

**THE MIAMI NEWS
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**Startling New Revelations of Weird, Mysterious,
Cults That Have Broken Out Around the Globe**

**Analysis by an Expert of Devil Worship, Sun and
Nudity Rites and Voodoo Sacrifices**

**—TODAY: Africa's Dread "Leopard Men;" Cannib-
als of Central Europe, and the Disappearance of
"Lahissa," Chicago's Amazing Bearded Healer**



EBON RITUAL

Seven Rare Photos of a Priest of Aleister Crowley's "O.T.O." Cult in the Ceremonial "Signs of the Grades." Left to Right: Earth, the God Set Fighting; Air, the God, Shu, Supporting the Sky; Water, the Goddess, Auramoth; Fire, the Goddess, Thoum-Aesh-Neith; The Spirit, First Rending, Then Closing the Veil, and Osiris Slain, the Cross.

Following is the final installment of a series of articles exposing Twentieth Century cult activities by Bruce Grant, versatile young special investigator and journalist.

In his last chapter the author gives a fascinating analysis of the health resort maintained by Pierre Bernard at Nyack, N.Y.; Aleister Crowley's "Do What Thou Wilt" philosophy and Black Mass; the amazing "Lahissa," healer who stunned and engrossed Chicagoans; the Japanese dagger dancers; the war god zealots of Mexico; the "leopard men" of the Belgian Congo, and the cannibal gypsies of Europe.

Pierre Bernard calls his suburban country club, at Nyack, N. Y., a health resort, and his teachings there have intrigued many from New York's fashionable "400." Two of Mrs. William K. Vanderbilt's daughters married members of this cult.

Bernard is variously termed "Oom the Omnipotent" and the "Great Tantrik Guru." His cult is said to be based on the physical, mental and soulful teachings of Tantrism, which is a philosophy derived from the Tantra Shasta, the Scripture of the Kali Age in India. The word "guru" has no ominous meaning, but merely signifies "teacher."

Whether "Oom the Omnipotent" has brought to America the authentic ritual of Tantrism is not known, but when he was under investigation by the authorities in 1911, in New York City, it was revealed that he had what was known as an "Esoteric Circle," or inner sanctum, of his cult, to which only a choice few belonged. He was under fire on charges made by two girls, Zella Hopp and Gertrude Leo, and was indicted, but when they failed to testify at the trial he was discharged.

Pierre Bernard's Phenomenal Rise from Barber to "Guru of the Tantriks."

Bernard has had a remarkable career—for a former Chicago barber. How he received his start in life and how he assumed such an importance in metropolitan social psychic life is an amazing story. He is represented as having learned the rudiments of medical practise from an uncle on the Pacific Coast. Later he is said to have worked in the fruit groves of southern California, and received his mystic lessons from Hindu students.

The "Guru of the Tantriks" is said to have assembled his first set of disciples in Portland, Ore. After his trouble in New York City, later, he disappeared for a time, and later bobbed up in Leonia, N. J., where he met a woman of rare grace. She was beautiful and charming and intellectual. She learned with rapidity the Nautch dances arranged by Bernard. It was this woman, so goes the story, who first gained for her teacher the

attention of various society women, who took up his "exercises."

Oom's dancing partner is given credit for enlisting the attention of the then Mrs. Ogden L. Mills, daughter of Mrs. W. K. Vanderbilt, Sr., toward the "health system of Tantrism." That this dancer persisted until she gained an audience with the beautiful Mrs. Mills, and then danced her way into favor on an Oriental rug in Mrs. Mill's then Washington residence, is the claim made for the charm of the Oom's Tantrik terpsichorean.

When Mrs. Mills became interested in the Tantrik order, she was loudly welcomed by all members. She brought to the cult an added prestige. Many other society folk stormed the doors of Oom's office for admittance. So he took these luxury-loving people, dressed them in bloomers and red slippers, both men and women, and proceeded to put them through the "exercises"—and they loved it.

It was not long after this that Mrs. Mills brought her sister, Mrs. Barbara Rutherford Hatch, wife of Cyril Hatch, to the attention of Oom. And it was about this time that Bernard purchased the grounds of the old Nyack Country Club, and opened up what he then called the Braeburn Country Club.

In 1922 Mrs. Margaret Mills divorced Ogden Mills and married Sir Paul Dukes, the British international secret agent. The couple left this country and went to England.

