

Quick Silver messenger

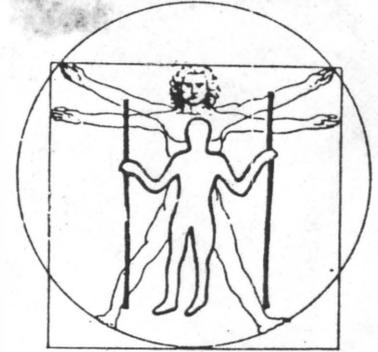


Nigel Pennick Interview

Quick Silver messenger

Landscape Myth Consciousness

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Production]

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Quicksilver Messenger deals with geomancy, traditions and experiments which aim to make deeper and more meaningful contact with the living earth. It is also part of an international conspiracy to liberate the imagination enslaved by orthodoxy. Join us.

EDITORIAL

It's been some months since the last appearance of QSM and I'd like first to apologise for the delay and second, to beg your understanding. Putting together a journal such as this requires a fair degree of co-ordination, contact making, diplomacy and downright hustling. It also requires a location where upon these activities can be focussed which provides an address, a phone, a typewriter and a space just to lay out the paper. Unfortunately, your editor has not had the luxury of these basic facilities in recent months and this issue comes to you on the move. It was worked on in very different locations: the interview was made in a semi-detached house in the UK and was scripted in a garage in Bandung, Java, then typed in a hotel in Jakarta. The finishing touches and, in fact what you're reading now are being put together in North Sumatra. You know the scene: Coconut palms, stinking heat and wierd, wierd music and your editor bashing away at the typewriter. The only difference is that the thermostat on the a/c is broken and it's actually so cold I have to wear a sweater! As a result of these factors the quality and perhaps coherence of production is not what it has been. Nevertheless, we're sure you'll enjoy and find the contents, even if reduced in length, edifying.

NEXT ISSUE

Next issue sees the second and concluding part of the Nigel Pennick. We hope to include more book reviews, some material by Colin Bloy and begin to put information on magical beliefs in this part of the world out.

Cover photo: C.A.

Change of Address (!)

Any mail sent to the old UK address won't be read for some time so, if you need to contact QSM do so at it's Oriental headquarters: c/o ELTI, Hotel Wisata International, Jl. Thamrin, P.O. Box 2457 Jkt., Jakarta, Indonesia. You can send subscriptions here, cheques only.

.....and one last word - stop worrying about the apocalypse over there. We're here to be happy, not to worry ourselves to death!

The Nigel Pennick Interview

Introduction to Interviews in General.

One of the functions of interviews is to play with ideas in a way that's more spontaneous than in the laboriously researched and written article. It's a direct record of an event and not a constructed fabricated thing. If an interview was conducted with the same person on two different occasions with the same questions being asked the result would quite probably be two quite different interviews. So in that context the timing of an interview is of great importance. Different factors impinge upon and influence what's being said. These will include what both parties have been thinking, feeling, reading, what they've seen on tv, who they've been speaking to and so on. The statement that is made can only be made at that particular time when the interview takes place. Consequently it shouldn't be seen as the ultimate, definitive statement by the interviewee. As John Michell said in his QuickSilver Interview, "My ideas are changing all the time".

NIGEL PENNICK - the man and his machinations.

Nigel lives with his wife and a cluster of small children in a small, new housing estate near Cambridge. In that spired city he worked as a research scientist until some months ago. He has played a key role in arousing the contemporary interest in geomancy. In the early '70's he republished a book that had been out of print for years and in doing so drew public attention to a key text on a system of geomancy which was recored (in part, at least) while the system was still in practice. The book 'Feng Shui' by Eitel can now be found on book shelves in many countries and under a variety of imprints. This project was part of a whole series of republishing papers and texts which had been lost for years. This publishing project came from the grandly named 'Institute of Geomantic Research' which he founded with one or two others on a shoestring buget. The Institute was also responsible for publication of 'The Journal of Geomancy'. There was nothing turgid about this now defunct journal which proved to be a stimulating read everytime it popped through the letter box.

