"Senoi Dream Theory," Chapter 3

Chapter 3: The Life and Mind of Kilton Stewart

The previous chapter was based on the similar experiences and observations recorded by several anthropologists at different field sites. Their findings are at variance with most of the claims about dreams by Kilton Stewart, and differences of time and location do not seem to resolve the discrepancies. It becomes useful, therefore, to turn to a consideration of Stewart's life and work to see if that provides any insight into the validity of his claims about Senoi Dream Theory.

Stewart was born in 1902 in Provo, Utah, where his father was the city traffic engineer. The second of six children, four boys and two girls, he graduated from high school in Provo in 1920. He spent his freshman year at Brigham Young University in 1921-22, then went to the University of Utah from 1924 to 1928 to earn his bachelor's degree. Stewart returned to the University of Utah in 1930-31 for a master's degree in psychology, and he received his Ph.D. in anthropology from the London School of Economics in 1948. He spent most of his time between 1920 and 1940 traveling around the world as what was then called a vagabond, or beachcomber. For most of the years between 1940 and 1965, he practiced psychotherapy in New York City, where he died of cancer at the age of sixty-two.

One of the people who knew Stewart best in the 1930s was a young British woman, Claudia Parsons, who met him in Southeast Asia in 1937-38 when she was halfway through a trip around the world. Parsons kept a diary of her journey, which became the basis for a charming travelogue, *Vagabondage*, published in 1941. She recorded her first impressions of Stewart when she spotted him at breakfast just before an early morning bus ride in what is now Cambodia in November 1937. She compared him with someone named Christian she had met earlier in her travels:

> He had the same attractive air of devilry, the same stocky figure. But he was broader than Christian and rather older. He wore sandals on his feet, and his linen suit was that of the beachcomber hero in an American film who is either about to reform or is slowly sinking to a living death.... There was more than an idle curiosity in that academic forehead, in that Bible history head. One felt that John the Baptist had just caught the bus.[1]

The beachcomber hero who looked like John the Baptist was indeed striking in appearance: handsome good looks, a strong build, and powerful shoulders, the latter the products of work on his father's ranch and his love of swimming. But he was even more impressive as a conversationalist, and as he expounded "on religion, youthful repressions, personality conflicts, and finally on dreams being the expression of one's

ego," Parsons learned that he considered himself a psychoanalyst. "It was early impressed on me," she continues, "that he was a follower not of Freud but of Otto Rank, having himself been psycho-analyzed by one of Rank's disciples in Paris." Parsons also heard about his interest in tribal peoples:

> There was a long record of study and experience. By degrees I gathered the threads of a life shared between public institutions and solitary expeditions, when he carried out research among such as the... Ainu of Northern Japan, the headhunters of Formosa and the Negritos of the Philippines. Talking to Stewart one learnt that the answers to many present-day problems were to be found in the study of primitive cultures. These expeditions were financed either on public research money or out of his own fluctuating resources, but I did not then know to what extent those resources fluctuated.[2]

Following the bus ride, Parsons and Stewart spent two busy and romantic days in Bangkok, where they became lovers. Stewart also roamed the back streets looking for ivories, jade, Oriental knives, and small antiques. Then their ways parted because Stewart was going to visit Senoi territory in what was then called Malaya. He asked Parsons to join him as the secretary-typist for the expedition. When she reluctantly refused his kind offer, Stewart professed a broken heart. (However, note well, she later changed her mind about not joining the expedition, which means there is a detailed record of Stewart's main visit with the Senoi that will be presented later in this chapter.) For now, the point is that by the time Stewart professed a broken heart Parsons already had a good understanding of her new friend:

> When I boarded my train I left Stewart, so he told me, with a broken heart. But I was not frightened of having damaged a heart so seasoned. And a psychoanalyst with a broken heart is a contradiction of ideas.[3]

After an exchange of letters and telegrams, however, Parsons met up with Stewart and one of his friends about two months later in Singapore. It was during the stay in Singapore that Parsons made another of those discoveries about Stewart that always left her speechless:

> The last evening in Singapore is worthy of mention, when at a party at the Tanglin swimming-pool Stewart divulged that he was an elder of the Mormon Church. This was a crowning discovery. I had learnt something of the Mormon history whilst in America, of their ousting from one place after another all across the States till they made their last stand in the deserts of Utah and turned these into habitable country. Here amongst us was a descendant of two families prominent in this history, here was Stewart with a hundred and thirty-four first cousins and a grandfather who went to Mexico rather than give up his four wives. America now rather esteemed these law-abiding citizens, but Stewart in a life of roaming appeared to have violated most of the Mormon abstentions. It was now a supreme jest that in his early years he had gone on the foreign mission that establishes an elder. Nevertheless in five months I had time to discover that this often exasperating companion was

> truly Christian.[4]

Shortly thereafter, Stewart and Parsons decided to take an automobile trip from Calcutta to London. Over the next three months she learned that he possessed even more unusual traits than she had imagined. For example, he was generous to a fault, giving away money right and left:

> Stewart's whole wealth was a rapidly dwindling £60 with hope of another £20 in Cairo, but instead of pondering on the hiatus between here and England, he was concerned only with how to support the beggar population of the countries through which we passed.

More than money, Stewart wanted to give everyone a ride even though he and Parsons had only a two-seat Studebaker with a rumble seat in the back:

> Every time I went to sleep, when I woke up there was another pedestrian stuffed into our dinky seat, while in India I woke to find that with our bumper rail we were pushing a large vehicle which had run out of petrol on the road. The pedestrians that we helped were highly varied. They wore turbans, skull-caps or sometimes woolen caps of the Cossack type.... It was the poorer, down-at-heel type whom Stewart mostly assisted. We were a sort of good-will bus service.[5]

Parsons's warm portrait of Stewart as a zestful charmer and open-handed traveler is filled out and supported by an autobiographical account that he dictated to another one of his lovers, a young Australian named Nancy Grasby, just a year before he met Parsons. Entitled "Journey of a Psychologist," this unpublished manuscript recounts his adventures between 1932 and 1934. It begins with his musings after he was fired from his job at a Utah state school for mentally retarded children. Perhaps he lost his job because he kept alcohol in his room, he wrote, which was against the rules. Or maybe it was because he had attempted an unauthorized experiment in curing bedwetting with a mild electroshock device. Or maybe it was both. Stewart could not decide.

