

or bad. Gripped as we are with the romance of the noble savage, what little we know of culture history shows that change has been ever present—Carib has succeeded Gê, Arawak has succeeded or influenced Carib, and so on. If we are realistic in our studies of culture we know that change is universal and we cannot and should not seek refuge only in the study of past changes. It seems that changes in the next 50 to 100 years in the tropical forest area will be more significant and more far-reaching from the point of view of the human species in general than any that have gone before. Anthropologists cannot afford to ignore them.⁵⁰

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⁵⁰ To Dr. Alfred Métraux the writer wishes to express his appreciation for helpful suggestions made after reading this paper in manuscript.

PROFESSIONAL BEAUTIES OF NORMANBY ISLAND

By GÉZA RÓHEIM

NORMANBY ISLAND has a group of women and men whom we can only describe as professional beauties. Doketa, my *wari eas* ("song name", i.e. namesake) gave the following detailed accounts of these:

From Sawatupwa to Sigasiga the people are *Manibus* (man in the bush). They don't know this kind of thing. The people of Tubetube, Duau, Dobu and Ferguson Island know them.

The old people liked the *gomabwaina* (male beauties). Their growth had to be perfect from top to toe. It was an important point that the body should be slender, with the breast and trunk broad but the waist narrow. Their hands should not be very thin. Face and nose should be just right (*paru-paruna*). Their hair should be neither small nor big but just average and this kind of hair was called *kujagibat* (hair hard).

Gomabwaina must behave in certain ways. They don't eat much and they don't go to steal women. They don't joke and they don't deal with things in a straightforward way. *Omajamaja* (shame) is specially emphasized in their case. If they do go courting at least they don't put decorations on (feathers, paint, etc.) and they don't tattoo their bodies. They should marry only *sinebwaina* (female beauties). However some of them do marry ugly women because the latter have big gardens. In these cases the male beauty's friends will object and tell him to leave his ugly wife and marry one of the beauties. But he will reject them and stick to his wife, who takes good care of him.

At the time of my visit to Normanby Island these *gomabwainas* were evidently a thing of the past. None of my informants could mention a single person then alive who had been one. "Male beauties" seem to have been a secondary institution, possibly an imitation of the more important "female beauties" pattern. Male beauties had no distinctive patterns of sexual behavior. The main thing about them was that their group was proud of them. On this account the capture of a *gomabwaina* meant glory and was the supreme aim of all war parties. A story will illustrate this: Masasa was a *gomabwaina* at Gudamuri. The Dobu people came and captured him and put him in a canoe. His brother followed them, running along the shore and crying. He shouted to them, "Let Masasa go back and take me!" They replied, "No, we want him. You go back and look after your village." The narrator concluded: "Such a beautiful man has never been seen."

Doketa's account of the female beauties was as follows:

The growth of a *sinebwaina* is neither tall nor short but just right from top to toe. The side of her body is *weliweli* (lit. "straight round"). Her trunk is narrow with small but prominent breasts. Teeth, face, vulva and pubic hair should all be

small. They should not eat much because then they will be big and although they may still be beautiful in the ordinary sense of the word, if they are not small enough they cease to be *sinebwaina*. In this case they are *kesaejana* (middling ones).

Sinebwaina should not laugh loud or hang about but they should stop at home with their mother or sister. It is an important point that they must have intercourse with all men who desire them. The peculiar thing about them is that they must do nothing (like laughing) which might be regarded as in invitation. *Idi lojawe kapana inugeta* "Their love making coitus first". While other women have first the *kenokeno* (sleeping with their boy friends without taking their skirts off) a *sinebwaina* will begin acquaintance by having intercourse. After the first coitus they will lie with the man like other women. They don't marry anybody but wait for an *esaesa* (rich man).

Gimwagimwareja, now a widow with a decided reputation for being a *sogara* (woman who desires men) says that the *sinebwaina* does not care to have intercourse with everybody, especially not with ugly men. When the *gwari* (group of men going from house to house in search of a girl) comes she only accepts pretty men. *Sinebwaina* do not smile and they should be small. They eat very little in order to remain thin, only half a yam a day.

