondence to which we now look forward with great interest.

First, let me say that we shall be happy to refund you for any reasonable cost that may be involved for you in copying reports or notes on your files, if you think they will be of interest. The main question here is whether you have anything that amplifies what we already have in the printed record-notes concerning Noone's views on Temiar dream culture, or which may cast light on his side of the story of his relationship with Kilton Stewart. We should also be interested in anything that reveals more of his views about the possible fate of the Temiar following an invasion. Other than that, I can only leave it to you to let me know what else might be available from your files that could be relevant, and I will let you know if I feel it is worth troubling you for it.

Second, as regards your general recollections of Noone from your forestry days; we should be delighted to have any personal impressions that you could jot down briefly, since the biographies by his brother and by Dennis Holman leave us with many puzzles about those years before 1939, and most specifically we should be interested in:-

- 1.) Do you have any recollections that may cast light on the mystery of the lectures he is supposed to have given in England in 1934 and 1939? Richard Noone says he was at Aldenham School on 25th May 1934 when Pat received a standing ovation for a talk which he later delivered to "the joint Oxford and Cambridge Faculty of Anthropology" under the title "The Dream Psychology of the Senoi Shaman," but there seems to be a good deal of evidence from other sources to support Kilton Stewart's claim that the two of them were trekking through the jungle at that time, and Sir Edmund Leach assures me that there was never any such body as the Joint Oxford and Cambridge Faculty of Anthropology. The only paper we can find any record of his delivering in England that year was in November, to the Royal Anthropological Institute, and it had nothing to do with dreams. If any of your memories would tell us just when he went on home leave that year you would help solve a mystery, and if you have any reports about that paper on dream psychology please send them at once!

As regards 1939, do you recall him saying anything about a PhD, or about a May Week meeting in Cambridge at which Frederick Bartlett himself made comments on his proposal to submit a thesis on Temiar dream psychology? This story is told in detail both by Stewart and by the Holman/Richard Noone biographies, but there are no traces of anything of the kind in Cambridge, not even of Pat's having registered for a higher degree. Sir Edmund says he was certainly never offered the Chair of Anthropology and Cambridge, as his biographers state. Have you any relevant memories or contemporary reports?

- 2.) Do you recall him saying anything about recording Temiar dream-songs while they were actually asleep? Stewart says (and the biographers

echo him) that Bartlett quizzed Noone at the abovementioned Cambridge meeting about how he could be sure of the veracity of Temiar dream reports, to which Noone replied that the dream songs they reported in the morning were the same as the ones he's recorded them singing in their sleep - a very puzzling statement in the light of modern knowledge about dream paralysis. (And precisely how would they have recorded them in those days?)

- 3.) Do you recall him saying anything about how long Stewart spent in the field with him? Stewart claims they were together in Temiar villages for five months in 1934-5, but Pat's own account in his 1936 paper suggests a short trip lasting not more than three or four weeks.
- 4.) Do you recall him saying anything about Temiar learning to turn hostile spirits into friendly familiars by fighting with them in their dreams? Or about Temiar children being taught that a dream-quarrel must be compensated for in waking life next day by giving gifts to the other party in the dream-dispute? Or that Temiar would even commit incest if instructed to do so in a dream? Or that they teach themselves always to pursue dream sex right through to climax?
- 5.) Finally, anything you can recall (a) about Pat's views on dreams or (b) about his opinions of Kilton Stewart, would be valuable.

Now as to your specific recollections about the recording of dream songs, I can introduce my questions by asking you to read the enclosed excerpt from a book to which my wife was asked to write an introduction last year while we were in India. The chapter from which the excerpt is taken contained so much nonsense about the Temiar that she insisted it be radically revised or removed before she could honestly comply, and the author agreed, but in the meantime the incident made us vividly aware of just how deep-rooted this nonsense has become in the U.S. since we were last there, and this made us decide to come to Malaysia. I have copied out the bits of the chapter which refer to you and the recording, and have been unable to refrain from expostulating about some of the obvious howlers, but am leaving it to you to comment in detail on this extraordinary extrapolation from what you wrote in those recording notes. Against this background, we have the following particular questions:-