The manuscript tells how he then hopped a freight train from Salt Lake to Sacramento and sold Fuller brushes in the wealthy sections of Oakland for a few months while he hung around Berkeley. Eventually he decided to move on to Honolulu, but he had to travel as a stowaway because the seaman's papers he had obtained on one of his earlier journeys around the world were not good enough to get him a legitimate ride across the ocean. The manuscript continues with his many adventures in Hawaii, reports on the roundabout way he finally obtained a job as a mental tester for the psychologist S. D. Porteus, and ends with a long account of the deliriums and fantasies caused by a bad case of what he calls typhus fever, contracted during his first trip into the jungles of Malaya.

The self-portrait of an adventurer who lived by his wits that is provided in the early parts of this youthful memoir is not a fictional product of Stewart's fertile imagination. It is supported by the recollections of two people who knew him well. The first, Dorothy

Nyswander, a retired psychology professor when I interviewed her, first met Stewart when he was an undergraduate at the University of Utah. The second, his brother, Omer, a retired anthropologist from the University of Colorado when I interviewed him, was the author of several books and dozens of articles on the Indians of Utah and the Southwest. Omer, who admired Kilton greatly as a person, recalled that his older brother first began taking unauthorized train rides as a teenager. By the time Kilton was in his late twenties, according to Omer, he had been around the world two or three times as a merchant seaman.[6]

The idea that Stewart was able to stowaway on a ship to Honolulu may seem unlikely, but it is corroborated by Nyswander. In the early thirties she was teaching at the University of California, Berkeley, and Stewart stayed with her when he arrived on the West Coast. Nyswander recalls being with him on the docks of San Francisco while he walked up and down, deciding which ship would be most likely to treat him well and give him a job in the kitchen once he was discovered.[7] If any reader still doubts that Stewart was a vagabond, in spite of the independent accounts by Claudia Parsons and his brother Omer, the separate account by Nyswander should put their minds at rest.

According to his own account, Stewart soon tired of his job in Honolulu. He decided he wanted to do mental testing among tribal groups in the Pacific. It was thus that he had come to visit the Ainu of Japan, the headhunters of Formosa, the Negritos of the Philippines, and several other primitive groups.

The manuscript, however, is not primarily about his findings with these groups. It is also full of adventure, telling of near drownings, battles with illness, numerous love affairs with exotic women, and encounters with such interesting characters as an aging prospector in the mountains of the Philippines and an American-turned-Buddhist priest in Bangkok. The data that he collected from his mental testing were turned over to Porteus in Honolulu and were later used as part of a chapter in Porteus's *Primitive Intelligence and Environment* (1937).[8]

Stewart dictated his 1936 manuscript because he did not like to write, and he was also an extremely poor speller. He discusses these matters with his usual flair in the autobiography:

> The two days of facing the unknown of the Philippines stimulated my literary ambition and I wrote two articles, one on the Ainus and one on the Formosans. It was my first attempt at writing since my Freshman Themes had given up their split infinitives and comma faults to the avid eyes of the English instructors, when I had vowed never to write again if the gods would give me enough "Bs" to balance up the "Ds." I felt very guilty as I broke this promise; but there is something fearsome about being a stranger in a strange land, which makes men lose sight of their standards.[9]

Once in Manila, he repaired to a park early one morning to get the articles ready to show a magazine publisher there:

> I hauled out my dictionary, found a bench in the shade of a tree, and looked for the evidence of my creative urge in the line of spelling. Since early childhood I had striven to maintain individuality in this field. By four o'clock I thought I had looked up every word that I had used. I thought pleasantly of tea as I made my way to the appointment. The editor was a charming fellow, and, after scanning my articles, said that he would take them but that he would sue me if translating them ruined his spelling for life. Apparently I had missed a word here and there.[10]

Actually, the articles never appeared, and that was probably the last time that Stewart laid pen to paper. Henceforth he would dictate all of his ideas to paramours who believed in him and his creative abilities, relying on them to be his editors and proofreaders.

Although Stewart was a poor writer, he had unusual talents as a speaker and storyteller, as attested to by Parsons and others. He seemed to be able to convince anyone of anything. People were enthralled by the stories he could tell from his many travels even though they didn't always believe him. "Kilton was a great story-teller and I often had the impression he would not worry about the exactness of details if it might interfere with his narrative," his brother Omer wrote to me."[11] "I never knew what to believe, but he was a wonderful friend and companion," Dorothy Nyswander said to me. Then she asked, "Tell me, did he really get a Ph.D. in England?"[12] One of his friends from the fifties, John Wires, a young man at the time, asked me exactly the same question after telling me how he heard Stewart speak to a liberal group at the Community Church in New York and became interested in his theories.[13]

Stewart's penchant for dramatic stories is illustrated by his account to a reporter in 1964 of how he came to be interested in dreams. Beginning with the fact that his father had been a government surveyor, Stewart said that as a boy he often went along with his father when he surveyed on Indian reservations. There he met a shaman who helped him conquer a terrifying dream:

> It was a shaman medicine man who first taught me you could direct your dreams. I had a terrifying one of a coyote whose tail tickled my stomach. "That's all right," said my friend. "He's just trying to tell you that someday you will be a medicine man and will cure people. When he comes again, let him inside of you." I did and was never terrified again.[14]

According to Omer, who was very close to Kilton and enjoyed recounting his exploits, this account could not possibly be true. It is a complete fabrication. Their father left government surveying before Kilton was born to work for the city of Provo, and the Indians of Utah were on two reservations that were far from where the Stewart children grew up. It is Omer's strong recollection that Kilton did not spend any time with Indians until he and Omer became friends with the anthropologist Julian H. Steward at the University of Utah and helped him with his archeological work on one of the Utah reservations in the summer of 1930 or 1931. When I expressed skepticism and asked Omer how he had become interested in Indians and anthropology, he replied that it was

through an introductory class in anthropology during his freshman year at the University of Utah.[15]

In addition to his rhetorical talents, Stewart also was an excellent hypnotist. He had learned this skill on his own in the early thirties, and he had practiced it all over the world, even for minor sultans in Asia and in the context of tribal dances and healing ceremonies. He also used it to collect hypnotic dreams for some of his studies.