His approach to disseminating information on the subject and also exciting interest in it has been entertainingly creative and, extremely energetic. In fact his publishing and writing output bears a close similarity to his verbal output in conversation and in lecture. He has been labelled "Prolific Pennick" and if you've ever subscribed to any of his projects you'll know the cap fits. And in this interview he's wearing it. His commercially published books include 'Zodiacs in Britain', 'Geomancy', 'Hitler's Secret Sciences', 'Sacred Architecture' and a forthcoming title together with Paul Devereux on world geomancy. The second part of this interview will appear in the next issue of QsM.

QsM: What is geomancy?

Nigel Pennick: Ha! Ha! The endless old question! What did I say in my book? I can't remember....Geomancy is defined as the placement of human artifacts, the placement of human building, human constructions in harmony with the natural order and with cosmic events.

QsM: OK and where does the word originate?

N.P.: It's a compound word from Greek. 'Geo' meaning earth and 'mancy' meaning divination. So it's anything to do with divination on or about the earth.

QsM: When did the word first come into usage?

N.P.: Well, it had an early use which was concerned with what is now called 'divinatory geomancy' or 'microcosmic geomancy' or 'punktier-kunst' which is a term some of us use now which is to do with dots or beams or something on a surface making the actual shapes and therefor using it as a divination. The present useage came in I think in 1868 when English and other English speaking misionaries were making comments and reports about Chinese geomancy and they couldn't use the word 'feng shui' ' cause nobody knew what it meant. So they used the word geomancy to describe it.

QsM: When did you first become interested in geomancy?

N.P.: I suppose in about 1966 or 1967. Something like that. Maybe

a little bit earlier. I was interested in the position of buildings and also in the general fact that I could go to a historic town and know roughly where things were. It struck me that the idea of having lived there in a previous life wasn't particularly a good explanation and I came to the conclusion that there must be some kind of inherant structure to these places that had been laid down and that was how I was able to find my way about.

QsM: You mean that you had an intuitive knowledge of where these things were or that these patterns were repeated from place to place?

N.P.: Yes, I'd go along and say to myself "where's the church?" And I'd know roughly where the church was. And I'd know how to get to the market place. It might be something to do with extra-sensory perception or it might be an intuitive recognition of the pattern that underlies these things.

QsM: What was it that encouraged you to become more deeply involved in geomancy at that time?

N.P.: I was interested in the fact that people in ancient times were always beings looked upon as savages, you know the skins and woad

school of archeology. And in fact, people were constructing massive buildings. For example, in the middle ages people were constructing massive cathedrals and you just don't build something like that without principles. I was reading various books on principles of medieval architecture which discussed the symbolism of churches and that sort of thing. And I got into the orientation of the buildings. Round about the same time I visited Stonehenge and that got me into the whole thing of continuity rather than this kind of activity just being medieval.

QsM: What other things were pointing you in that direction at the time?

N.P.: Generally people were talking about ley lines and all that sort of thing. When I was at college I was studying science but I was in college that wasn't specifically scientific, namely Cambridge College of Arts and Technology. A lot of my friends were art students and history students, people like that, rather than the scientific people. And though I was studying science I was mixing with people who had ideas about flying saucers, the paranormal and everything like that. Books were circulating around like Pauells and Bergier 'The Morning of the Magicians' and I suppose I just linked into a general trend of people who were interested in that.

QsM: In your book 'Hitler's Secret Sciences' you stated pretty clearly that the Nazis used magic and geomancy to further their ends. What hard evidence is there for this?

N.P.: Well, there's never 'hard evidence' for anything like this unless you have a picture of Himmler sitting in a magic circle or something like that. But there are things like the great interest in runes in the SS. I would say here that there is a distinction between ordinary Nazis, many of whom were just political people or people who just joined it because it was the dominant force in the country at the time, and the mystical side of the people who were in the SS. There was a whole milieu of Germanic magic which went back to people like Guido von List and von Sebbotendorf and others in the pre-First World War period. Himmler was certainly sponsoring various things. I have a letter from Otto Rant to one of his minions concerned with his seeking for various sacred sites. And recently I've been sent a photocopy of one of Bartell's drawings of what they were going to do to Schloss Webelswerb which was Himmler's headquarters where he had this set up and according to various reports he was having certain meditation sessions there with the idea of regenerating the spirit of Germany.

QsM: What part were the Ahnenebe playing in this?

