

THE LADY'S GEOGRAPHY – ABRIDGED

THE LADY'S GEOGRAPHY.

[Page 145]

AS we have before observed that it shall be our endeavour in the progress of this work to render it as interesting as possible, and to reject every thing that does not tend in some measure either to instruct or entertain, we shall consequently be very short in our descriptive part of the particular countries we may have occasion to conduct our fair readers through; since the general face of nature varies little more in different countries than the face of man. Air, earth, and water, hills and valleys, woods and open plains, are the universal features every where; and therefore would produce continual and tedious repetitions, were we to attach ourselves to such descriptions: but the peculiar variations in those features, together with the particular complexion which the mind of man appears to wear in every place, is what alone we shall think worthy of our notice. For this reason we shall constantly divide our investigations of different countries into three parts, viz. first, such general description as may be absolutely necessary for the knowledge of its situation, and to give some idea to the reader of the prospect he might expect to meet with if he was on the spot, but in this we shall be as concise as possible; secondly, the natural history, or a detail of the productions and [Page 146] curiosities of nature peculiar to it; and lastly, the civil history, or an account of the manners, laws, and customs of the inhabitants; in which, as well as in the preceding article, we shall aim at preserving all imaginary novelty, by taking no notice at all of those things of either kind which are universally possessed in every country; making only a bare mention of such as they have in common with some others; and extending more amply on such alone as are peculiar to the very individual spot or nation which is the subject of our immediate consideration. In pursuance therefore of this kind of plan, we shall now proceed to...

15.1. A DESCRIPTION of AMBOYNA, AND OF The other ISLANDS dependent on it.

This cluster of islands, which are numbered by some authors amongst the Moluccas, were first discovered by the Portuguese, in 1511; but were taken from them by the Dutch in the beginning of 1605, in whose possession they remain to this day. They are situated in about the fourth degree of south latitude, and about the one hundred and forty-fifth of longitude from the Canary Islands.

Amboyna in itself, although the capital, is by no means the largest of the islands which are connected under the same jurisdiction: yet as it is the most populous in proportion to its size, the most regularly cultivated, the most carefully strengthened with many fortresses, and beautified with a very handsome city, it claims the preference of being first mentioned.

[Page 147] It is an island, or rather two joined together by a small isthmus of about a quarter of a league in breadth, and which forms on one side of it a gulph of upwards of six German leagues in length, and about a league over in the broadest part, capable of containing an infinite number of vessels, and on the other a very fine bay.

...

The town [of Amboyna] stands in a fine plain on the coast of the larger gulph, and is about a quarter of a league in length, and fourteen hundred paces broad. The streets are wide and regular; and altho' they are not paved, yet the soil is so very spongy, that the heavy rains, which frequently sail there, do them much less damage than one would be apt to expect. It contains about a thousand houses, exclusive of the public buildings: amongst which the [Page 148] castle, the market-house, the church, the guard-house, the town-house, the hospital, the orphan-house, governor's palace, the old and new Dutch churches, and the company's linnen magazine, are the most considerable, and some of them very magnificent.

The number of inhabitants of the island of Amboyna are thought to amount to between seventy and eighty thousand souls, all of whom are Moors or Mahometans, excepting the people of Leytimor, who, most of them profess Christianity, and about five or six villages of the other part of the island.

Under the government of Amboyna are included ten other islands, viz. Bouro, Amblau, Manipa, Kelang, Bonoa, Ceram, Ceram-Laout, Naussa-Laout, Honimoa, and Boangbesi.

The external aspect of all these islands present at first sight the appearance of the rudest desert. On whatever side you turn your eyes, you see yourself surrounded with lofty mountains, whose tops are lost in clouds; with frightful rocks riding on one another's heads; with horrid caverns, thick woods, shading with almost a continual darkness numbers of very deep valleys; and at the same time your ears are struck with the noise of rivers rushing into the sea with horrid roar, especially towards the beginning of the eastern monsoon, the time at which the European vessels most commonly arrive there.

Yet foreigners who stay there till the western monsoon find infinite beauties in the prospect. The mountains abounding with seago and with cloves; the forests clothed in verdure, and adorned with blossoms; the vallies laden with fertility; the rivers [Page 149] rolling with waters pure and chrySTALLINE; the very rocks and caverns, which seem but as the shadows in a picture; all these objects diversified in so many ways render it one of the finest countries in the world.

