

WITCH DOCTORS AND HEAD-SHRINKERS

(Originally published January 1963)

Witch doctors (and we are not referring to the internists in this instance) have come in for their share of belated recognition lately. In the last months, several excerpts and articles have appeared in medical publications extolling the value of some of the primitive methods used by our less civilized associates in healing. Reports from the Amazon River area indicate long familiarity with such drugs as digitalis, curare and the like. The reports we like best, however, are those from a couple of World Health Organization psychiatrists.

Dr. El Mahi from the Sudan has admitted that he has learned much from the native medicine men about handling the new, great personality problems and tensions which have appeared as a result of the rapid changes in African civilization. And Dr. Lambo, a British-trained Nigerian psychiatrist, has taken to prescribing rituals, dances and animal sacrifices for his neurotic patients as part of his community group therapy program.

It may be that some of our own native mind healers could adapt a few of these practices to their séance, couch and ink blot rituals with benefit to all.

And speaking of psychiatrists, we have read the first two installments of the venerable Dr. Jung's memoirs, currently appearing in the *Atlantic Monthly*. Jung's account of his travel with Freud to this country in the early 1900s, during which time they swapped dreams and interpretations over many weeks as roommates, has shaken our faith in the soundness of these founders of modern psychoanalytic methodology. We wonder how this strange couple of oddballs ever managed to convince anybody of anything, much less rise to positions as exalted authorities in their field.