N.P.: The Ahnenebe was an organisation which was ostensibly into studying the ancestral heritage - as the name implies. But there were lots and lots of side branches connected with it in various ways and they tended to cultivate people who had been doing different things. And so, for instance, Wilhelm Teudt, who wrote the famous book 'Germanische Hilig Tume', in the 1920's, was brought into the organisation and they set up the Feligstette fur Germane Kunde at Dettmold, I think it was. This was an establishment where they were working on ancient German culture. There were lots of little things going on. I think it's important to point out that it wasn't a solid monolithic structure. It was rather like the Earth Mysteries movement now, but with government backing as would happen if we had a government that was interested in that kind of thing.

QsM: Was Adolf himself involved in this?

N.P.: This is a moot point. Hitler was definitely into anything that would further his own power. But I think he was very much a cynical power monger. I think he did believe in having the higher forces guiding him but I think he laughed at the idea of Himmler restoring the Teutonic Order of Knights and medieval kind of thing he was aiming for. But obviously, a lot of the early background stuff about Hitler was destroyed when he took power. Most of the records of him such as records of him in the army were deliberately destroyed at his behest. So if he had been in any organisations the records have gone. The people connected with it are dead except for Hess who is imprisoned and will never be let out and will never be able to write his memoirs. So we'll never know.

QsM: Himmler then appears to be the, er, could one say 'the romantic' ? in the Nazi movement. What other things were they doing specifically to influence events using geomancy as a tool?

N.P.: Well, there was a programme sponsored by the Ahnenerbe and the SS to take over certain German sacred sites of history. And it was more than just the idea of preserving ancient monuments. It was to charge up these sites in order to maintain Germaness. And there's a lot of evidence where they took over certain sites and fought like maniacs to preserve them afterwards. One of the things they were going to preserve was Hitler's bunker from where he directed the invasion of France in 1940. But there were more sacred sites than that such as the Brocken, where there was a top which was doing some strange things. They had other like Frauenberg, the Ecksteinstein and they even put a swastika on Mount Elbrus in Russia.

QsM: So then what were the expected results of this geomantic interference or manipulation?

N.P.: There's no actual documentary evidence stating that they were intending to do something but if you read the works of Gerlach who was writing in 'Germania', sponsored by the SS in the 1940's, he stated that he believed that there was some kind of energy or power which was generated and transmitted along lines and which was enabling practitioners of various orders in the past to send out both spiritual power and controlling energies over a landscape. He based his ideas on what was done in Bohemia in about the year 1000 when the Benedictine monks took over various sites and put monasteries on them in straight lines at fixed distances apart. It was overseen by St. Gunther who was a military monk who was sitting on top of this mountain kind of pinning the whole thing down.

QsM: Were the Nazis trying to substitute a new kind of paganism for the Christianity that had taken root in Germany and in Europe?

N.P.: That's another strange thing. Certain people were and certain people weren't. Himmler made every member of the SS abjure the Christian faith. But when he tried to get the Nazi leaders to do it Hitler said, "Oh well, you know we don't think much of the Christian faith but it's a reasonable thing to keep on now just to keep the people down until we get rid of it." And so only he and Rosenberg actually abjured whereas all the remaining leaders remained Roman Catholics right up until their death. Which again is another strange phenomena because they were all R.C.'s except for Rosenberg. Rosenberg, of course, wanted to set up a kind of mixture of paganism and christianity, a sort of Germanic Christianity where they would eventually have a German church which he partly based on pagan ideas he believed came from Atlantis and also on the kind of ideas of people like Meister Eckhart and the German mystics of the middle ages. He wanted to remove the cross and have

a National German Church with just the swastika and 'Mein Kampf' as the Bible.

QsM: Ugh!

N.P.: But the rest of them didn't really do much about it and, er, remained in the church.

QsM: We've talked a little about the expected results of the geomantic programme, what were the actual results?

N.P.: Well, it's the old problem of the magician, I think. The fact that the magician can produce the magical acts but then finds out the physical part of things can't do it. It was all very well having the magical system but it was just taking on too much between Russia, Britain, America and everybody combined. The actual magical side of things I'm not sure. You could say that it did actually smash Christianity out in Eastern Europe, except where Poland is concerned, but it certainly never rose again after World War Two in East Germany, Hungary and other places.

QsM: In 'The Spear of Destiny' Trevor Ravenscroft mentions a strange experiment in which he alleges that a Rudolf Steinersque technique of ridding a piece of land of rabbits was to crush up the genitals of these creatures and spray the mixture around the borders of the land in question. Ravenscroft alleges that the Nazis, or some of them anyway, used a similar technique to rid Germany of the Jews. Comment, please.