- 6.) Were your own notes and Noone's written at different times and put together later? I ask because several paragraphs are so closely similar that I would be surprised at your writing them had you known what he was going to write. In fact we'd be very interested to hear the details of just when Noone wrote the notes and how he got them to you, seeing that he left for the jungle immediately after the recording.
- 7.) Is there any truth whatever in the story of news of Pearl Harbour coming through while you were making the recording, and of your being ordered back to K.L. while Noone was ordered into the jungle without a radio to arm the Temiar as guerrillas? No other story of those days says anything about plans to arm the aborigines.
- 8.) Do you have any information to confirm or refute the strange Gregory Bateson story, and if not, how does its feasibility strike you in the light of your knowledge of what actually went on out here in those days?

If you could possibly let us have your reply before the end of May we should be most grateful, since it may affect the work we have to do before we leave. Meantime, very many thanks again for your offer of help.

Yours sincerely

Jul We-C

P.S. Is my former publisher
Ben Glazebrook still a
neighbour of yours in Albany?

Excerpt from manuscript of a proposed book on "Dreams and the Creative Process" by a San Francisco Unitarian minister, for publication by the Paulist Press.

From a chapter entitled "The Story of the Senoi Dreamers."

"In November of 1941, the Japanese invaded Thailand and occupied that country after a brief struggle. For months prior to the Japanese move into Thailand, Herbert Noone had been working to persuade several of the scattered Temiar ladangs (sic) to come together for a tribal gathering where they would sing their best dream-inspired songs to each other, and allow these songs to be recorded. The Japanese invasion of the neighboring country to the North created great anxiety among the inhabitants of the F.M.S., but for Herbert Noone it was a further motivation to press ahead with plans for the tribal gathering and the recording session, since this might prove to be the last opportunity to engage in any such civilized pursuits for an unforeseeable length of time into a very uncertain future.

On December 3rd., the team of recording engineers from the state-run Malaya Broadcasting Corporation arrived in their truck full of equipment at the jungle hill station of Grik where the road to the Cameron Highlands ended (sic). In the forest beyond the permanent settlement (?) various Temiar bands had been gathering and building a ladang (sic) to serve as a setting for the singing. The radio team had been dispatched by Eric Davis, the Chairman of the M.B.C., at the request of E.D. Robertson, his opposite number in the FMS Museums - Herbert Noone's employer (as Field Ethnographer). It was a co-operative arrangement among government agencies that suited everyone - everyone, that is, except the Temiar.

E.D. Robertson takes up the story: 'The recording presented many technical difficulties.....and it was his remarkable influence with them that made recording possible.' (Note by J.W-L. At another place in the chapter, this last sentence is quoted again and attributed to "E.D. Robertson, Director of the FMS Museums.")

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"Towards the end of the recording session, word came through on the radio that the MBC team had brought with them that the Japanese had bombed the American bases in the Hawaiian Islands, and were invading in strength down the Malay peninsular from occupied Thailand. The radio engineers were immediately ordered to return to Kuala Lumpur, and at the same time, the emergency military authorities ordered Noone to return to the jungle with the Temiar and organize them into fighting units to resist the Japanese invasion. (?) Noone did so.

Another piece of this dramatic story came to my attention one evening in 1976 while having dinner with Gregory Bateson. I asked him a question about his assessment of the significance of the Senoi dream rituals, and we fell into conversation about his experiences with Herbert Noone. He and Noone had been friends, and Noone had served as best man ~~at his wedding~~ when he married Margaret Meade. Bateson recounted that almost immediately after the military authorities had ordered Noone back into the jungle to organize armed resistance, they thought better of it. They realised that Noone's rapport with the native peoples in all areas of the FMS, his knowledge of their languages and the things that motivated them to concerted action, all of that would be of much greater use in the military effort if Noone were closer to HQ organizing and arming the ~~whole people~~ native population as a whole.....Knowing of Bateson's friendship with Noone, the authorities proposed parachuting him into the neighborhood of Noone's camp so that the new orders could be relayed quickly....Bateson said he agonized over this decision for the entire night and eventually decided that his lack of experience in wilderness survival made it unlikely that he would survive.