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POLITICS IN THE TORRES STRAITS
ISLANDS

by Jeremy R. Beckett

A thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in the Australian National University
This thesis is based mainly on my own field work in the Torres Straits Islands. Acknowledgement of other sources of information is made at appropriate points in the text.

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Chapter I

THE SAVAGES OF TORRES STRAITS

The Torres Straits Islands occupy a special place in the history of British anthropology, as the scene of the most notable and ambitious of the early field studies, that of the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition of 1898. The team was organized and led by A.C. Haddon and included a number of others who were subsequently to make a major contribution to this and related disciplines. Surveying his work in Torres Straits towards the end of his career, Haddon wrote:

"Since 1888 I have consistently tried to recover the past life of the islanders, not merely in order to give a picture of their former conditions of existence and their social and religious activities, but also to serve as a basis for an appreciation of the changes that have since taken place. It has generally been acknowledged by me that ethnologists should study the existing conditions of backward societies, but to interpret these it is first necessary to know from what they have originated and then to trace the successions of new contacts and their influences on the people. I must leave it to another to describe this metamorphosis."

(1935: xiv)

In 1958, sixty years after the Cambridge Expedition, I went to Torres Straits to investigate the contemporary life of its indigenous inhabitants. Even in 1898 the Islanders had experienced almost a generation of intensive contact with Europeans, and much of their indigenous culture survived only
as a dimming memory in the minds of the older men. Two
generations later there remains no one who experienced the old
life and few areas of island life remain unchanged. The
Torres Straits which Haddon and his colleagues described is
remote from the Torres Straits of today, although some vestige
of it lingers in the traditions of the people, reminding them
of what they once were and of what they are now becoming.

In the present study I am concerned with the Torres
Straits Islands as part of a large-scale modern society. I
shall trace the main courses of social change arising out of
contact with Europeans and examine in detail the contemporary
life of three island communities. So profound has been the
transformation wrought by ninety years of contact, that little
could be gained by a detailed, dual-synchronic analysis of the
pre-contact and present day societies. Nevertheless, I shall
begin with a re-examination of some aspects of the Cambridge
Reports, since it will enable me to show the magnitude of the
changes which have taken place. This, together with a brief
account of the area and its population, will serve as a prolo-
gue to the main body of my study, which I shall outline in
greater detail in the next chapter.

The Area and Its People

The Torres Straits divide the northernmost tip of Cape
York from the southern coast of New Guinea. In the area
defined by latitudes 9°20' and 10°45' S., and longitudes 142°
and 144°, are numerous reefs and small islands, all that remains of what was once a land bridge. The largest island (Prince of Wales) is no more than 14 miles at its widest point. The inhabited islands are widely separated. The southernmost island, Prince of Wales, lies some 150 miles from the easternmost island, Murray, and some 100 miles from the northernmost, Boigu, while Murray and Boigu are separated by some 130 miles.

The islands fall naturally into three groups, Western, Central and Eastern, conveniently demarcated by the lines of longitudes 142°45' and 143°29' E. The larger islands of the Eastern group are all of volcanic origin and support a dense vegetation. The Central group are tiny coral islands, scarcely raised above sea level. Of the Western group, Saibai and Boigu have been formed by alluvial soil brought down by the great rivers of New Guinea, and are flat, low-lying and swampy, supporting only a sparse vegetation. The rest are rugged, hilly and covered with great granitic boulders; they too support only a sparse vegetation.

Physically, the Islanders are Papuans, having a dark chocolate skin and frizzy hair. They are of medium stature and of good physique, being muscular and well proportioned. In pre-contact times there seems to have been some intermarriage between the peoples of New Guinea and Cape York, and the islands adjacent; however, Aboriginal characteristics are rarely apparent in the present population. But there are considerable
evidences of the miscegenation with Polynesians, East Melanesians and Asians which occurred around the turn of the century.