N.P.: I haven't come across that one. It sounds even more weird that the weird things they did get up to. There's an old idea of getting rid of nomads.

There's an old idea of getting rid of nomadic people in Europe. They had concentration camps in Europe before. In Belgium in 1904 they put the gypsies and tramps in camps and they were trying to get a similar system of concentration camps in Britain at the same time to stick tramps in. So there's a long tradition of this awful attitude to people and I think the idea was originally that the Jews were going to be shipped to Madagascar. That was one of the plans. Then things went wrong and they had to think again and decided to murder them all instead.

QsM: The interest in magic and geomancy seems to be a recurring theme in right wing politics. What are the geomantic features involved in the siting of Franco's tomb in Spain?

N.P.: Franco's tomb, which is at the famous Valley of the Fallen in Spain which is a huge shrine constructed by slave labour, I may add, to commemorate the Fascist dead of the civil war - 'cause the communists and anarchists never got a look in - was laid out on centre of a cross between four famous and important shrines. There is a geomantic tradition in Spain which is exemplified by people like Gaudi (he was a Catalan, he wouldn't have called himself Spanish). There was also a rigid and axial planning of towns like Madrid and Barcelona which can still be seen now. I think there is a remainder of the Jesuit system in it. And of course the SS come back into that as Himmler modelled the SS on the Jesuits and there's evidence that the Jesuits were doing various things in the Americas and also they attempted to smash geomancy up in China when they were there.

QsM: So to what extent have the Jesuits been practising geomancy?

N.P.: California has to be seen as part of New Spain. We think of it now as

part of America but it was actually colonised by the same people who did Mexico, New Mexico etc. There's very good evidence that the Jesuits and then the Franciscans who took over when the Jesuits were suppressed in the Spanish Empire, were siting their missions at certain important points. When I was in Canada a couple of years ago I went to the major Roman Catholic church at Guelf which was constructed on a phenomeral geomantic point that was originally founded by the Jesuits in the 1860's. It's very evident that they were put on a lot of sites of course with the intention of pinning down the poor old native Americans.

QsM: Coming back to politics again, do we see the same kind of interest in these things coming from the left?

N.P.: The fact is the right tend to be more religiously orientated even if it's unorthodox religion. Whereas the left are generally Marxist and therefore take materialism as a creed and consequently they don't like to think of anything psychic as being possible. They have to have to shown in a material sense i.e. they'd need to get the instruments out and see the needles flicking in order to convince anybody. Dom Petit Pierre in his book 'Exorcising Devils' claimed that in 1926 when the General Strike was on there were psychical energies coming across from Russia to Britain which were fermenting red revolution here and that he was able to pin them down at Burrow-le-March by exorcisms. But then again, if one thinks of a hypothesis of psychical energy generating these things, anything that's done creates psychic energy. So even if Stalin was having a big 'help the British Revolution' campaign, that in itself would have stirred up psychical energy even if the communists hadn't been thinking of the possibility of it doing so. So we've got to distinguish between the attempted and the accidental.

QsM: Of course the Russians have been doing research over the last 20 years or so into psychical phenomena, some of this has been published in 'Psychic Discoveries Behind the Iron Curtain'. To what extent do you think politically minded people in general are arriving at the point where this kind of information can be used successfully?

N.P.: Well, I think that the military are always open to ideas hence the "crank ideas" being used by the military. The use of dowsing being one of them not that I think dowsing is crank, of course. It's a thing that's not accepted in the scientific text books. But there is a deliberate definite tradition of dowsing right the way through. And you look at the books by Major General this and Colonel that in the British Army. People who I know who have been connected with it have said that the army is always open to any possibility. There's this kind of fear gap thing like the arms race. They'll investigate it just in case it might be possible. Then if it possible it'll have a military application - so we'd better do it before the Russians, and the Russians had better do it before the Americans or the Germans or the British or anybody else. So lots of blind alleys and dead ends will be reached but there may be actually some genuine psychical things. I think what it's really coming towards is the interface between the psychical and the physical. Low frequency radiation and these sort of things are being worked on where you're actually affecting people and you may eventually have some kind of system which is between it i.e. psychical control of something physical.

