

Queer Features of a Native State in Java



GUARD OF THE SULTAN.

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SOLO, State of Soerakarta, Java, Oct. 1.—(Special Correspondence of The Bee.)—Have you ever heard of the sultan of Solo? I don't mean the sultan of Sulu. The latter is a little six by nine nabob in the lower part of the Philippine islands. The sultan of Solo is the greatest native ruler of Java. He has millions of subjects in his own province of Soerakarta and the most of the 25,000,000 of Javanese people look up to him as the successor of Mahomet and the intermediary between them and their god. I have written something of the sultan of Djokjakarta. This sultan is a much greater man. His capital city is the largest native city in Java and it has in the heart of it a vast palace inclosure containing thousands of nobles, servants and slaves. I am told that there are 25,000 people living inside the palace walls. These include the princes and all the other relatives of the imperial family and their retinues.

They also inclose a vast female population. All Mohammedans have the right to more than one wife and the sultan can have as many as he wishes. He has one head wife and numerous concubines, as well as many female slaves and servants. The women of the harem proper seldom come outside the palace and they are not seen by the men who call upon his majesty. The sultana, or head wife, often takes a party with her when she goes out driving, but at other times the closer forms of Mohammedan seclusion are preserved. The most of the women in the palace are noble women. They are the daughters of the native chiefs and they esteem it an honor to be chosen as wives of his majesty.

How the Ladies Dress.

I have described the dress of the ladies of the Djokja court. It is much the same in Solo. According to law the thousands of women inside the palace wear décolleté dresses. All, except the sultana and the princesses, are perfectly bare as to their shoulders and arms. They have a special pattern of dress which is not permitted to be worn outside the palace, and their sarongs, although made of calico, are very expensive, for they are all decorated by hand by the artistic printers of the kingdom.

The woman's dress is somewhat as follows: First there is a strip of calico ornamented with original decorations about three yards long and a foot wide, which is wrapped round and round the body just under the arm pits, binding the breasts so tightly that it is often injurious to health. The upper part of the shoulders and arms have no covering and there is a strip of bare yellow skin from three to six inches wide between the breast band and the sarong-like skirt which forms the rest of the costume. The skirt is also bound very tightly about the body and the waists are considerably compressed. The Javanese girl is quite as proud of her small waist as her American sister, and she is very particular as to the pattern of her sarong.

Black Teeth Are Fashionable.

She spends much time also upon her teeth; not in making them white, but in giving them the jet black hue which is fashionable among the natives of this part of the world. Both here and in the Philippines both sexes blacken their teeth, and

almost every tribe has a different method of filing them. In Mindanao I saw hundreds of men and women who had their teeth hollow ground, just as though they had taken a rat-tail file and scooped out the front of their teeth. In Java the men sometimes file their teeth to a point, so that the upper and lower jaws each contain a ragged saw, the teeth of which fit into one another like a steel rat trap. The women file their teeth off straight and sometimes cut them down at the sides so that they are almost square. They laugh at the white teeth of the foreigners, and say that we have teeth like dogs, for dogs have white teeth. They sometimes file off or pull out the canine teeth because their teeth resemble dog teeth. A well-filed set of teeth is a girl's badge of womanhood. It is her coming-out dress, as it were. After a girl's teeth have been filed she is supposed to be ready for marriage, and the boys begin to make sheep's eyes at her. The filing is a painful ordeal, and it is not all done at once. When it is first begun it is in the presence of a family party, and a feast follows. After this the teeth are blackened with a mixture of soot and iron filings, which makes them shine like polished jet.

Among the Sarong Makers.

In going through the palace grounds I found many women at work in their homes printing the sarongs or skirts which form the chief dress of the people. Each sarong is about two yards in length and about a yard wide. It is merely a strip of fine white cotton, upon which the designs are sketched out for the printers. The designs are made with melted wax flowing from a little pencil with a bowl of liquid wax in the end. After the design is sketched the dye will only take in the unwaxed parts of the pattern, so that it must be carefully put on. Some of the designs require weeks and months to complete and the skirts when finished are almost as costly as an American gown. The strip of cotton in the beginning is perhaps worth 30 cents, but in the hands of a fine artist it may be so printed that it becomes worth \$30 or more. The commoner designs sell for \$2 or \$3, but there are many which are very expensive.

The work is very hard on the eyes and I noticed that many of the women had on spectacles. Some of these sarongs are printed by machinery, but the handmade ones are more beautiful and are in great demand. There are streets in the bazaars which sell nothing else. Those worn by the men are much the same as those of the women and there are millions of such skirts sold every year.

In a Javanese Court.