...

15.3. The MANNERS and CUSTOMS of the Inhabitants of AMBOYNA.

[Page 154]

The inhabitants of these islands are of a middle stature, rather lean than fat, and extremely swarthy: their features are regular, and there are both men and women of them who are far from unhandsome. There is however a sort of them, which are called Cakerlaks, who are almost as white as the Europeans; but it is a sort of paleness which has something frightful in it when one is near them: they are very red hair'd, have large freckles on their hands and faces, and their skin is scursy, rough, and wrinkled. Their eyes, which are perpetually winking, seem in the day-time half shut, and are so weak that they can scarce bear the light; but in the night they see very clear. The women of this kind are very rare. These Cakerlaks are a kind of lepers, and are held in great contempt by their country folks—They take their name from certain flying insects, which cast their covering every year, and whose skin resembles that of these people.

Their habitations are for the most part extremely poor and wretched: some indeed which belong to the principal persons are built of boards; but the generality are constructed of gabba-gabbas, or branches of the seago tree, the bark of which is extremely smooth and polished. These houses make no bad appearance when they are new; but in a short time, when the gabba-gabbas begin to rot, and the nails and fastenings which hold them give [Page 155] way, they form great gaps which render them extremely inconvenient.

Nor is their furniture more commodious or more plentiful—A few shelves to serve by way of canopy, some matts to sit on, a little earthen ware, a frying-pan, a copper bason to put their pisang in, a lamp of the same mettle, and two or three boxes made of the leaves of the nipa, ornamented with white shells, compose the principal part of it. The leaves of the pisang serve them by way of table cloths and napkins, and the shell of the cocoa nuts for spoons. The use of knives is unknown to them, but they do every thing with a kind of cleaver, which they manage very dexterously: besides these implements, for domestic use, they have also some arms in their houses, such as helmets, bucklers, sabres, and javelins.

Their habits are neither more diversified nor more magnificent: the men wear a kind of close-bodied coat and breeches, made of cotton, or some other stuff, of a blue colour, and for the most part unlined. The women in the house wear a sort of petticoat sewed up, but without plaits, and equally open at both ends: this they fasten at their waists to their under habit, which is a kind of shift with the sleeves very long, and a little open before, and which reaches down somewhat below the navel. When they go out they put on a second petticoat, which they throw over their left shoulder, in the manner of a cloak; so that only the right side is to be seen.

As fashion is unknown to the people of this country, all the difference of cloathing amongst [Page 156] them consists in the difference of the stuffs. The Moors have no other distinction in their dress from the Christians of the island but that of wearing a turban instead of the hat, or sometimes red or white handkerchiefs, which the latter fasten on their heads.

The grandees however are particularly fond of distinguishing themselves by the magnificence of their dress and the number of their slaves. They also wear robes of brocade, silk stockings, and slippers, as marks of their nobility; whereas the commonalty, both men and women, go barefooted, or in wooden sandals. The wives of the principal magistrates have the privilege of a kind of mantle, with hanging sleeves which comes down to their knees, is generally made of rich flowered silk, and gives them great consequence among the people. They also adorn themselves with ear-rings, bracelets, and necklaces of many kinds, which are mostly made of gold. They wear a hat cut in three or four points, and hold a handkerchief in their hands by way of a fan, which they put before their faces whilst at prayers in the church, where they have chairs; whereas the common women sit cross-legged on mats upon the ground.

As the Amboynians in general are not looked on as the best soldiers, they are also but indifferently provided with arms. They have however some, which if they did but dare to look their enemies in the face, might be rendered extremely useful. I have already, under the article of their furniture, mentioned the principal of them. Nothing more therefore is necessary but to say something in regard to their structure.

[Page 157] Their helmets are of brass adorned with the feathers of the bird of paradise. Of bucklers they have two kinds; one sort, which are three or four feet long, and about one broad, and adorned on the outside with some rows of white shells: the other kind is only a small target made of rushes, very completely interwoven, about two or three feet diameter, with a spike in the centre, which renders them at the same time equally commodious for offence. Of both these shields they avail themselves very skilfully in parrying off the strokes of their antagonists. Their right hand is armed offensively either with a fabre or a javelin: some of them substitute, in the room of these, the bow and arrow, which are in more familiar use amongst the Alfourians, or mountaineers. Their fire-arms, which they acquired the knowledge of from the Europeans, they employ only in sporting; nor have they any heavy artillery, excepting a few pateraroes on the walls of their fortresses.