The Savage Islanders and their World

The indigenous population of Torres Straits was small and scattered over a number of islands; no community numbered more than 1,000 and most were much smaller. Some gained their main livelihood from the sea, while others spent much of their time in cultivation; but all were skilled seamen, plying the waters of the Straits on trading and headhunting expeditions. Their technology was simple and they were poorly provided with material goods, but their religious life was richly developed in its ritual aspects. Economic activities tended to be organized on a small scale, but war and religious ceremonies united whole communities and sometimes neighbouring communities as well. Like so many primitive peoples, their social organization was expressed in the idiom of kinship. Each island society was segmented along patrilineal lines, with the groups of wider span becoming manifest only in times of war and for ceremonial purposes. Individual ties with non-agnatic kin cut across these divisions.

There is an extensive literature on the indigenous culture and social organization of the Torres Straits Islanders. Much of it comes from the missionaries, government officials and travellers who were the first to enter the area. But their
observations were usually superficial and often marred by the
preconceptions prevailing at the time. A.C. Haddon first
visited Torres Straits in 1888 as a marine zoologist and it was
what he saw of the indigenous population that led him to turn
his interests to anthropology. In 1898 he returned with six
other scientists as leaders of the historic Cambridge Anthropo-
logical Expedition. The team spent only six months in
Torres Straits, and most of that time on Murray Island and
Mabuiag, though individual members made brief visits to other
islands and to the mainland of Papua. Haddon returned once
again for a short tour in 1914, when he was accompanied by his
daughter, the late Kathleen Rishbeth.

The team's findings, together with detailed summaries and
excerpts from documentary sources, have been published in six
bulky and profusely illustrated volumes, which reflect the wide
range of their interests and the encyclopedic conception of
anthropology current at that time. Though rich in detail
and most scholarly in presentation, their account is sometimes
incomplete, largely due to the fact that they were attempting to
reconstruct a world that had perished for almost a generation.
Haddon collected a number of useful case-studies and Rivers's
genealogical data and statistical analysis of marriage patterns
are invaluable, but inevitably much of the description is
conducted in terms of ideal norms. In a few instances I have
been able to supplement or amend the record from my own
enquiries, but for the most part, their statements cannot now be checked nor their omissions made good. For this reason the summary that follows will leave some questions unanswered.

The indigenous population, which probably numbered between three and four thousand in the 1860's — the time when Europeans were beginning to establish themselves in the area — was distributed among twenty-five islands, though some of these were inhabited only at certain periods during the year. It fell naturally into ten groups, each located on two or three adjacent islands, between which there was little exchange of population. If we can judge from genealogies going back into pre-contact times, there was little intermarriage between these groups. In certain respects these groups were culturally distinct, but it is nevertheless possible to speak in terms of a Torres Straits culture. The Islanders had more in common with their fellow-Melanesians on the mainland of Papua than with the Australian Aborigines of Cape York, but the archipelago has provided something of a cultural as well as a physical bridge between the two land masses. The Cape York natives took far more from the Islanders than the latter took from them. Unique among Australian Aborigines, they used masks, drums and outrigger canoes (Thomson 1935: passim).

Clan totemism and the system of organisation into patri-
moieties extend from Cape York through the Central and Western Islands of Torres Straits (but not the Eastern group) to the coast of the Trans-Fly district of Papua. The two Torres Straits languages are confined to the archipelago, but Ray has classified Miriam, the language of the Eastern Islands (Stephen Island, Darnley, Murray and Dauar) as Papuan, and Mabuiag, the language spoken on all the other islands, as Australian (1907: 511). However, he notes elsewhere that both Mabuiag and the languages of Cape York have certain Papuan features (1925: 14).

Both the Islanders and their neighbours derived a livelihood from fishing and hunting the turtle, which abound throughout the area. Dugong provided another important food item, except in eastern Torres Straits where it is rarely to be found. The peoples of the Central Islands, those living off Cape York and on Moa, Badu and Mabuiag, gained their livelihood mainly from the sea, except for a few wild roots and berries. By contrast, the Eastern Islanders and the peoples living off the coast of Papua, spent much of their time gardening. They grew bananas, yams, sweet potatoes and, where there was swampy ground, taro, in small, individual plots, by methods of shifting cultivation. Economic variation between islands can be partly explained in terms of ecology. The Central Islands are small and infertile, while Mabuiag is extremely stony and thus scarcely suitable for cultivation. By contrast, the Eastern Islands are extremely fertile.
European observers placed the hunting and fishing peoples lower in the material scale than the cultivators. The former lived in fairly small groups, moving their camps at frequent intervals and erecting only the most flimsy of temporary shelters; whereas the latter occupied more substantial huts in relatively large settlements.