One of the several people able to attest to Stewart's abilities as a hypnotist is Sir Edmund R. Leach, one of the most distinguished anthropologist in the English-speaking world in the second half of the 20th century. Leach had finished a three-year contract as a commercial assistant for a British firm when he met Stewart at a party at the British embassy in Peking in 1936. It was not too long before Stewart had convinced Leach to join him and Nancy Grasby on a short expedition to study the Yami on Botel Tobago, a small, windswept island forty miles off the coast of Formosa. It was there that Leach saw Stewart put natives into a trance as part of his dream research:

> He had considerable skill as a hypnotist and having seen him at work I underwent the experience myself He put his "patient" into a very light state of hypnotic "trance" and told him to "dream" and to report what he was "dreaming." The process was very interesting; the "patient" was fully conscious of what he was saying and seeing and remembered it quite clearly afterwards....
>
> What was also very extraordinary was that he was able to carry through this hypnosis through interpreters, sometimes even a chain of interpreters. I have myself been present when a [native] was hypnotized by Stewart speaking to a Chinese who knew both English and Japanese who in turn spoke to a [native] who understood Japanese who then spoke to the "patient" who proceeded to report a very "Freudian dream" which he found so shocking that he immediately woke up.[16]

According to the 1936 autobiographical manuscript, Stewart's first visit to Senoi country was unplanned and unexpected. He had arrived in Singapore in early 1934 after completing his testing for Porteus, and he was down to his last few dollars. He was planning on a recreational week in an exciting city before catching a steamer to Hawaii:

> Three luxurious days passed by, and then I began to wonder about the natives of Malay. The life of the hotel palled. In the little city of Taiping, I was told, there was the Ethnographic Museum of the Federated Malay States, and there was a man there named H. D. Noone who ate, drank and breathed natives. He even kept them in his garage. Mr. Noone was the Government Field Ethnographer. It was only a two hour ride on the train to Taiping. I asked for my bill.[17]

Noone was not at home when Stewart arrived, but his Malay servant invited Stewart to come in and wait for his return. The result was an enjoyable week of hot baths and good

meals before Noone finally appeared. According to Stewart, he and Noone hit it off immediately, a claim that is easily believed because other accounts report that Noone was almost as outgoing and open-handed as Stewart. As for Noone, he took one look at Stewart and named him "Torso":

> He would be delighted to have a companion in the jungle, and if I would give him an excuse of the data I would collect on mental tests he would wangle enough extra funds to bring my journey within my financial range, which I had informed him was nothing. As I protested weakly that I could hardly hope for such good fortune, he answered, "Rot. Come now and bring your torso down to lunch, and forget such sentimental twaddle. 'Torso,'" he repeated, looking at my shoulders as we sat down. "The torso of American youth straining to maintain his liberty." From then on I was "Torso."[18]

According to Stewart, the expedition started with an elephant caravan and lasted about two or three months. Noone's published paper reveals a very different picture, however. He calls it one of several demographic expeditions concerned with the distribution of settlements. It had a field staff of only two men. Other men were recruited from the various settlements along the way to serve as bearers. Noone explains that he already had spent two different three-month periods learning the Temiar language and studying Temiar culture at other settlements. He describes the expedition with Stewart:

> In 1934 we (Mr. K. R. Stewart accompanied me on this expedition) started from [the town of] Lasah on my second expedition across into [the province of] Kelantin, this time taking a line further north by following the Temor [River] towards its source and so into [the] Ulu Piah [area], finding the source of the Betis [River] just by [the town of] Gunong Grah. On this occasion when I arrived after twelve marching days and two rafting days at [the town of] Kuala Betis I rafted on down the Nenggiri [River], stopping at [the town of] Kuala Jindera, and so reached Bertram, a station on the East Coast Railway-after two days of rafting.[19]

Two strong conclusions emerge from this description and other information in Noone's monograph. First, contrary to Stewart's usual exaggerations, it is not likely that they had an elephant caravan, at least beyond the first day or so. More important, it is very likely that this expedition lasted in the neighborhood of sixteen days. This number is important to keep in mind in order to see how it -- and a subsequent visit of seven weeks in 1938 -- are gradually inflated later on by Stewart and Garfield.

Whatever the length of the trip, Stewart reports that he and Noone participated in several of the song ceremonies that were put on for their benefit, sometimes joining in the dancing or inducing the much-coveted trance states through hypnosis. Indeed, Stewart drew some conclusions about the nature of Temiar religion on the basis of his hypnotic work:

> The fact that we could send them into their dance trances and call the familiars of their medicine men through hypnosis made it appear that the

> whole religious pattern of the group was carried through direct and indirect suggestibility, and that all religions are perpetuated from generation to generation in a similar manner.[20]

Actually, this hypothesis about the nature of religion was not a new one for Stewart. He put forth the same view in his master's thesis on religion, which is entitled "Fear as Prime Factor in the Origin of Religion." Working within a Pavlovian framework, Stewart argued that religion is based on a conditioned fear of the unknown and is then passed on through imitation. The argument is illustrated with material from a wide variety of anthropological studies. It was done under the direction of a behavioristic psychologist, M. C. Barlow.

Most importantly for my purposes here, there is only one brief mention of dreams in Stewart's 1936 account of his first visit to Senoi country. It does not suggest any sustained focus on dreaming and dreams. It appears in the context of the general program of his investigations with Noone:

> We spent a few very pleasant days in the first long house. I gave mental tests and asked the inmates about their phantasies and dreams; Noone measured them, checked up on legends and obtained genealogies. We also instituted our programme of hypnosis. Many of the natives had slight abrasions on their skin, which we treated with various types of ointments, telling them that part of the treatment was to sit in a camp chair and look at a bright object and go to sleep. The most interesting material we got was from the medicine men, who told us in detail about the professional training they had had.[21]