There is a great difference between a *sogara* and a *sinebwaina*. The *sogara*, who is regarded as we regard prostitutes, is a woman who takes the initiative. She goes to a man or follows him. There is also a great difference between a *sinebwaina* and a *sine-kubu-kubu toa* (lit. "woman bottom stop") who is her antithesis. The latter is a woman so ugly that she avoids men through fear that the people will make jokes about her. The *sinebwaina* is passive but assured of her charms. "Ordinary women have bad vulvas and so are ashamed but the *sinebwaina* has a good vulva and so gives it for nothing. Ordinary women frequently reject us, but a *sinebwaina* always wants intercourse when she sleeps with a man." The last refers to courting customs; women will frequently sleep with men without having intercourse.

The *sinebwaina* sits at home in her house. Whoever comes to her, young or old, she accepts because if she refuses anybody she is not a *sinebwaina*. She cannot tell them to go back because her fame would suffer. When away from home she will not talk to anybody and will run away from people who laugh. However, if a man finds her on the road he will catch hold of her and say "Today I will come to you!" "Very good", she replies. Then the man gives her shell money. She will be ashamed or angry if people call her a *sinebwaina* openly but will be glad if she overhears them doing so. She will say to her lovers: "Let us have intercourse and then the men will talk about me and the people will hear my name."

A somewhat similar institution seems to exist in the Trobriands, where



NE DOJARA

"Professional Beauties of Normanby Island"

such women are called *naminabaita*. Having a daughter who is *naminabaita* is connected with the custom of *ula tilava* (paying for compliments). A man goes to another and says: "Your daughter is a beauty!" The father must give him something or he will take the child.¹ The same rule holds if a man is good at carving or dancing and another tells him that he is.²

Ne Dojara, a woman who used to be a *sinebwaina*, related the story of her life as follows: "We had *sapisapi* (shell string necklaces) and *ane* (scented flowers). Mother told me I was a *sinebwaina*. I was not to eat too much and I was to eat little pieces only. When my mother died, father told me that I was not to marry a male beauty (*gomabwaina*) but a good gardener. But I wanted Mauitu only. I think he made a *sigaha* (love magic) but I don't know. While I was a *sinebwaina* I never laughed and I did not walk about with other women. I always just sat in the house. This is the way of a *sinebwaina*."

A dream told by the same woman may throw some light on the psychology of the *sinebwaina*: "I dreamed about my sister's daughter, Sine Wenaki. Young men were having intercourse with her, especially Kamulesi. He said: 'I have not had intercourse with her.' They were awake; it was dawn. Her father scolded Kamulesi. 'You should not have had intercourse with my daughter!' He replied: 'Our women grow up, they are nice and we make love to them.' Then they looked for *kaira* (shells) and they gave them to her father."

The associations of this dream are as follows: First she explains what kind of a girl Sine Wenaki, her sister's daughter, is. She always says to the boys: "There go my husbands. I wish they would give me tobacco." The boys reply: "You are our wife. We shall bring you tobacco." or "We give you tobacco and we are coming today." Her father always said: "She thinks only of the *gwari* (group of boys in search of a girl) and does not work in the garden." When Kamulesi, a totem sibling, wanted to marry her, her father kept her back. "Then you will leave me," he said. But her mother was in favor of the marriage and sent Kamulesi to fetch shells to begin the marital exchange of presents. On the other side Kamulesi's elder brother was trying to delay the marriage. He said, "Don't hurry. The girl should grow up first." These are the same words used by Kamulesi in the dream. The dream sentence therefore means that Kamulesi is justifying himself; the time has come when his elder brother (here identified with the girl's father) would also agree to his marriage.

¹ From a Dobu informant who spent several years at Kiriwina.

² B. Malinowski, *The Sexual Life of Savages in Northwestern Melanesia*, (1929), pp. 182, 297.