Meantime there was a divorce between Cyril Hatch and the beautiful Barbara in 1924. And a few months later society received an added shock when Mrs. Hatch married Winfield Nicholls, known as "Harjes" in the cult's inner circle, and first lieutenant to Oom. But this match did not last, and wound up in bitter court charges by Nicholls when he filed annulment proceedings.

Even with the social influence Oom has been able to command, his cult has been frowned upon in Nyack. For this reason it was only recently announced that he had entered politics in South Nyack., where his estate is located, in order to carry out his plans. The death of Joseph T. Gaynor, one of the town's trustees, left a vacancy, and it is said the Oom is promoting Captain Ralph Baldwin, one of Orangetown's firemen. Orangetown is a part of South Nyack.

Then, too, to insure further secrecy from a curious and not too friendly world, he made application this year for a charter for the Biophile Club, Inc, and asked permission to build a private dock.

Probably one of the most picturesque cults was founded several years ago by Aleister Crowley, a lovable and intellectual eccentric. Crowley termed his cult the "O. T. O.," which has been mentioned before in this series. This "Love Temple" was founded on ideas taken from the medieval devil worshipers, and was a revival of practises of the ancient Rosicrucian Order, Egyptian Masonry and plain Black Magic.

Crowley's Activities in Detroit and His Famous "Black Mass" in the Village.

Crowley believe himself an incarnation of "The Beast of the Apocalypse," "Beast 666" of the Revelations, and his creed was "Do What Thou Wilt Shall Be the Whole of the Law."

His cult reached a dramatic climax in Detroit, when he drew into it the wealthy publisher Albert W. Ryerson. Mr. Ryerson turned over his luxurious mansion to the cultists and, one after the other three wives dragged him into court and bared the secrets behind the closed doors of the "temple."

At one time, in his Washington Square studio, in New York's Greenwich Village, Crowley staged a "Black Mass." For this ceremony actually was needed a renegade priest, who had been ordained in and cast out of the church. Crowley himself, garbed in vestments which might have done justice to a Buddhist priest or a Bayswater convict, assumed the role of the renegade priest. He certainly made an imposing appearance, even to those spectators whose common sense forbade them to take the rigmarole seriously.

He had assembled for "the mass" a score or more of his followers—beautiful young women and wealthy young men. In the center of the room was an altar, upon which lay a girl. Crowley, who knew something of everything—Gothic theurgy, sorcery, infernal necromancy, black and white magic, and Hindu mysticism, presented an illusion which threw several of the women into hysterics.

During his chanting there suddenly was a puff of smoke in the center of the darkened room, and from the cloud stepped a negress, who began a weird, barbaric dance. There was another puff and still another, and soon a half dozen black girls were cavorting about the room.

Crowley, after the fainting women had been carried from the room, proceeded to chant a Latin ritual, in which the word Lucifer is substituted for God and the word Evil for Good. By this time the whole room was in an uproar. The scene was

both farcical and melodramatic. To unbelievers it was what is known as "good theatre."

Chicago has not forgotten the tremendous power "Lahissa" held over his numerous followers. He had offered his disciples peace, he offered them health, and he offered them life to be loved at its fullest. He painted a glowing picture of a magnificent "Temple of Wisdom," that was to be a concrete, visible symbol of inward and spiritual grace.

"Lahissa" was Dr. Louis Conde, with deep-set, dark brown eyes and the long black hair and ebon whiskers of a prophet. His temple, which had foundations in his imagination, was to be a masterpiece of the architect's and builder's art.

Night after night his ever-increasing flock crowded the auditorium he had rented. He cured many, as their testimony read later, and his "healings and blessings" were cherished by his followers. He also collected money, in donations from \$5 to \$5,000, for the building of the temple, which was to be an earthly paradise.

But one day Dr. Conde, who had been working hard on his project, left for a vacation in the South. He took along with him his new secretary, Miss Ethel Decker, and her seventeen-year-old sister, Grace Decker. But when his followers waited a long time and did not hear from him or did not know his whereabouts, there was sharp outspoken criticism.

Certain members appeared before Assistant State's Attorney John Nicolai, and signed complaints against the "Miracle Man." They wanted details as to the whereabouts of the money they had contributed to build the "Temple of Wisdom," and some of the women members insisted on knowing whether Dr. Conde had spent any of this money on Miss Decker.

But "Lahissa" returned to face his critics. He publicly denied the charges against him. Three women had him arrested on charges of operating a confidence game. They said he had taken money from them on the promise of making their husbands "successful and wise." Apparently they were disappointed in his powers. "Lahissa" was ordered to appear in court to defend himself against these charges, but he failed to show up and his \$5,000 bond was declared forfeited. He vanished, and with his disappearance the cult collapsed.