Stewart left Malaya in the spring of 1934, and he did not return for three and a half years. In between, he made two different trips to Peking, spent several weeks on the aforementioned expedition to Botel Tobago, and returned to the Philippines for the third or fourth time to collect dreams in a Negrito group. Stewart also claims to have undergone a Rankian psychoanalysis in Paris in the summer of 1935, but the particulars of his training and analysis are still lost to history despite my efforts to uncover them. Otto Rank, one of Freud's earliest and most creative followers, had broken with Freud in 1926 and set up his own school of psychoanalysis. His theory deviated widely from Freud's, putting great emphasis on the traumatic effects of the birth experience and the importance of a creative will or life spirit. He also came to believe that the lengthy treatments that had become part of psychoanalytic orthodoxy were not really necessary. His own brand of therapy became a matter of a few weeks or months, with considerable time spent in discussion of spiritual growth and little or none on childhood fears and fantasies.[22]

Rank moved to Paris in 1926 to take up private practice In 1934 he and his small handful of followers founded a summer institute there called the Psychological Center. The six-week session included lectures by social workers, psychiatrists, and psychologists from Paris, New York, and Philadelphia. Rank gave several of the lectures. Plans were made to hold the institute again the next summer, but they were canceled because Rank moved to New York in the fall of 1934. Rank was in Paris in the spring of 1935 for only a few

weeks and then returned to New York.[23]

Nonetheless, Stewart reports in a brief biographical statement written for a family history in 1944 that he was "psychoanalyzed at the Rankian Psychoanalytic [sic] Center" in Paris in 1935 and then worked at a Psychopathic Hospital in that city. What he may have done was to work with the psychologist Pearce Bailey, who had received his Ph.D. at the Sorbonne in 1933 and helped Rank run the Psychological Center in 1934. Bailey stayed in Paris through 1936 before returning to the United States to earn a medical degree and become a neurologist. According to an expert on Rank and his followers that I interviewed, Bailey was the only person in Paris at the time who could have worked with Stewart.[24] But whatever Stewart's exact involvement with Rank or any of his followers, the experience clearly meant a great deal to him.

Although nothing is known about the nature of Stewart's work in Paris, some things can be inferred about its length and intensity from his travel schedule and a letter to his brother. He left New York for Paris in May or June of 1935, arriving in Paris in late June or early July. In the fall he left Paris for a railroad trip to Peking via Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, arriving in Peking in December 1936 or January 1937.[25] In other words, his psychoanalytic training, if he had any whatsoever, may have been brief even by Rankian standards. He gives a glimpse of it in a letter to Omer from Peking dated January 22, 1936, with his usual emphasis on goofing off and making out :

> I guess Detroit was the last place in which I heard from you. From there I had a very triumphal march on to NYC and thence to Europe. The Analysis was most interesting and I think valuable beyond words. I am highly pleased about it. When I see you next I shall dig into you with the old fear pick. It was great fun just loafing around Paris. I never enjoyed myself more. I shacked up with an Australian actress and used her for a laboratory course in analysis. The whole stay was just about perfect. I gave all my money away to communist refugees from Germany and was delightfully broke the whole time.

The letter also makes clear that Stewart was highly impressed with Rank's theories and was using them in his work in Peking:

> Arriving here I got right into the work at the Psychopathic Hospital and have been utterly charmed and absorbed ever since. I am working on a half dozen insane patients with psychoanalysis and hypnosis and have had two or three private patients nearly all of the time and so am getting plenty of experience. I think Rank is superb as a thinker and am planning tests all the time and have built and am trying a few of them on the patients with which I hope to put a lot of his theories to the test. So far I think he is just about as near right as anyone could be about everything.

Armed with his newly acquired identity as a psychoanalyst, Stewart made his second visit to Senoi country early in 1938. This time the trip was planned in advance, and it again included Noone, but it nonetheless had some elements of Stewart's unique style. Moreover, we know a great deal about this visit thanks to the very lucky fact that Claudia

Parsons agreed at the last minute to go along as his typist if Stewart would drive to London with her afterward. She begins her report by providing us with a picture of the general setting:

> Noone had chosen a convenient and not too remote Saki [that is, Senoi] village in order to work on his treatise with the subject matter right before him. For seven weeks we lived within sight of a Temiar down-river group, for seven weeks time was only indicated by night and day, by hunger and fatigue. Only my faithful reporting in my diary showed us the progress of the year.[26]

Even in a setting relatively close to civilization, however, Parsons anticipated a fair amount of hardship, but instead she was in for yet another surprise:

> Jungle life was not what I had expected. I had foreseen a period of semi-darkness, a bunch of tents, boiled water to drink and little chance of washing till April. Instead I had a house of my own, hot water and early morning tea brought to me each day by a Malay servant, while beer, ginger beer, tongue, curries and a gorgonzola cheese were amongst the things that sustained me. Even a box of cigars was dissipated in the study of Temiar culture.[27]

The study moved along in an uneventful fashion. Noone and Stewart would go down to the same mixed Temiar-Semai settlement later studied by Dentan and Benjamin, and then return to dictate to Parsons:

> Our days were spent collecting and sorting data, while I typed to the dictation of Stewart or Noone. Stewart, who seemed to work best when in the horizontal, lay flat on a bench and gave dissertations that contained words like *physiological*, *palaeolithic* and *schizothymic*, words that made me glad of that cushion of jungle between me and the world. For one might sack a typist in England for a mere negligence, but it would have been an awful offence or a devastating ignorance before she was sent packing on an elephant. Luckily I had my dictionary.[28]

It was the information collected on this second visit to the jungle, which ended on March 24, 1938, that provided most of the systematic Senoi data that Stewart eventually used in his dissertation. But let us make no mistake. The Senoi dreams were collected by Noone, who understood the native language. Stewart only administered his various mental tests.