The sultan of Solo controls all executions and to a large extent all the punishments of his people. His control, however, is more nominal than real. There is a Dutch resident governor here who tells his majesty how he should act and the Dutch really run all the courts and impose the fines. I saw fifty men and women with ropes around their necks all tied together awaiting trial the other day in front of one of the government offices. They were in charge of native policemen and were surrounded by natives, but the judge inside

the court was a Dutchman and it was he who imposed the fines.

It was a curious sight. The fifty were roped together in such a way that one could not run without dragging the whole crowd after him. On the veranda in front of them were native scribes in turbans and sarongs with kris-like swords in their belts at the back. These were the clerks of the court. Each had a great pile of coppers beside him, the collections of fines and the funds for making the change. The veranda was filled with natives of various ranks. I made my way through the crowd and was admitted to the court room. The judge was a good looking Hollander dressed in white duck, with a handsome young native in turban and sarong squatting on the floor near his feet. The native was the prosecutor and interpreter. As I waited a criminal was summoned. He was made to crawl in on his heels and he sat on his heels while he was cross-examined, the witnesses coming in and sitting on their heels about him.

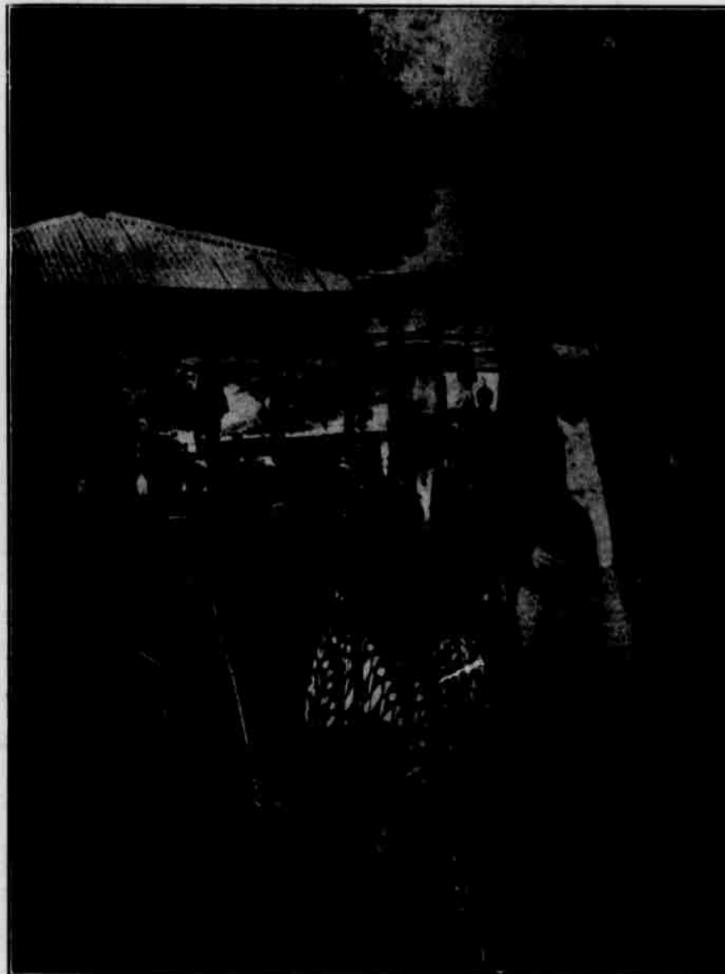
As far as I could see the Dutch judge did his best to get at the truth. He was looked up to more as a father than a judge, and this is the relation that the government tries to maintain with the people. The cases were petty ones. No fines of more than \$10 was imposed during my stay in the court room, and some of the fines were but a few cents. One man had been out without a lantern. A jealous woman was arrested for an assault upon her lover and a very pretty girl was sent to prison for petty larceny. I watched the clerks paying the witnesses. They received 2 cents for each mile they had traveled in coming to the court, and were paid in coppers.

The Sultan of Solo has a large revenue. Everything in the country nominally belongs to him. He owns all the lands and rents out a large part of them to foreign planters. He receives 125,000 guildens a month from the Dutch government and a great deal from his own people. He can levy taxes with the approval of the Dutch resident and he keeps up a little army of his own. He has a troop of thirty cavalry of Dutch soldiers, which always forms his escort and which would in case of trouble take him prisoner, for they are really the servants of the Dutch.

Sultan a Rich Nabob.

The sultan has vast treasures in gold and jewels. His women are gorgeous in silver and gold and the princes and princesses wear diamonds galore. He has his own zoological garden and his stables contain the finest of horses.