The ordinary navigation of the Amboynians is in a kind of canoes cut out of the trunks of trees, which are ten, twelve, and sometimes even twenty feet long by one or two broad. To either side of these vessels they fix a large wing, which, falling on the surface of the water, keeps it always in equilibrium amidst the waves; and as long as these wings are able to resist their force, the lightness of the vessel enables it to make a considerable progress in a very small time; but if once they happen to give way, the canoe infallibly oversets. These little barks are manned with one or two rowers, besides the person who takes care of the helm. [Page 158] Their fishing-boats are broader, being about three or four feet wide, but without any covering, which would be very troublesome and inconvenient for that use. Of the same form as these, but larger, are the vessels they make use of in their parties of pleasure. In the middle of them, however, is fixed a square tent or pavilion, with benches and curtains all round, large enough to contain fifteen or twenty persons, in proportion to the size of the boat; by which also is determined the number of the rowers. The smaller Orembayes (for so are these vessels called) carry ten or twelve, and the larger ones from thirty to forty. These rowers are arranged towards the head and stern of the boat on planks which project from its two sides: the oars are broad and short, almost in the form of a baker's peel, and the strokes of them are regulated by the time of certain instruments of music played on by two men for that purpose.

A third kind of bark, which they make use of, is called the Champan, carries a mast, and is covered; is about ten or twelve tons burthen; and is made great use of for the conveying goods from one island to another. The last sort of shipping which these people employ are their Coracores, which are large vessels of sometimes an hundred feet in length, and twelve or fourteen in breadth. The meaning of the name is the Sea-tortoise, which is given to them from their being very heavy and slow, altho' with a fair wind they are very convenient, as they have the assistance of sails as well as oars. Some of these galleys have two, some three, and others four rows of oars, extending from fifty to [Page 159] near an hundred, with room for lodging about the same number of men, exclusive of two or three very elegant little apartments for persons of particular distinction. Of these vessels, form'd into fleets from fifty to sixty-five, provided with proper arms, and a few pateraroes, they defend their own coasts from incursions, and frequently make attacks on their neighbours.

From what we have said of the habits, dwellings, and furniture of these people, it appears, that their necessities can be but few; one would therefore imagine that with a little application, join'd to a very small degree of oeconomy, it would be easy for them to increase their means, and even to amass great riches. But altho' there are several of them who enjoy a very considerable income by the profits arising from the produce of their cloves, yet they, for the most part, expend it all in feasts, presents, and law-suits, in the latter of which they make nothing of throwing away an hundred ducats

in the defence of a controverted clove-garden. It is, however, remarkable that in a country where poverty is in a manner the fashion, there are, nevertheless, no such thing as beggars: but the wonder will in some degree cease when it comes to be consider'd, that the trees produce in very great abundance certain fruits, the use of which is not denied to the passers-by; and that besides, no one there ever refuses to a poor man the liberty of cutting as much fire-wood as he has occasion for in one day, whilst it is very easily in his power, with no extraordinary industry, for him to make three shillings a-day by the sale of [Page 160] those faggots, two pence of which will amply suffice for his day's subsistence.

We have observed above that feasting is one of the articles which ruin the Amboynians, and by which they are perpetually kept in penury and distress. In short, there are many various occasions on which they are obliged to give great and sumptuous entertainments. Of these they have ordinary and extraordinary ones. At those which are given on marriages, christenings, burials, &c. all the relations are invited; but no one comes empty-handed. Every person thinks himself obliged to contribute a certain number of dishes: and these presents are carried with great ceremony and abundance of ostentation by their slaves, one following another, in large brasen basons, each cover'd with an embroidered handkerchief, thro' which, however, it is easy to distinguish what is underneath.

Besides this, three or four persons are constantly employed for what might easily be performed by one; each endeavouring to outshine the other in the quantity of his presents and the number of his domestics.

[*To be continued.*]

[Page 317]

33.1. 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.

[Page 318] 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 estimamtion; 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. [Page 319] 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.

[Page 320] 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.

[Page 398]

43.1. Of the MANNERS and CUSTOMS of the Inhabitants of AMBOYNA.

AFTER having given some account of the habits, arms, and festivals of these people, it will be proper to give a slight description of those diversions wherewith the feasts we have mentioned constantly conclude, which are those of music, singing, and dancing.