Once in London, Stewart's thoughts turned to the possibility of earning a Ph.D. in anthropology. He had mentioned the idea in one or two letters to his family and to Omer in conversations, but this was the first time he had decided to do anything about it. Since he already had plenty of data, it was primarily a matter of organizing it into a dissertation. He initially planned to register at Cambridge University in the fall of 1938, but then decided on the London School of Economics instead.[29]

Noone also was in England in late 1938 and early 1939, on a leave from his job with the Department of Aborigines in Malaya. Stewart wrote to his family in Utah that the two of

them planned to write up their findings together for publication as well as work on individual dissertations. Noone had first registered as a Ph.D. candidate at Cambridge in 1935. At that time he stated that his dissertation would concern "The Social Psychology of the Temiar Senoi, a jungle Tribe of Malaya." However, in 1938 he changed his topic to the more specific subject of dreams, which is further evidence that the dream data collected by him was meant for his own dissertation. He registered his new title as "Dream Experience and Spirit Guides in the Religion of the Temiar Senoi of Malaya."[30]

Noone gave a talk based on his Senoi dream data to the Royal Anthropological Institute in March 1939. It was entitled "Chinchem: A Study of the Role of Dream-Experience in Culture-Contact Amongst the Temiar Senoi of Malaya." It concerned the introduction of a new ceremonial dance called "Chinchem." The dance had been obtained from a dream revelation by a leading adept or shaman. Although no copy of the talk exists, it is summarized in the Royal Anthropological Institute's journal, *Man* (April 1939). According to the summary, Noone argued that the new ceremonial dance arose from the difficulties this particular Temiar group was experiencing because of its contacts with Malay culture. His main claim was that the new values introduced through the dream and the dance had "mobilized the morale of this group towards more effective adjustment in the contact situation."[31]

Noone also noted that there were certain similarities between Chinchem and the ghost dance revivals among Indians in the United States in the late nineteenth century, and the parallels are indeed striking. As with his 1936 paper, Noone's findings and conclusions in this talk are ones that are consistent with what other anthropologists have observed. Thirty years later, for example, Weston LaBarre called his book on the origins of religion *The Ghost Dance* (1970). Based on his analysis of religions around the world, including the new religions that arise in the crisis situations that primitive groups face when they confront Western colonialists, LaBarre concluded that "every religion begins in some dramatic individual revelation or dream, culturally diffused to others, and gradually edited into the necessarily vague and contradictory entity appropriate to a whole group."[32] There is therefore good reason to suspect that Noone was a solidly grounded and sensible anthropologist.

Stewart also gave a lecture at the institute during his stay in London. It was entitled "A Psychological Analysis of the Negritos of Luzon, Philippine Islands." According to the four paragraph summary in *Man* (January 1939), it was based on work done in two periods of three months each in the summers of 1933 and 1937. Using data from various mental tests as well as free associations under hypnosis, word associations, and dreams, Stewart concluded that "a rough analysis of the test results fails to support the theory of racial differences, as there were individuals in all three groups [of Negritos] who compared favourably with the higher test scores of Europeans." Stewart put his findings into the context of his theoretical interest in Otto Rank. The summary concluded:

> An attempt was made to interpret all this material according to the general theories of psychotherapy and psychoanalysis. The terminology and ideology

> of Otto Rank seemed to be the most useful in unifying the various phenomena. These data also argued for the similarity of the intellectual and emotional natures of different racial strains of humanity.[33]

The talk is notable for two reasons. First, it suggests that Stewart was going to rely primarily on mental test data, not dreams, for his dissertation. Second, it is notable that Stewart did not stress differences between groups, unlike many observers in that era. In fact, Stewart was a strong egalitarian and a critic of capitalism as well. His letter to Omer from Peking in January 1936, following his trip across the Soviet Union, included the following paragraph on his impressions of that country:

> Russia was intensely stimulating and if I had not already been pretty sold on their experiment I think I should have been won over 100% at that time. My god how they are doing things. They are a nation full of hope and courage. No unemployment and food prices steadily on the decline and every day a greater belief in their own destiny. They are doing a magnificent job.[34]

In a paper he published a year later in *Philippine Magazine* on "The Yami of Botel Tobago," Stewart used his findings on the Yami to make a sustained critique of racism and inequality. After noting that casual observers might think these people are "stupid savages" because their level of material development is so primitive, he attacks that kind of argument on the basis of his test results:

> Such a conclusion, however, would prove the observers more stupid than they think the Yami are, for, in fact, these simple folk are neither stupid nor savage. During a three-month expedition among them which has just been completed, their performances in various mental tests indicate them to be quite on a par intellectually with Chinese, Japanese, and European-American norms, and an examination of their social system makes it appear that they are from many viewpoints less savage than any of the great groups who pride themselves so highly on their civilization.[35]

Stewart contrasts the equality of the Yami social order with the extremes of wealth and power in modern capitalist societies:

> It makes it appear that what we have been calling capitalism is nothing more than industrial feudalism, and that feudalism is a mental disease, which destroys both the master and the serf. When a man thinks himself to be a god and starts killing devils, we put him in an insane asylum, at least we still do in some countries. But when he thinks he creates a railroad or a bridge or a skyscraper, because of some circumstance which enables him to direct or initiate the work, we put his name in the foundation stone and make him a feudal baron. Most of the men who employed their brain and muscle in the group enterprise get no credit for the creation. Their creative work is traded for the right to live, sold over the block for the profit of others.[36]

In short, there are strong indications that the itinerate mental tester and future dream

theorist also was a passionate social critic. It was an element of his character that gave an immediacy and moral force to his later writings on dreams, which are infused with calls for social betterment.

Despite their respective talks to the Royal Anthropological Institute, there are no indications that anything materialized in the way of writing for either Noone or Stewart at this time. Noone returned to Malaya soon thereafter and was caught up in the war against the Japanese. It was during this period, while working in the jungles against the Japanese, that he probably was killed by his young Senoi "brother" in a love triangle. Since his brother Richard Noone was never able to find Pat's data and manuscripts after World War II, despite a sustained effort, it is likely that they all were destroyed at some point by Japanese soldiers, or by the humidity and torrential rains. It is therefore not possible that Pat Noone wrote the liner notes for a record album on Temiar music that Taylor thinks are evidence for his case of a "reasonable doubt."