At the present time the East Indian Government is confronted by a serious problem of barbaric cultism in Bali, off the coast of Java, Dutch, East Indies. In this Polynesian country recently, has sprung up the age-old ritual of the "Dagger-Cult."

The Kris, or Dagger Dance, usually forms a sanguinary part of this religious ceremony, and is held in the courtyard of the Balinese temple. The dance begins at sundown. It is a revival of ancient practises, and has nothing in common with the highly developed Brahmin faith of the country.

Flower-decked girls are the first to appear on the scene, usually maidens of rare beauty, between fourteen and sixteen. After they strew the ground with their blossoms and retire to a shed off the court, an old man with a short sword rushed into the square like a maniac. This is the prelude to the dagger dance.

Young women then emerge from the rear, in single file, carrying the Kris, or dagger. They begin a weird dance to the accompaniment of tom-toms, and their eyes are wide and staring. Some appear to be under a hypnotic spell, but this is attributed to a hasheesh drink they consume before the ritual. They work themselves into an emotional frenzy and begin slashing and stabbing themselves. As the dance continues the sight of blood rouses them to further ecstasy, and they continue until they are too weak to stand.

This self-inflicted torture is similar to that which marks the ceremony in honor of Huitzilopochtli, the terrible was god of ancient Mexico.

But in the Belgian Congo, between the Republic of Liberia and Sierra Leone, the blood fetish is attended by more horrible practises by the dread "Leopard Men." This mysterious brotherhood of savages, which worships the leopard as a god, has been the terror of Kassi Country, and even the natives of the African jungles have long sought to wipe it from the face of the earth.

Before the novice can be admitted to the dread circle of these maniacal cannibals, he must slay a young and beautiful girl, drink her blood, and eat of her flesh and tear out her heart. The "leopard man" robes himself in a leopard skin, the claws are fashioned from curved steel spikes, and his very teeth are ground to points. He stalks his victim through the jungle fastnesses and springs upon her from ambush, as does the leopard.

A Cannibalistic Cult of Gypsies Is Found in Czecho-Slovakia.

But cannibalism is not confined to the jungles. The whole of Europe was amazed a short time ago, when a pretty gypsy girl

sought out the chief of police at Lopice, in Czecho-Slovakia, and confessed that the big Romany tribe, of which she, herself, was a member, had turned cannibal.

The girl recounted that Sindor Filke, the swarthy, powerful and brutal leader of the tribe, had flouted her love, and she had fled with the sole purpose of revenging herself on him. When the authorities confronted Filke with the charges he appalled them by the frankness with which he admitted that his tribe was a cannibalistic cult.

The gypsy cult was revealed as the only example of group cannibalism that had ever existed in civilized Europe. It was found that there were no laws with which to deal with such an atrocity, as it had never occurred to any lawmaker to imagine the necessity to legislate against such a practise. Filke said his tribe had eaten human beings because of economic necessity—as other meat was too high-priced—but that they had eventually "cultivated a taste for human chops."

Barbaric cultism takes many strange forms. In the district of the waterfalls in the Belgian Congo the natives have a "Cult of the Dead." Their chiefs and head men are embalmed and are worshiped as gods.

When a chief dies his body is placed in a sort of grate made of reeds. Underneath the body a smouldering fire is kept going by the widow or nearest relative, until the body is thoroughly dried or roasted. In fact, it is mummified by the process.

Everything the deceased has worn during life—things which have been carefully preserved—are used as a covering now. If the dead man was rich all these clothes make a huge bundle and his effigy becomes of enormous proportions—sometimes three or four times larger than he actually is. The mummy is finally decorated by experts, who form the various details of the face and paint it over.

When these ceremonies have been completed with appropriate music and mourning, the mummy is carried around the whole village and finally buried. Above the grave the family erects a small temple, where food and drink are regularly brought for the departed.

But to return for a moment to the theme of cannibalism. Learned authorities declare that the original scene of such practises was South America, where the Carib tribe vowed themselves to anthropophagy (a noun derived from two Greek words signifying "to eat man.")

A similar cult flourished in the West Indies. Paleolithic excavations in France also point to the devouring of human

flesh on occasion. Most interesting to the student of anthropology, even today, is the "protective" cannibalism, a magical procedure, by which the devotee seeks to ward off the ghost of a murdered man by consuming a small piece of his flesh. There are many other anthropophagy rituals, but they have perhaps been sufficiently scrutinized in this series in their relations to cults and cultists.