The states of Djokja and Solo are in the richest part of Java and they practically belong to their sultans. The sultan of Djokja gets 30,000 guildens a month in money rents. He leases his lands out to foreigners on twenty-year leases. The same is done with the sultan of Solo. In these leases the sultans engage that the natives of the vicinity shall work for the planters one day a week without pay. This is on condition that the rice lands, consisting of half the rented estates, shall belong to them. According to custom, half the land shall be planted in sugar and half in rice and native food crops. These crops are



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JAVANESE CRIMINALS LABELED FOR JAIL.

alternated every year, so that there is a rotation of crops, which is best for both planter and native. The contractor knows that he is to get but half the land at one time and the rent is arranged accordingly. The people work the lands as villages and communities, dividing the crops. While cultivating the rice they have their own head men, but on the sugar plantations they are governed by the planters' overseer and he uses them practically as he pleases. Each planter has his own watchman furnished free by the sultan. In case of fault he can only punish through the sultan, or rather the resident. A large part of the labor is free at least one day in seven. This is due to the sultan as a tax and he transfers it to the planters. The hours of work are from 6 to 6, with two hours off at noon.

He's an Expensive Guest.

These planters live in great state and when the sultan visits them they spend large sums in his entertainment. I recently visited a sugar factory, the lands about which were leased of his majesty. The factor expected to have the sultan go over his plantation and he was anxious to make a good impression upon him. He had put up a pavilion at the railroad station as a sort of a rest house for the sultan and had erected triumphal arches along the line of march. I was told that his majesty's entertainment would cost at least \$1,000 and that there would be parties, receptions and other gay doings. While I was on the estate one of the sultan's officials came out to look into the arrangements for the imperial entertainment. As the official stepped from the railroad car one of his servants held a great umbrella over him to shield him from the sun. Another followed carrying his sword, another with his spear, while the fourth came along bearing his cane. The official was in his bare feet and the contrast between his gorgeous retinue and his own slovenly appearance was striking.

It is a striking commentary on the excellence of the Dutch rule in Java that the natives of the two states ruled by sultans are much poorer than those of the states governed almost entirely by the Dutch. The most of the people here dress in blue cotton. They are so poor they cannot wear the beautiful printed goods they make, although their manufactures are sold in the other states.

Indeed, the women of the lower classes are very beasts of burden. I see them everywhere walking along under heavy loads. They carry fruits and vegetables to market on their backs and on poles over their shoulders. They work in the fields and they are the porters of the markets. The women do the most of the selling in the markets. They peddle about all kinds of wares and have meat shops, dry goods stores, basket stores and vegetable booths. The druggists are females, the jewelers are females and in fact the most of the business seems to be done by women. Just outside the palace city in Djokjakarta there are a score or more booths where women are selling jewelry and powder and paint to the women and others who go in and out of the palace. They sell also costly sarongs and other articles. I tried to buy a few specimens as curios, but found that

the women were entirely too shrewd as traders for my limited purse.

In the Solo Markets.

The women are equally shrewd here at Solo. There are thousands of them doing business in the markets. These consist of vast sheds divided up into booths and of open courts covered with great umbrellas made of palm leaves, with long handles driven down into the ground. Every market woman carries her umbrella to the spot she has rented and plants it. She then spreads straw mats about it and arranges her wares upon them, leaving space enough for herself to squat among them cross-legged. The umbrella shades her and it is made so that it can be inclined to face the sun. There are hundreds of such umbrellas in the market place.

Stroll with me through the great court and take a look at them. We are in a field which seems to be growing umbrellas and under each umbrella is a black-haired, yellow-faced woman, surrounded by piles of various articles. Here is one squatting down among green corn, string beans and other vegetables, there is one selling tobacco and farther on is one who has nothing but corn husks, to be used for cigarette paper. On the opposite side of me is a girl selling tea. Her stock is piled up on a mat on the ground in front of her and she is measuring it out with a little coconut shell. I point to the shell and ask how much and she replies 2 cents, using the Javanese language.

Land of Fruits.

What a lot of fruit peddlers there are everywhere. Here is one at my feet with a heap of pineapples before her. The pines are dead ripe. They are just fresh from the fields and the rich odor of the fruit fills the air. I pick up one of the largest and the girl tells me it is worth 5 Javanese cents, equal to 2 cents American. As she talks I make a note of her dress. She is clad like hundreds of other women in the market and is a fair type of the maidens of Solo. Her complexion is of the color of rich Jersey cream. Her hair is black, long and straight, it is greasy with oil and is combed tightly back from her forehead and tied in a knot under the crown. Her ear lobes are filled with brass plugs as thick as my thumb, the outer end of each plug set with red and white glass to imitate rubies and diamonds. She has on a blue cotton jacket and a sarong. Her

(Continued on Eighth Page.)



A Rat

in the coffee bin—not a pleasant thought, yet when coffees are kept open in bulk who knows what different "things" come climbing and floating in?

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