QsM: Returning again to geomancy, what are the main geomantic elements used in the planning of Hindu temples and to what extent are those basic features transcultural?

N.P.: Well, we have the 81 square structure, square geometry. The Vastu Videa type of principal in having....I'll start again. We have a grided ground plan which is standard thing. It's in Etruscan geomancy, Chinese and so on. You have the 64 squares for the town and the 64 squares for the house which is in the chess board and is in the Artha Shastra principle. And then you have the 81 squares which is the sacred one and you get the layout having the 9 squares in the middle representing the Brahma. They are the sacred 9 squares in the middle. This 9 square pattern exists in many places. In fact I'm doing a publication which has got it in it. And each part of the square, each group of these 81 squares except for the 9 in the middle is dedicated to a certain god or goddess. So the thing is basically centrally planned and it'll be based upon these number of squares and so the directions will relate to the various gods and their attributes. So you have carvings of certain gods on certain fronts of the building. Also, depending on what the building is dedicated to, the dimensions of the building - the heights of the doors and the walls, all that kind of thing comes into it. So you get a very complicated system. In addition, the measure that is used is related to the gods and so it's quite a complex and very elegant system.

QsM: What unit of measure would they have been using in the Far East?

N.P.: Oh, I can't tell you that! No, no, I'd have to look it up.

QsM: Now I'm holding in my hand one of your geomantic compasses which has been redesigned using European glyphs - runes and so on. Could you talk about this.

N.P.: Well, the compass that I've made I've been working on for several years in fact. The principals that I'm using in it are the principals which are found both in Chinese and in Western geomancy. In fact, there's a great degree of overlap in them, namely, as the south being the orientated direction in both Chinese geomancy and in Etruscan augury which is the origin of Western geomancy, the auger or the geomancer facing south. Then everything is related to the southward direction. What I've done here is instead of the 8 directions shown in the 8 trigrams (usual in the Chinese system) I have the 8 direction symbols which are used in the West. Also I have incorporated into it the 16 symbols of the tetragrams (from the Chinese system used in the divination of the I Ching with yarrow stalks where you get the 8 trigrams or the 64 hexagrams.). In the Western system there are 16 tetragrams with 4 which are used in the microcosmic geomancy, punkierkunst. These have specific direction attributes which relate to good or bad directions and can also be used in the divinatory side of things. This is something that hasn't been used in the West for centuries but which is reconstructable.

I've got the 13 fold division of the horizon in terms of the Celtic trees, the division of the 24 winds which again is a Western thing used by Vitruvius and ancient Greek architects and especially in town planning. Then I have positive or negative for incoming and outgoing of various kinds: for doors, windows, structures on the horizon and those kind of things. Also the 24 half months which are found in the Western tradition and also in the Chinese tradition. So there's a very great degree of of linking between the 2 traditions, it's just that the terminology has before now tended to cloud the issue. But I feel that it's not a very good thing to adopt just wholesale Chinese characters and everything. 'Cause as we adopted Arabic numerals which are actually Indian - Hindu in origin, you can adopt certain things, whereas others are transmuted by our environment into our own use

QsM: How could you actually use this instrument in the siting of a house, for example?

N.P.: At the present moment I'm actually drawing up my own tables for use. They are going to take quite a time with all the correspondances involved. There are 2 functions that have to be taken care of. First of all you have to find the site. Now if you have the site already you ~~may~~ not have a good one. Most people don't have the finances to choose any site and of course we've got the restrictions of planning and all those kinds of things in any case. So finding the proper site from virgin territory is impossible. What you would really have to do is look at several sites and see which site fitted the function of what you wanted to do the best. So that's more like a secondary geomancy as opposed to the primary geomancy of going out on the virgin territory and wandering around for months looking for a place.

QsM: I see, so once you've actually found the place how would one establish the orientation of the building?

N.P.: Well, technically the orientation would depend on what was near it. But effectively the optimal direction of a door is southward facing and this was carried out in many places in this country until the last century as a matter of course and even now they're doing it now from the scientific point of view in solar houses and having the main windows facing south. A big development at Pennylands in Milton Keynes has just done that. Then you'd make sure that ~~may~~ harmful effects coming to the building were nullified by means of banks of earth or trees or some other screening. Then you would construct the building for whatever function you wanted and there is an aspect which people are going into again after a great hiatus and this is the actual auspicious time of setting things down. This is where the astrological side comes in in both Vastu Vidya - the Indian system - and in feng shui, and also with electional astrology in the West.