Of their instruments of music, the principal one is the *Gongue*: this is of very great use throughout the Indies, but is most highly esteemed by the Amboynians, who ever preserve it amongst their most valuable effects. Of these there are two sorts, the one large, the other small. Of the latter sort, they arrange six or seven in a row on a bench, which are struck alternately with two sticks covered over with linen cloth. This instrument, which they call *Tataboang*, serves by way of accompaniment to the former, but is played much quicker, though ever in cadence therewith.

The *Fifa* keeps the same time as the larger *Gongue*, and is properly a drum. It is distinguished from the *Rabana* by being of a cylindrical figure, [Page 399] whereas the other is flat. Besides which, the manner of touching them is different. There is also a third sort, which resembles a little barrel, slung by a string round the neck, and is covered with parchment at both ends, whereas the others are only covered at top. The figure of these instruments together, with the manner of using them may be seen in a plate, annexed to Numb. III. of this work.

Their dances keep time to the sound of these instruments, with an exactness, and a degree of agility, that is really surprising. Their prodigious leaps, their supple turns, and the extraordinary windings and changes of posture, which they bring their joints to execute, surpass all description or idea. As soon as the feast is over, a man appears drest in the manner of the *Alfourians* or mountaineers, covered with the branches and leaves of trees, and armed with a large buckler, a sabre or javelin, and a helmet, surmounted with a large plume of feathers of the bird of paradise. In this singular equipage, he cries out, for some moments in the air, sometimes alone, and sometimes accompanied by a second of the same class, casting around him looks of the utmost fury and perturbation, and making the most terrible efforts, as if he would beat down the whole world under his blows.

This exercise, which they express by the word *Tsjakali*, is constantly succeeded by their common dances, which each sex severally executes by two or four together, with great gracefulness and address: some holding a naked poignard in each hand, and [Page 400] sometimes one or two silk handkerchiefs, which they wave around them; others have a fine scarf or sash of the same, or of chintz, which is fastened to the left shoulder, and one end of which trails on the ground. The men wear besides a turban on the head; and the women decorate their hair with flowers. Their dancers are always young unmarried people: when they begin, and when they retire, they salute the company by joining their hands over their heads: but on these occasions it is the custom always to make them a present of certain habits of silk, or some rich stuff, in which some one of the spectators runs to enwrap their bodies, whilst they are yet dancing, by the way of intreating them as it were not to fatigue themselves any longer; and this is one of the expences by which the Amboynians ruin themselves.

The men as well as the women usually accompany these dances with their voices. These songs, which serve as a kind of annals, for want of better historians, contain, among other things, the ancient events of their country; the praises of their heroes; and the glorious deeds of their ancestors. And this vocal and instrumental music is not only made use of in their great feasts, and on other

particular occasions, but also on board their boats and barges, in which the rowers keep the most perfect time to the instruments and voices.

[Page 474]

8.1. The MANNERS and CUSTOMS of the Inhabitants of AMBOYNA concluded.

THE People who were looked on as the Originers of these islands, but which it is probable came thither from other countries, were reckoned by the antient writers, who however knew very little of them, amongst the Anthropophagi, or devourers of human flesh; and indeed some recent examples seem to confirm that idea of them. The grossness of their manners was perfectly correspondent with their simplicity and their ignorance, which has however often been favourable to strangers, still is apparent in the fabulous and absurd relation, which the Amboynians themselves give in regard to their origin. Some of them claim descent from a crocodile, some from a serpent, and others from an eel, a tortoise, or even the old trunk of a tree; on which account they still respect their ancestors, in the creature from whom they pretend to have sprung; and if any one happens to kill one of these animals, they consider themselves in duty bound to avenge their deaths.

...

[Page 477]

Inconstancy, and a love of novelty, are the characteristics of this people, in whom, therefore, there is no placing any great confidence. The Dutch have frequently experienced the necessity of depriving them of the means of following their natural bent, which incessantly leads them to form plots against them, and execute them with as much steadiness as secrecy whenever they find a favourable opportunity.

[Page 478] Too much severity, however, towards them would be equally dangerous: sensible of injuries, and vexations, vindictive and implacable, it is ever, better to please them by fair, than to enrage them by harsh treatment. Such moderation therefore is ever strongly recommended in the instructions which the company sends to its officers; and it were to be wished for their own sakes that they conformed thereto with more exactness than they generally do.