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ACTIVITIES OF CHILDREN AMONG PRIMITIVE PEOPLES. I.

By ALEXANDER F. CHAMBERLAIN.

In the numerous anthropological and ethnological monographs of undoubted accuracy and scientific value that are being published from year to year in all parts of the civilized world there is contained much material of great interest to the student of childhood in all its aspects. The present writer offers here the first of a series of articles dealing with the activities of children among primitive peoples as recorded in recent anthropological investigations. The people here concerned are certain Papuan tribes of Dutch New Guinea as described by Dr. G. A. J. Van der Sande in his *Nova Guinea, Vol. III, Ethnography and Anthropology* (Leyden, 1907, pp. 390, with 50 plates, 216 text-figures and a map), embodying the results of the Wichmann Dutch Scientific Expedition to New Guinea, in 1903. The excellent illustrations in this work are a welcome addition to the adequate descriptive matter. Ordinary, common-place activities common to all children are not considered in detail.

1. *Betel-chewing.* Although betel-chewing is in some parts of New Guinea tabooed to children, sometimes to young men ("as long as they remain in the temple"), and even occasionally to young men "until they have killed somebody" (p. 20), the quid of siri, like the tobacco-pipe, is often passed around from mouth to mouth,— "a used quid of a grown-up person is chewed afterwards by the children with evident pleasure." Van der Sande himself witnessed the following at a dance at Tobádi, participated in by boys and girls as well as adults (p. 10): An old man who passed this group handed his used quid to a little girl, apparently no more than five years old, who immediately took hold of the present with joyful eyes, but was all at once forced by the other girls to divide the quid, after which all rejoined the dance, chewing and laughing with evident satisfaction. See No. 15.

2. *Carrying.* In New Guinea the heavy loads from the gardens are carried home by women and girls (p. 178). Generally cord bags are used for this purpose; in the western regions baskets made of *pandanus*-leaf, *hibiscus*-bark, or reeds. The "women's bags", as they are called, are always larger

and deeper than those of the men (p. 180). Women and girls carry their heavy bags on their backs with a forehead strap or sling. Their bags are also used by them for carrying favorite dogs. They load the bags upon their backs in a crouched position. See No. 7.

3. *Dancing*. Some dances (e. g. the *Iba jondige*) are executed by men, boys and girls (p. 310). At Tobádi this dance was performed "by a crowd of almost 50-60 persons, consisting of a number of men, behind which was a group of boys, and again behind these a group of girls, all standing in on a corner of the platform" (p. 311). The people of Mapar have numerous dances inside their houses, in which "men, women and children are placed in separate rows, but dance all at the same time" (p. 311). See No. 13.

4. *Driving boars in hunt*. In the *battues* of wild pigs of the people of Tobádi the line of drivers placed at the bottom of the wooded slope is composed of boys (p. 155). See No. 5.

5. *Education of youths in "temple"*. In the so-called "temples" are to be found at all times "a number of youths, novices, who also sleep there and who, during a longer or shorter period after the years of puberty, are not allowed to have any connection with the parental home. They may not even be seen closely by any female being" (p. 293). At Tobádi such youths are "locked up" in the "temple" sometimes for more than a year and "during this time the young men under the special superintendence of *Hamadi* (the village chief) do all sorts of work, manufacture string, nets, carve and paint ornaments and also participate in hunting and fishing" (p. 294). There are also religious ceremonies, initiative rites, etc. See No. 12.

6. *Fishing*. The catching of the large fish known as *kā joi* is usually carried on by the women, but "in the right season the fish seem to be so abundant that the women cannot manage the fishery without aid: men and children come to their assistance" (p. 167). The illustration on page 169 (fig. 109) of "fishing with the fishing basket" at Geelvink Bay shows "two girls standing by, one of them carrying a bundle of small fish," while "the boy standing next to them has a fishing arrow, which he has evidently used as a throwing spear" (p. 168). See No. 5.

7. *Gardening*. In garden operations the girls take part with the women, whose work begins after the men have cleared the ground (pp. 176-177). They are also employed with the women to "carry the heavy loads home from the gardens" in boats and by means of large or small baskets (p. 178). See No. 2.

8. *Grinding and polishing stone implements*. Part of this

process seems to be confided to boys. After the stone hatchets (*sè* or *tsè*) have been given their form of flaking, the grinding and polishing are sometimes "done by a boy on a big, flat grinding stone, *sèdèrè*, without sand, but with plenty of water, whilst now and then he plunged the hatchet into the lake in order to wash off the shavings, the 'tooth,' and to ascertain the result" (p. 175).

9. *Lime-making*. One of the illustrations in Van der Sande shows a boy of the L. Sentani tribe in charge of the burning of fresh-water shells for the purpose of making lime (p. 22).

10. *Navigation*. Of the *isja* or men's boat, Dr. Van der Sande says (p. 196): "The *isja* is in the fullest sense of the word a men's boat. I never saw a woman making use of it; on the other hand, boys from 10-12 years old manage it with the greatest confidence. The possession at this time of life of a somewhat smaller *isja* depends, no doubt, upon the early age at which boys are here admitted into the men's watch-houses." At Asé he saw "children 4-5 years old struggling in fairly deep water on small immersed models of the '*isja*' specially intended for such exercise." See No. 11.

11. *Plays and games*. Children are generally left quite to themselves. Indeed, Dr. Van der Sande says (p. 265): "Never did I see a father or a mother playing with the children." Among the sports of the boys are shooting with the bow-and-arrow, playing with hand-tops, jumping and tumbling about in the heavy surf rollers, playing in the water with models of the men's boats, etc. These last two sports are carried on by girls as well. See No. 10.

12. *Preparing twine for nets*. At page 164 is described the preparing of twine from the *ime*-fibers by the Tobádi temple boys. Occasionally they do a little netting also, but, while the preparation of the twine is men's work, the making of fish-nets belongs to women. See No. 5.

13. *Scarring by fire*. In various parts of New Guinea boys and girls raise scars on their flesh by burning, both as a test of courage and for mere amusement. On the island of Jäpen "the girls at dances give the young men such wounds with burning wood" (p. 50), and in the Gilbert archipelago Finsch saw "young girls causing such scars on themselves with a red-hot shell, 'out of fun'."

14. *Shooting*. In many parts of New Guinea the right to carry a bow and arrow is permitted to young men only after certain ceremonies have been gone through (p. 248), as *e. g.*, when he has been received as a warrior. At Humboldt Bay, "after leaving the temple"; at Tumleo, "after the ceremony of putting on the stiff bark girdle." At Tobádi a special sort

of arrow is used by children; also by adults for shooting mice (p. 263). Shooting is also a sport. See No. 11.

15. *Tobacco using*. In some parts of New Guinea young children are never seen with tobacco or pipes, though their use by them is common in others. In the region of L. Sentani, boys smoke "as soon as they serve in the watch houses" (p. 18), while in Humboldt Bay "smoking by young men in the temple is not allowed." At L. Santani young children do not smoke cigarettes or use pipes. On Murray Island, where the tobacco tubes are passed round from mouth to mouth, "very young children are there allowed to smoke" (p. 19). The Aroani children are also indulged in their manner of using tobacco at an early age. See No. 1.