What else Noone had learned about the Senoi use of dreams or how he would have utilized the dreams he had collected in early 1938 may never be known with certainty. The claims about his views put forth in the book on his life by his brother Richard are romantic accounts of doubtful accuracy. They are based in good part on retrospective memory, conversations with Stewart, and Stewart's own articles. Letters that Pat Noone wrote to his parents in the early thirties demonstrate interest in the Senoi emphasis on dreams, but there is no indication in his 1936 monograph or his talk to the Royal Anthropological Institute, contrary to Taylor's attempt to yoke him with Stewart intellectually, that he shared Stewart's later claims about Senoi dream sharing and dream control.[37]

Following Noone's departure for Malaysia in 1939, Stewart wanted to stay in London, but his plans were disrupted by the war in a totally unexpected way. He happened to be visiting friends in Paris in September 1939 when the war broke out. Because he was an American citizen, he was immediately shipped directly back to the United States from France. He arrived in New York with only the few belongings he had taken with him to France. Fortunately, Parsons retrieved his trunks of memorabilia and data from the apartment that one of her friends had loaned to Stewart.[38] The data included carbon copies of the dreams that Parsons had typed up for Noone back in the jungle in early 1938. There things stood as far as the dissertation and Senoi Dream Theory were concerned until after the war.

Once relocated to the United States, Stewart settled in New York City in the early 1940s to practice a mixture of Rankian psychoanalysis and his own dream-based therapy. Shortly after he set up practice, he felt the need to have a record of the dreams of a wealthy and prominent patient. He advertised for a stenotypist who could take dictation on the kind of machines that are used today only in law courts. The person he hired, Clara Marcus, remained with him from that time on as an assistant, editor, and lover, and then as his wife in the last five or six years of his life.

Dorothy Nyswander, Margaret Nyswander Manson, and Claudia Parsons all expressed the firm belief that Stewart's involvement with Marcus was a significant turning point in

his work. As a highly organized and business-oriented person, she brought some degree of discipline to his life and handled the administrative and financial details of his group practice. In addition to taking down what was said in many of the therapy sessions, she also served as a typist and editor on the manuscripts he dictated to her. As Parsons put it in a letter to me dated July 30, 1983: "She made herself indispensable to him both as housewife and amanuensis and indeed it needed someone with her purpose and drive to tidy up his life." Several of the people I interviewed described her as an aggressive and confrontational person who frightened or annoyed many of the people who met her. As my own interview with her made clear, she had not changed very much by the early 1980s.

No sooner was Stewart settled into his private practice in New York than his plans were once again changed by the war. In July 1942, at the age of forty, he was drafted into the army. He was assigned to a special intelligence unit because Omer, serving as a lieutenant in an intelligence training unit, suggested to his superiors that Stewart might make a good interrogator because of his abilities as a hypnotist. But things did not work out for Stewart as a soldier. The army had no use for his skills, and his undisciplined character led to tensions for him. He received a discharge in March 1943 and returned to private practice in New York until the war ended.[39]

But the interlude in the army turned out to be a blessing in disguise because it qualified Stewart for the GI bill and thus enabled him to move back to London as a student in 1946. After retrieving his data from Parsons, he registered once again for a Ph.D. at the London School of Economics. Since the London School at that time did not require any course work for the doctorate, he focused his attention on his dissertation. This lack of course work is worth underscoring because it shows that Stewart was completely self-taught to the degree that he knew anything about the anthropological literature.

Stewart and Marcus spent two years in London, with Stewart dictating what Marcus told me were usually "page-long sentences," which she edited and rewrote. His thesis advisers were two prominent anthropologists of the day, Raymond Firth and S. F. Nadel. According to Marcus, these advisers made Stewart rewrite the dissertation several times, much to her great annoyance.[40] For Firth's part, he was reluctant to put anything on paper for me about his recollections of that time period. Thus, it is not known if he shared the extreme doubt about Stewart's academic abilities that were frankly expressed to me in letters in the early 1980s by Sir Edmund Leach, but which I did not mention in my book because Leach and other principals, including Clara Marcus, were still alive at the time.

The final result of Stewart's stay in London was a 545-page dissertation entitled "Magico-Religious Beliefs and Practices in Primitive Society-A Sociological Interpretation of Their Therapeutic Aspects." Its primary theoretical focus is on the way in which the Senoi use of dreams and healing ceremonies is superior to the practices of Yami and Negritos, thereby allowing the Senoi a more open and creative psychological development. It also includes dozens of pages of purely descriptive material on the everyday lives of Yami and Negritos. More important for our purposes here, there are

eighty-four pages of reported dreams in its appendices. There are 312 dream reports from Senoi, 192 from Negritos, and 316 from Yami.

The descriptive material on the Senoi is similar to what has been reported by Pat Noone and later observers. There is also the kind of material on dream teaching and dream councils that has not been corroborated by anthropologists who learned the language and spent considerable time living among the people. Still, the dissertation usually does not make the grandiose claims that are contained in the later articles. The different parts of the psyche according to the Senoi are discussed in sober fashion, and the village councils are characterized as "interminable," just as later observers attested.[41] To the degree that there is any discussion of dream control, the emphasis is on the dreams of the shamans, not the people in general. It is only shaman dreams that are claimed to demonstrate the decline in fear and attack themes: "We have shown, however, that in the dreams of the Senoi shaman, the dream response to this category of changes [that is, fear and attack dreams] also reverses the early childhood patterns, causing the dream image of the thing which has been used, disturbed, or destroyed to appear as a spirit guide and make a creative contribution."[42]

The dissertation has not been widely read. This is because his widow refused to allow it to be circulated. She asked me at the outset of our interview if I had ever seen it, and then told me that she would sue people who tried to obtain it. Having been forewarned, I told her I didn't have a copy, but I soon received a bootlegged copy from another dream researcher. Given these threats and constraints, it was not possible for most researchers to make a comparison of Stewart's dissertation and subsequent articles.

Although the dissertation contains most of the basic ideas that are presented in the published articles, it is most interesting today for what it does not say and does not demonstrate. First of all, it makes no mention of the Senoi encouraging their children to have pleasurable dreams. Indeed, the only sustained discussion of pleasurable dreams is at the end of a section on the dreams of children and early adolescents. Here Stewart notes that there seems to be a *decline* in pleasurable dreams by early adolescence, the opposite of what he claimed later. He then speculates on the possible causes:

> Also, his pure gratification dreams such as flying and eating become less pleasurable. Apparently, the social dictum that it is selfish to enjoy things without sharing them with the group is affecting the child's pleasurable dreams adversely as his growing confidence in himself and in the power of authority affects his fear dreams favorably.[43]

Also missing from the dissertation is any account of how the dreams were collected in the three societies. This is a notable omission because there is reason to believe from other evidence that they were collected and recorded in different ways in the three cultures. Among the Yami, for example, the dreams were very often -- if not always -- collected under hypnosis, with a Japanese policeman serving as the interpreter both for the induction of hypnosis by Stewart and the reporting of the dreams by the Yami subjects.[44] Among the Senoi, on the other hand, the dreams were collected directly by Noone, who spoke Temiar, and then dictated to Parsons.

