

THE LADY'S GEOGRAPHY CONTINUED.

[Kelly Plante](#) August 30, 2021

Of the MANNERS and CUSTOMS of the Inhabitants of AMBOYNA.

THE men and women do not go together to these feasts, as there are apartments in their houses appropriated to each sex, these islanders having certain laws which do not suffer all the relations of the husband to see his wife. The father, mother, and children of the same family, may indeed feed together, but not the father with the daughter-in-law, or with his grand daughters when grown up: the mother with her son-in-law or grandsons, or the brother and sister-in-law together. Nay more, they are not even permitted to see each other when eating, and if a man surprises a woman in that situation, by accident, for by design it never happens, he acquires a scandal which is not to be wiped away but by the means of making her some considerable present. The reason of this custom with respect to relations it is not easy to guess at; but as to the separation of the sexes in general, it may be supposed that jealousy, of which these people have a considerable share, must be the sole cause of it.

One of the principal dishes which the Amboynians make use

of in their feasts, is a hog's head, with a lemon fixed between the jaws, and adorned with a number of flowers of a very beautiful red, called Bongayraya. This dish is always placed before those persons who stand in the highest estimation; the other parts of their pork is dressed in many different ways, but in every one of them with exceeding high and savory seasonings. If they have fish, the head is always presented to the king of the feast, who is himself for that reason called Kapalakan, or Fish-Head; of which, when he has taken as much as he thinks proper, he distributes the remainder among those who sit near him. The turtle is one of their great delicacies, which they stew at a distance from the fire, without any other liquor than the juices of the animal: but they afterwards add to it a great quantity of seasoning. The cocoa, seago, and rice also, prepared in various methods, form several dishes in their entertainments; and of the two latter their bread is composed.

They have great quantities of venison and wild-fowl, of which they are very fond, as also of the bat, dressed after a particular manner. There is a kind of white worm, which is found in the rotten wood of the seago tree, of about the length and thickness of the first joint of a man's thumb, which they roast on little skewers, and eat very greedily; as they do also the wawos, or reddish worms we mentioned to be found on the sea coast. These are to be met with in great

abundance along the shore, especially in stony places, about the season of the April full moon. In the night time they give a light like the glow-worm, which seems to invite people to go in search of them; which they do, every one laying in his stock at once, because they make their appearance only for about three or four days in the whole year.

In these feasts, the victuals are ever dressed by the women, but they are always served in by men. The principal care of the master of the feast, is that there may be no want of victuals; every guest has one large vessel set before him, containing several little dishes which are filled with all kinds of food, and after he has eaten his fill of this allowance, the rest is carried home to his house by the servants.

Their chief drink is spring water, or the milk of the cocoa-nut. By way of wine they make use of the towak or sin, which is extracted from a tree of that name, and the saguweer which distils from another, and has nearly the taste of wormwood-wine. Their stronger liquors are the rack and brom made from rice, and two other kinds of spirit, which they get from Japan and China. They are very fond of the French and Spanish wines, but do not greatly relish the German. The women keep mostly to water, although they are by no means averse to the drinking of Spanish wine, were the means of procuring it more accessible to them. The use of tea and coffee is not very familiar to the Amboynians; yet they

sometimes take the former, especially when they are visited by the Dutch, to whose customs, whenever they come to any of their repasts, they accommodate themselves as much as possible.

Their manner of kindling fires is much readier than ours; they rub two pieces of wood against each other, the one hard, the other soft and hollow, near which they hold a bit of lint, which kindles in an instant. For the making of salt, they take the pieces of old worm-eaten wood which the sea throws up on the shore: these they dry and reduce to ashes, sprinkling them continually with sea-water, till they form a mass of salt underneath them, or else boil up the same water in a pot with the ashes of certain leaves for two or three days successively, at the end of which they find a quantity of very good salt at the bottom of the vessel.