QsM: So how did you actually come to reconstruct the compass? By researching in publications and making comparisons with the Chinese system?

N.P.: I've done that and I've also taken the Chinese idea of the compass as there doesn't seem to be a Western tradition of this that survives. I looked at what the functions of the compass are and I compared them with the same functions in the Western traditions. So now I've actually got a link between the Western functions and the Eastern functions. So effectively it's a completely Western thing based upon an Eastern idea.

QsM: Would you like to clarify that a bit?

N.P.: Well in fact I'm using principles which have survived in China and which have been destroyed or at least broken up in the West. But it's obvious that those kinds of systems were used in the West in previous times. So by using the Chinese model the Western one can be put back in its original context.

QsM: Changing the subject now a bit, you've written about the quality of spectacle in modern life and I'd like to ask you some questions about this. First, what do you actually mean by spectacle?

N.P.: Well, 'spectacle' is where the actual experience of something is made secondary to its recording, or in another way, interpretation. For instance, if

you go to a football match and you see the match as it actually happens. That is a spectacle in itself, but they make a spectacle of spectacle by showing it on television which is a secondary thing. Or you get tertiary spectacle where a newspaper will write about a football match which has been on television instead of something being a primary event. Instead of someone actually going and doing something for themselves and experiencing something directly. We're in a kind of society where everything has to be documented and redocumented and there are action re-plays of action re-plays. It's on video and it's shown backwards and sideways and so on. The television and media were originally showing something or reporting something that had happened, but they actually became parasitic upon themselves. The newspapers are an example of this where they'll be reporting on what Jan Leeming wore on television or something that's even more obstruse than that. The same same thing occurs with the pop music industry. You know, Boy George coming back at London airport - not even commenting on a song that he's sung or his performance. He becomes a spectacle in his own right. It's not a particularly modern phenomenon but it's far worse now.

QsM.: So what we're talking about is a process whereby people are becoming divorced from direct experience. What are the things that make this more exaggerated in modern life?

N.P.: I think that fact that there are so many ways of recording things now. The fact that in the past that if someone wanted to hear someone play 'Moll in the Wod' on a fiddle they'd actually have to go to someone who could play 'Moll in the Wod' on the fiddle. But now you can have a video of someone doing it and so on. And so the kind of production side of things has been tailored to that and everything is seen in these terms. It's rather difficult to put over but.....

QsM.:How does it effect the consciousness of modern man?

N.P.: Consciousness is seen in terms of the format consciousness and that image is the most important thing. You know, "What is your image?" Whereas in the old days an image was merely a secondary thing. The idea in the old Judaeo-Islamic principle of not worshipping images was basically that you are making it a secondary thing. You are worshipping the statue of a god rather than the essence and being of that god. So the whole idea of image as being the important thing is what it's about. You see Margaret Thatcher, she had the image men in and they changed the colour of her hair and lowered her voice and so on and so on. So now instead of whether she's an able politician who can do her job as she says or is absolutely useless person doesn't matter. The important thing becomes what the image is that's put over.



Qsm.: What can be done to combat this 'disease'?

N.P.: Well, I think to make an awareness of it. The fact is it's like a self awareness of these things. The idea of understanding that you're looking at something which is separate. I'm not saying that it's bad for everything - you must have the suspension of credibility to watch a play on tv or at the theatre for instance; and you suspend the fact that you're watching actors and you think they're good actors because they can make you believe in them. But that's something different because it's a spectacle that's being made as a spectacle, it is actually a performance. But it's when everyday life becomes a performance and you've got to have a person behind the counter who performs, or you've got to put over an image, that kind of thing. So, people cease to be spontaneous. They begin to act a role. Not a role which is something they do like the role of a father, or the role of a mother, not that kind of idea of a role. But actually a role in which a person goes to work and they are a 'so and so' and they come out and they do something else and it's another role. That's the bad thing and the attempt is to be spontaneous and be yourself all the way through.

People say, "What do you do?" and you can say, "What do I do? What do you mean what do I do? I'm me". That really scotches them because they're looking at a person in terms of..."Oh, he's unemployed", so that means he's a non-person. Not that he or she's a person in themselves, it's "Oh, he's only a such and such." That's the awful thing of being identified with a role and that's to do with spectacle.

