

Mr. H. C. Cardew, Patrol Officer, conducted a most successful patrol through the Kukurundi and Lower Kumusi Districts. As I said in my last Annual Report, the whole of this country is mostly under water, and no officer looks forward to a trip through it with any degree of pleasure. It is a very large scope of country, and densely populated; therefore it has to be patrolled fairly regularly. Unfortunately, I had to curtail the patrol towards the end, owing to urgent matters in another part of the Division. However, I am pleased to report that the hostility shown by these natives towards the Government is now a thing of the past, and I do not anticipate any further trouble from them.

While I was on the Buna-Yodda-road, I had patrols of police constantly out, and I was in touch with all the natives within 6 or 8 miles on either side of the track, right up as far as Wasida, 40 miles inland. The natives were very good, as although, owing to the dryness of the season, they were short of food, they voluntarily brought in large supplies, such as tara, yams, taitu, and sugar-cane, not forgetting the inevitable pig. After leaving Wasida, I made straight for Kokoda on a visit of inspection.

Three patrols were made from Buna to the Jikivita country, which lies immediately under the eastern slopes of Mount Lamington. Really very little was known about these people, although they had been visited on one or two occasions before, and even now, they are not as tractable as I would wish.

Visits of inspection have been constantly made through the Wasida, Isivita, Sairopi, and Atibaguma Districts, and all the natives in and around those places are under thorough supervision.

I am pleased to report that the Biagis have not shown a return of their homicidal tendencies, which were so prevalent eighteen months or two years ago. The prompt action taken by the Government showed them that both officers and police could get over their country in record time, if they were so inclined, a fact which they had not realized before. Consequently, they think that it is better to conform to the law of the land and make new gardens rather than go on the warpath. While I was at Kokoda, large numbers of Biagis were constantly coming on to the station from right up on the "Gap" on the Main Range. I would have liked to have seen some of the Biagi-Kuru-Kuru people, but they did not happen along just then, although I understand they come to the station from time to time.

Numerous small patrols have been made to various districts in the Division, as well as the usual whaleboat work, but they are hardly worth going into detail.

The Yodda mineral field has been visited sixteen times by the officers from Kokoda to attend to any warden's and magisterial work to be done at that point.

One of the most extraordinary, and at the same time far-reaching, cults, whether it be one of sorcery or totemism I have not so far been able to determine, has extended along the seaboard of this Division, and is universally known by the name of "Baigona," this being a snake of the python family, which has control over all other snakes. I understand it has been in existence for some time, but it has only got a hold in this portion of the Territory to any extent during the last twelve or eighteen months.

The story of the "Baigona," as told by the people round here, is as follows:—

It originated in the Winiafi District, which is beyond Cape Nelson, in the North-Eastern Division, and is situated on the slopes of Mt. Victory and Mt. Trafalgar. It first made itself known by killing a man and making all the other people ill. It then appears to have remained quiet for a little while and not heard of, until one day it killed a man in the Okeina District, which is on the slopes of the same mountains, but this side of Cape Nelson. The name of the man "killed" is Maine—I use the present tense there, because the man is still very much alive. The Baigona took this man to the top of Mt. Victory (Keroro), and, while there, the Baigona cut Maine's heart out, dried it in the sun, and then placed it in his house over the fire, so that it would get well smoked. Remaining on top of the mountain, Maine was initiated into the mysteries of the Baigona science, and given certain medicines that would cure all diseases. He was then allowed to return to his village, taking his heart with him, which he hung up under his verandah of his house, presumably as a token that he was a "Medicine Man," similar to those green and red bottles seen in a chemist's shop in civilization.

Amongst other instructions received by Maine from the Baigona was that he had to proceed up the coast and in certain centres to appoint other "Baigona men," all of whom were to be junior to himself. This he did, and there are "Baigonas" all along the coast as far as the German boundary, and for a long way up the rivers. Needless to say, these men had to pay for their knowledge.

There are only two drugs used, namely Woaje-I (*euphorbia drummondii*) and Damana (*euphorbia rtulifera*). The former is burnt with the coral, when preparing lime for chewing betel-nut, and the latter is eaten with the paw-paw when consuming the nut, therefore both drugs are used in conjunction with one another.

They only have drugs that are beneficial. Now, that is a very subtle move on the part of Maine, because how can the Government interfere under these circumstances. At the same time, they have the power over life and death, because, if they do not choose to give the patient these drugs, or, in other words, the patient does not pay enough, he dies.

The Baigona has influence over the rain, both making and preventing.

The Baigona deals in all matters appertaining to the native, and is consulted concerning them.

All snakes are held sacred, and are not allowed to be killed under heavy penalties.

All the above may sound nonsense, but, from a native stand-point in this Division, it is very serious. It is simply marvellous the hold it has, and it will take years to eradicate it. One of the great drawbacks is that it is impossible to get witnesses to give evidence against the Baigona men. The people recognise that the men themselves have nothing in the way of drugs to harm them, but they fear the Baigona itself, which is all powerful, and is quick to revenge anything done to one of its people. As an example and a curious coincidence, on the 3rd March last Messrs. Carson, Oates, and myself were taking stock in the late Clunas' bulk store. During the morning Mr. Oates killed a snake, and I noticed the natives around looking very grave, so I jokingly said, "Oates, you have killed a Baigona." That evening at 7.30, although there had been no rain all day, the whole of the parade ground was feet under water, and at 9.30 there was a break-away in the creek, and it swept Mr. Oates' house, furniture, and the whole of his allotment (No. 5) into the sea, and all Mr. Oates had left was what he stood up in. I may say that all the houses and allotments on either side were not touched. Could any native want anything more convincing than that?

F.17948.

I

A. E. Oelrichs, Resident Magistrate, from
The Resident Magistrate's Office, Buna Bay, Kumusi Division,
15th July, 1912.