After this, without transition, Ne Dojara begins to talk about herself. "My father told me, 'Don't marry quickly, you will leave me.' Mother said, 'Marry quickly, I want to eat the *pokara* (marriage present).' My father was my real friend, my mother was my enemy." Her Oedipus complex is nearly conscious. She identifies herself with her sister's daughter, in whose case the situation was the same.

She next talks about Kamulesi and describes him as a serious sort of person who does not care for flirtation and on the other hand as a man with a strong mother fixation. When women were joking with him he said: "I work in my mother's garden. When she dies I will marry." His mother told the girls he would marry only after her death. Sometimes she advised him to marry but he always replied that he would stay alone with his mother.

Ne Dojara then talks about events that happened at Madarabuna on the shore of Wejoko at a *sagari* (food distribution festival). Kamulesi and Kaubwagamo were gathering shells on the beach (as in the dream). They had both come as *muri* (relatives-in-law). The women were jealous and quarreled with her. They were jealous because of her husband, Tau Louja. Then she explains that Kamulesi's words in the dream, literally "We did not sleep", really mean "We did not cohabit." In the same way she answered the women by saying "I am married already". Now if they had really been jealous about Tau Louja this reply is meaningless. But if they were accusing her of carrying on like a *sinebwaina* with Kamulesi and Kaubwagamo, we can understand her reply. "I am not a *sinebwaina*, I am married." Having said this she rises, covers herself very carefully with her skirt and leaves me.

If Ne Dojara is the girl of her dream we must say that a *sinebwaina* is really a woman who desires all men but who hides this under a mask of passive behavior. For Sine Wenaki is certainly what the natives would call a *sogara* (aggressive woman). Moreover, we also see that her desire for the men is based on her Oedipus complex. The men are all fathers (Kamulesi is a serious person) whom she is taking away from the mother (Kamulesi's mother fixation). A *sinebwaina* is therefore typically the daughter, the young woman in opposition to her mother.

If we look at the *sinebwaina* attitude and beauty ideal from the cultural point of view and interpret it without dream analysis, we notice the emphasis laid on smallness, especially on small breasts. This is most unusual in a primitive group. One of the incantations obtained in connection with the *gute* (mourning ceremonies) at Nadinadia confirms the interpretation of the *sinebwaina* as a child. It is used when the performers in the ceremony stick the pandanus streamers into their armllets. They have ter-

minated their period of mourning and are now coming out of the jungle into the village. They are washed, oiled and decorated and the girls are expected to fall in love with them.

STICKING IN THE STREAMER

Oh streamer of Tauhau!
I stick it in.
Oh streamer of Tauhau!
I plait it.
I make light and I gather them!³
Married women and girls
For them I plait the streamer.
I make light, I gather them.
The breasts I desire, the black nipples!
I make light, I fetch them.
O daughters of chiefs!
I make light, I fetch them.
Child lying beginning
Child lying on a pillow!

The rest of the incantation does not interest us here. The informant explained that *Natu kabakaba kuma*, "Child lying beginning" and *Natu kabakaba gedu* "Child lying on a pillow," were terms for a real *sinebwaina*, since she always lies in the house and sleeps, like a child. The obvious conjecture is that the *sinebwaina* is playing the role of a child; that the beauty ideal represents infantilism. Moreover, if we observe that the passive element is stressed in her attitude we should interpret this class of professional beauties as representing *passive object love* in Ferenczi's sense. "I am only a little girl. All I desire is to be beautiful, beloved and famous," would be her formula. The two latter concepts are manifestly identical. This would agree very well with the cultural pattern of this area. They are always saying that they are merely children, i.e. denying adult aggression. In this case it seems that the beautiful girls are denying their mother-daughter rivalry in the marked passivity and in the emphasis laid on an infantile appearance. The *sinebwaina* is trying to make everyone believe she is only a little girl. In her behavior, however, she shows exactly the opposite pattern. For her there is no playful fore-pleasure, only adult genital sexuality.

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³ He makes light because the sun gleams on his streamer.