Moreover, the Senoi dreams were collected in different ways from different age groups. Children's dreams were collected by asking parents what their children had dreamed about, which is in fact a totally worthless method. The dreams of teenagers and young adults were collected by asking them to report recent dreams. In the case of the older men, still another procedure was used. They were asked to recall all those dreams that they believed to be significant in bringing them to the status of adept or shaman. This is an invitation to storytelling and fabrication.[45]

As for the Negritos, most of the dreams were collected in English-speaking schools set up by Americans, who had, of course, taken control of the Philippines as a protectorate after the Spanish-American War. Seventy-five percent of the Negrito dreams are from adolescents and preadolescents, a far higher percentage than in the other two samples. There are references in the dream reports to horses, streets, the Catholic church, and being chased by "wild Negritos," all of which is strong evidence that these participants were highly acculturated.[46]

Considering the different ways in which the dreams were collected among the different groups and within the Senoi settlement, and the wildly differing degrees to which the three groups were assimilated into Western ways, there is every reason to be cautious about any claims concerning the superiority of Senoi psychological adjustment and flexibility that are based on alleged differences in dream content. Moreover, there is only weak evidence that night dreams and hypnotic dreams can be equated. A few studies suggest that this can be the case with some participants under the right conditions, but other studies lead to the conclusion that night dreams and hypnotic dreams are different. Still other studies suggest that hypnotized people are susceptible to suggestion and often make up their reports of dreams or memories.[47] This is not a believable empirical basis for the even greater leap of comparing hypnotic dreams from one culture with night dreams from another. Nor is the retrospective recall of dreams by shamans comparable to present-day recall by ordinary adolescents and young adults, or with parents' reports of what their children supposedly say they dream about.

These problems within the dissertation are serious enough to discredit any of his psychological conclusions, but the major problems with Stewart's claims about Senoi Dream Theory really began after he resumed private practice in New York and published his first article after completing the dissertation. "Dream Theory in Malaya" appeared in 1951 in *Complex*, a relatively new -- and short-lived -- journal founded by author-critic Paul Goodman to explore the relationship between psychoanalysis and society. Although Stewart published three articles subsequent to this one, they make no major additions to the claims about the Senoi that he made at this time.

Stewart's published presentation of Senoi Dream Theory begins with a considerable inflation of his credentials. He calls himself an honorary fellow of the "Royal Anthropological Society" (sic) and a research fellow of "Peiping Union Medical College, Rockefeller Institute." In fact, the Royal Anthropological Institute elects only a handful of the most renowned anthropologists in the world as honorary fellows; Stewart was a regular fellow by reason of paying his dues.[48] Nor was Stewart a research fellow of the

Rockefeller Institute. Although the exact nature of his few months of employment in Peking cannot be determined with final certainty, it seems most likely that he was paid out of the pocket of the psychiatric facility's wealthy American director.[49]

The paper also greatly exaggerates the amount of time Stewart spent studying the Senoi. The two or three months that he claims in his 1936 autobiography for the first trip (probably 16 days in reality), and the seven to eight weeks that Parsons documents for the second trip, were said to be ten months in the dissertation. In the paper, the ten months become a year, and the two months in England with Noone become another year: "From a year's experience with these people working as a research psychologist, and another year with Noone in England integrating his seven years of anthropological research with my own findings, I am able to make the following formulations of the principles of Senoi psychology."[50]

After setting the stage by calling Senoi an "astonishing" people who are as advanced as if they came from another planet, Stewart states his most important assertion: "The Senoi believes that any human being, with the aid of his fellows, can outface, master, and actually utilize all beings and forces in the dream universe." To demonstrate this point, he uses the example of dreams of falling. When children report a falling dream, he says, "the adult answers with enthusiasm, 'That is a wonderful dream, one of the best dreams a man can have. Where did you fall to, and what did you discover?'"[51] According to Stewart, the adult then says:

> Everything you do in a dream has a purpose, beyond your understanding while you are asleep. You must relax and enjoy yourself when you fall in a dream. Falling is the quickest way to get in contact with the powers of the spirit world, the powers laid open to you through your dreams.[52]

Stewart then asserts that these instructions to the child bring about changes in the dreams. His authority for this claim is that he "made a collection of the dreams of younger and older Senoi children, adolescents, and adults, and compared them with similar collections made in other societies where they had different social attitudes toward the dream and different methods of dream interpretation." In the case of falling dreams specifically, the results are termed "astonishing":

> The astonishing thing is that over a period of time, with this type of social interaction, praise, or criticism, imperatives, and advice, the dream which starts out with fear of falling changes into the joy of flying. This happens to *everyone* in the Senoi society.[53] [my emphasis]

Beyond the already mentioned difficulties of comparing the three different sets of dreams, the really astonishing fact is that the Senoi dreams in the dissertation do not provide any evidence whatsoever for these large claims. They show that the article is a complete fabrication in terms of his evidentiary claims about changes in falling dreams. There are only four dreams in the 228 young-adult and adult dreams that might be interpreted as flying dreams, and they do not reveal any pleasure in flying or any ability to confront and conquer danger. Three are near-disasters. For example, one adult male

had the following flying dream:

> I dreamed that whilst out walking I came up to a house, not realizing that the mistress of the house was at home. But when I reached the ladder of the house, a woman appeared. Pulling me up by the hair, she urged me to go up with her. Not wishing to go up, I argued with the woman from below. Next moment, back came the woman's husband, and began to drive me away. When I could run no further, I began to fly through the air. Then I woke up.[54]

The only positive dream that mentions flying is a pre-shamanistic dream told in retrospect by an adult male. The flying occurs in passing in the context of a command from a potentially friendly spirit:

> Go and see your noose-trap [said the spirit]. If there is nothing, then I am deceiving you. If it is true, then you will know." Then he gave this command, "Cut tamu leaves to flourish in the *Jinjang*" [one of the dances at a song ceremony]. Then I joined in the *Jinjang* and sang until a dog barked "kerkus." I flew to Mount Gaet and stayed there five days. After staying five days, I plucked flower blossoms on the hill.[55]

In addition, and even more damning, there are four dreams in which falling occurs, three from young adult males, one from an adult male. None of them turns into a flying dream. A person falls to the earth and dies in two of the dreams, and a dreamer's "spirit" falls into the river and drowns in a third. In the fourth dream the dreamer fell from a tree into a marsh and "awoke with a start."[56] One of the dreams with a falling death has a happy ending, however. The spirit who had ordered the dead child to climb the tree in the first place brings it back to life.

