

Anthro prof tells strange tale of island life

By LORA CUYKENDALL
Of the Emerald

When Robert Tonkinson walked around the block, he had to make a detour around the volcano. A visit to the neighbors was accompanied with the warning, "Go see them, but don't eat the food. It's poisoned." And above all—he had to be wary of sorcerers.

Tonkinson, a University anthropology professor, spent three months living on Southeast Ambrym, a small island in the southwest Pacific. Although it is unknown to most Westerners, Southeast Ambrym is feared as a center of sorcery by residents throughout New Hebrides, the island group of which Ambrym is a part.

"I became interested in the island because there was an unusually high out-migration rate. I wanted to see why," he says.

Southeast Ambrym lies in the east central part of New Hebrides, a group of 12 islands located about 500 miles west of Fiji and 250 miles north of New Caledonia. Ruled as a joint French and British protectorate, there are no European government personnel living on the island. The Presbyterian Church, which has done extensive missionary work in the area since the 1900s, does not keep a minister on Southeast Ambrym. In fact, when Tonkinson was doing his research, he was the only white man on the island.

"People don't like to stay there," he says. "The people tell stories of weird occurrences. Smoke rises continually from the island's active volcano and people from other islands believe it is the home of the spirits of the dead."

Tonkinson tells of a time he was walking home from a late night ceremony. Something crashed in

the path ahead of him. It was a coconut.

"I wasn't scared, really, living on the island," he says. "So often the tales of sorcery were used to scare people in order to gain control over them."

But as he walked home the next night, a coconut again fell in his path.

"The people agreed that it was sorcery," he says. "After awhile you can't help but feel a little creepy."



Drawing by Vanessa Wallace

Tonkinson, whose research is part of a larger study of South Pacific islands, says Ambrym's reputation for sorcery centers around the island's active volcano.

"Power is often associated with heat," he says. "Magical items are kept near the fire. The volcano is a source of heat and provides the island's sorcerers with strong powers."

The volcano, whose last eruption in 1951 resulted in the evacuation of several villages, lends the island much of its sinister mystery, according to Tonkinson.

"The jungle is thick and dense, the canopy is almost impossible to see through," he says. "The soil, because it is volcanic ash, is black and spongy. The only two colors you see are black and green."

Tonkinson says that he walked the "length and breadth" of the 160-square miles island during his stay. But that was not always a solitary trip. "When friends from Efate (a neighboring island) heard that I was planning to live on Southeast Ambrym, they had two church elders accompany me to act as bodyguards."

Tonkinson says the islanders have a means of protection from sorcerers. About 16 people are said to have the power of "lele." "Lele" means literally to "feel with my nose." A person with this power feels an itch in his nose when danger is imminent and can warn the sorcerer's victim.

"The belief in sorcery in some ways is useful," says Tonkinson. "By playing on people's fears, the traditional rulers of the island have been able to maintain peace."

He says both sorcery and religion play large roles in the island's politics. In the late 1940s, Ambrym chiefs used sorcery scares to banish the most powerful Christian leaders from the island. The Presbyterians held on, however, and in 1973 mounted a "holy war" against the evils of sorcery in an effort to regain their control. He says the island's people live within the structures of both beliefs.

"The people attend prayer meetings and church services several times a week," he says, "but they still warn their children to avoid the 'votut' (tabu places) where sorcery is believed to be practiced."

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Housing to reprint dorm applications

By JOYCE DE MONNIN
Of the Emerald

An unauthorized requirement of a \$150 prepayment on dorm rooms for next year has created more than a little controversy within the Office of Student Housing.

It will cost about \$700 to reprint the approximately 17,500 housing/admissions applications which stipulate the need for the prepayment to reserve dorm rooms, according to Vernon Barkhurst, director of admissions.

Student leaders pressured the University administration to rescind the \$150 prepayment which was not approved by the State Board of Higher Education, said Mark Cogan, ASUO administrative assistant for legislative affairs.

Cogan said the University has agreed to stop sending out housing applications until the corrected applications are prepared. He says the University also

agreed to notify the media and high school counselors of the error.

Barkhurst says the admissions office is holding all requests for admissions/housing applications until the new ones are printed.

Gary Christensen, associate director of high school relations, said high school counselors have been notified of the change by an article which appeared in the high school relations newsletter. Christensen said the article "cautioned students not to send the \$150 housing prepayment."

No further notification of the error has been sent out by the University.

Cogan argues that the amount of publicity used to rectify the error "doesn't seem sufficient to me." He says the administration "complains that it is costly for them to comply, but they are the ones who made the mistake and the burden is on the administration to correct the problem."

The Office of Student Housing said the \$150 prepayment was requested to reduce the number of students who reserve dorm rooms but then live elsewhere. Both Admissions Director Barkhurst and Student Housing Director H.P. Barnhart deny having received any prepayments at this time.

'Speed' scare alerts users

EUGENE (AP)—More than 40 drug users have contacted the Drug Information Center at the University since the center issued a warning of tainted amphetamines last week.

The samples have come in from Jackson, Lane, Benton and Multnomah counties, says Mark Miller, director of the center.

A sample submitted Jan. 30 showed no amphetamines at all, but contained two poisons, strychnine and brucine, plus ephedrine, used to treat allergies and asthma.

The drug is in white pill form with a cross stamped on one side. Miller said some callers were reporting symptoms of strychnine poisoning.

Commercial donations: to gain Olympic name

(CPS-ZNS)—Complaints of the commercialization of the Olympics get louder every year, apparently with good reason.

The US Olympic Committee recently decided to allow any corporation which contributes \$35,000 to the Olympics to advertise that its product has "been selected for use by the US Olympic Team," whether the team uses it or not.

And for only \$70,000, the corporation will not only be able to use the slogan but will also be permitted to use the famous Olympic symbol—five interlocking circles—on all its advertising promotions.

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