QSM.: To what extent were the Beat Poets like Ginsberg and so on and the whole Beat Movement, to what extent do you think that was involved in cutting through the world of image into direct experience?

N.P.: I think that that was certainly one of the attempts. And it's interesting that what could be called an occult element within the whole of the Beat Movement. I mean the odd references to things like Yacaburma and cabbalistic writers. And there was the whole Buddhist element with it. The kind of general mystical tendency, the recognition there that's implicit or explicit that the only way out of this is a kind of spiritual answer. And it's the influence of Jung and the influence of the non-materialist psychologists come into it here. I think the spiritual angle is something of an answer to existentialism, the futility of life. Or just the general 'do it now principal'. There is this spiritual answer and whether it's just seen as the internal architecture of the mind in a materialist sense or whether it's actually linking in with powers of the beyond... that is definitely the direction things ought to go in. And, of course the whole movement of which my work and other people's work is a part, does come from that kind of rejection of the materialism that came out at the end of the Second World War.

I mean, you had for instance the flying saucer thing which is part of the kind of idea that the world is going to be blown up by nuclear weapons and partly a paranoia that the Russians had got secret weapons from the Germans and also as a reaction the American McCarthyite stuff. But also there's this idea that the Second World War had been the logical extension of materialism. It ended up with nuclear weapons. It was murdering people in factories and bombing cities to the ground, burning them up. It was seen as a rejection of spirituality and a kind of blind worship of material forces. And of course, anything that is imbalanced like that tends to go off.

So I feel that the whole movement of what we're talking about has come out of that period.

The INDONESIANS - Portrait of an Archipelago by Ian Charles Stewart.
Publishers: Paramount Cipta (Indonesia), Concept Media
(Singapore), RKP (UK and international), 1984, £30.00

This is an exquisite photographic essay of a country whose many islands are scattered from Asia to Australia. It is comprised of over 280 colour photographs which are of a quality and reproduction that would allow you to cut them out frame them and hang them on your living room wall!

The National motto of Indonesia, 'Bhinneka Tunggal Ika', meaning unity in diversity is one that the United Nations should adopt. Apart from expressing a sentiment that the present writer wholeheartedly endorses, it gives a clue to the amazing cultural and ethnic diversity that makes up this country. From the precise and stylised movements of the classical dancers of Java and Bali, who celebrate the relate the ancient Hindu stories of the eternal struggle between good and evil with breathtaking beauty and expertise, to the 'primitive nomads of Kalimantan, Irian Jaya and Sumatra there are many examples of cultural styles in between. There's a wealth of human experience in these islands that refreshes parts that no country has been able to reach - for me anyway.

The periods of Indian, then Islamic and finally European influence have left their marks; though these influences have been assimilated into the indigenous cultures and something new has been created. It's part of the genius of the people of these islands to assimilate, adapt and recreate. However, the present onslaught of Western styles, ideas and technology, and its accompanying mechanisation, materialism and consumerism, the 'cultural pollution' that is darkly talked about in some circles in Indonesia could in fact take place to a degree which would have disastrous results. This is a land that is still largely unmechanised - out of the cities and off the main roads. The vast majority of people live close to the land working it by hand. There exists a relationship between people and land that has been all but lost in the west. A culture is like an organism. It can assimilate only so much without losing its essential character. Modern technological influence could have the effect of severely disrupting and dissipating ancient customs some of which have their origins in pre-history. I'm not attacking technology, of course, it can be used and indeed is, to strengthen a peoples identity in relation to their traditional culture. Mono-theistic religions are as big bogeymen here as anything else - same old story really, making the natives change their well tried and tested grass skirts and naked tops for modest dresses and a sense of guilt about their bodies. And it's still happening - believe it or not. Check out your local church, it may well be funding some project like that. It's the old racist/cultural-imperialist line 'white man knows best - the book proves it'. A great selling line but it's running out of fuel. About time the intuition got a fair crack of the whip. A parity, that's all we're talking about, right? And that can't be a bad thing.

This book records some of the time honoured and ancient customs which, as the author says, may not be in existence in 30 years time. Some of them will though because their appeal is strong and their practice popular and wide-spread. And long may they continue giving joy, and a sense of both continuity and community to those who partake in them. Recommended. If you're on the dole get your library to buy it.

Chris Ashton.