The idea that pleasurable dreams should be pursued to a conclusion is introduced for the first time in this paper:

> According to the Senoi, pleasurable dreams, such as of flying or sexual love, should be continued until they arrive at a resolution which, on awakening, leaves one with something of beauty or use to the group.
>
> Dreams of sexual love should always move through orgasm, and the dreamer should then demand from his dream lover the poem, the song, the dance, the useful knowledge which will express the beauty of his spiritual lover to the group. If this is done, no dream man or woman can take the love which belongs to human beings.[57]

This general claim about pleasurable dreams contrasts greatly with the earlier-cited assertion in the dissertation that the number of pleasurable dreams seems to decline along about adolescence. Moreover, the discussion of sexual dreams in the dissertation makes no mention of this principle. Nor are there any sexual dreams in the collection that support the notion that the principle has any influence. The relatively few dreams that even hint at sex, a mere nine in all, are primarily what Stewart calls in the

dissertation "sexual frustration dreams." Anger or fear is mentioned in five of them, and in only one is there any suggestion of pleasure. After reproducing four of the frustration dreams from younger adults in the main text, Stewart comments: "Such dreams of sexual frustration do not completely cease with adolescence, but we were told they rarely occur in the lives of the practising shaman."[58] But of course there are no data to back this up.

The several differences between the dissertation and the first published paper, and the lack of dream evidence in the dissertation for some of the claims in the paper, are important clues concerning the origins of Senoi Dream Theory. They are concrete evidence that Stewart's grandiose tendencies got away from him in his later discussions of the Senoi. This leads to the conclusion that the dream theory Stewart attributed to the Senoi in his published articles was in fact an amalgamation of his own ideas with what he had learned from his studies of hypnotic dreams, trance reveries, and night dreams among Yami, Negritos, Senoi, and his patients. Put more bluntly, the articles are one big fantasy that have no basis in the data and conclusions contained in the dissertation. The dissertation is the "smoking gun" that exposes Stewart as an intellectual fraud in his published claims about the dream life of Senoi peoples.

Parsons's account of Stewart, along with his 1936 autobiography and my interviews and correspondence with people who knew him well, all combine to make it clear that Stewart was not the kind of person who learned foreign languages and immersed himself in detailed studies of the cultures he visited. Instead, these sources suggest that he was a storyteller who let his imagination have free reign as he sifted through his experiences. Much of what he says in his dissertation about daily Senoi life is in agreement with what others have reported, but most of what he published is highly exaggerated and used as a starting point for what are actually his own ideas.

Based on my detailed analysis of Stewart's dissertation, and the many hours I spent interviewing people and combing through archives, I believe Stewart first and foremost saw himself as a guru and healer in relating to the world. His participation in healing ceremonies and tribal dances had impressed him with the importance of magic rituals and joyful ceremonies in human life. He thought that modern life lacked social occasions of deep psychological significance. He kept repeating the fact that Westernized human beings had cut themselves off from the emotional and psychological wisdom of the nonviolent tribes he had studied, and that the result was violence and homicide, mental disorders, and war. In praising these aboriginal people for their alleged nonviolent principles, he completely misunderstood that these subjugated people had no choice but to be nonviolent or perish. He also ignored the evidence that some were personally violent in their own communities and that others fought and killed during World War II and the counterinsurgency war of the 1950s.

Indeed, Stewart's primary preoccupation in every one of his published articles -- from the 1937 article on the Yami to a 1943 article, "Education and Split Personalities," to a 1962 article, "The Dream Comes of Age" -- concerned the major social problems that faced the civilized world. He criticized the lack of cooperativeness and the indifference to

equality in the 1937 article, the split personalities allegedly brought about by overly rationalistic educational systems in his 1943 article, the failure of scientists to study peace when "the engines of war today are terrifying" in a 1954 article, and the need to promote mental health and world peace through dream education in his 1962 finale.[59] These are not the usual concerns of a dream researcher.

In short, Stewart thought he had found the answers to modern societal problems in the ritual practices of primitive peoples. He thought the wisdom of tribal healers could be applied to today's world. Preliterate people, and especially the Senoi in his later years, had the answers to the problems of violence, insanity, and war. His desire to be a great healer and prophet led him to imbue his dream principles with the mystique of the nonviolent and easygoing Senoi.

However, as the anthropological accounts in the previous chapter demonstrate, Stewart's claims about the psychology of the Senoi are complete nonsense. Recall that the people he calls relaxed and happy are wary of strangers, skeptical, and pragmatic after centuries of being enslaved and looked down up. They suffer greatly due to the physical environment they live in.

Thus, it would be more honest if Senoi Dream Theory was identified correctly as Stewart's own theory about the efficacy of dream sharing and dream control. It was Stewart, not the Senoi, who first proposed that people actually might be able to share and control their dreams for their pleasure and development.. He may have come to the ideas in part from discussions with dream adepts in Senoi settlements, but the ideas were in fact his.

This does not mean that Stewart consciously created a hoax. Like many gurus and con artists, he fervently believed what he said. He simply did not have the character or training to discipline his thinking. He wanted to be a well-known prophet and healer, and in a certain small sense he succeeded because of the dreamwork movement, although he never convinced more than a handful of people of anything during his lifetime. But the anthropological evidence and the testimony of everyone I talked to shows that he was not a credible observer. The comparison of what is in his dissertation with what he wrote later shows in detail how his claims grew larger and had no basis in evidence.

It is now time to show in detail how Stewart's misguided claims about the Senoi became a key element in the dreamwork movement.

Continue on to Chapter 4

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Go back to the Dream Library index.