In other respects indigenous technology was more or less uniform throughout the islands and broadly similar to that of the coastal peoples of the Trans-Fly region of Papua. The main materials were stone, shell and wood, but metal, obtained through contact with passing European ships, was in use by the late eighteenth century. Woven fabrics of palm-leaf, pandanus and fibres were also manufactured. The people used stone clubs and bows and arrows in war, shell or stone axes in peaceful handicrafts. The Eastern Islanders caught fish in large stone fish traps built around their shores; however, light spears and turtle-shell hooks and lines seem to have been in more general use, while turtle and dugong were hunted with heavy wooden harpoons. Outrigger sailing canoes, often of considerable size, provided the means of transport in fishing, hunting, trading and raiding expeditions.

Population control by means of abortion and infanticide suggest some pressure on resources, but the island economies were sufficiently productive to permit considerable time to be spent on non-productive activities such as raiding, dancing,
trading and elaborate magico-religious ceremonies. Even so, there were often surpluses of produce available for internal and external exchange. Internal exchanges permitted some small degree of division of labour, but many were ceremonial rather than economic in character, permitting the expression and providing a source of inter-group rivalry. In the exchanges that accompanied such occasions as weddings and funerals, sizeable groups pooled the fruits of their labour to provide impressive displays of wealth.

External trade was not entirely lacking in ceremonial significance, but its economic importance is more apparent. Thus, fishing communities were sometimes able to exchange their produce for vegetable foods produced by cultivating peoples. Trade with Papua was of paramount importance since the Islanders, having no suitable timber of their own, were obliged to obtain their canoe hulls from there. These, together with drums and feather ornaments, were traded for a particular type of shell and for human heads.

Island communities traded and inter-married with their neighbours, and also fought with them. War was never waged for territorial aggrandisement. The principal objectives seem to have been revenge for previous killings and the getting of human heads; but women were occasionally abducted and subsequently married by their captors. The significance of head-hunting is now largely obscure. Heads served as trophies
of valour, but they also carried some magico-religious significance and could be traded for other items of wealth. The Torres Straits Islanders acquired a name for ferocity in the early period of contact and evidently prided themselves on this reputation, but it is hard to establish just how frequent and serious raids were.

The Cambridge Reports provide a wealth of detailed information on the magical and religious beliefs of the Islanders, particularly those of Murray Island and Mabuiag. Evidently, this area of life was highly developed. I can attempt only the briefest of summaries here. However, it must be remembered that Haddon and his colleagues were not observing this life in action but enquiring about practices that had been discontinued for a generation and more, and about beliefs that the missionaries had done their best to discredit. Consequently, despite the wealth of detail, there are gaps in the account.

Perhaps the basic concept of magico-religious belief is what the people themselves now translate as "power" - parapar in Mabuiag, or sasirim in Miriam. My informants suggest that the term can be applied to natural phenomena, such as the power of fire to burn or the power of alcohol to intoxicate but usually the connotation is supernatural and esoteric. Today, the God of the missionaries is said to be the principal, but not, I think, the only source of "power". According to
traditional belief, it could be derived from various sources. Some substances and formulae had power as a part of their intrinsic quality; others had power only by virtue of their association with particular events or circumstances. Thus, certain roots and leaves having a pungent smell were always used in ritual activities; on the other hand, bird feathers had no peculiar quality as such, but when placed in the hair to the accompaniment of certain formulae, bequeathed by a culture hero, they won the heart of the girl towards whom the spell was directed.

Numerous spells survive, usually couched in archaic language, which directly or by imagery state the results desired. Some of these are merely traditional; the validity of others is reinforced by a mythical charter, associating them with one of the culture heroes. In the uttering of many, if not most, Miriam spells, it was customary to invoke the names of Malo-Bomai, the beings around whom the major cult of the island revolved. Ritual actions might or might not accompany the utterance.

Powerful objects might be natural, for example the 'sacred light' (Adi Bui) stone of Saibai, or artefacts such as the masks and drums of the Miriam Malo-Bomai cult or the shell chest ornaments of the Mabuiag Kwoiam cult. Such objects were dangerous, if not handled in the prescribed manner. The remains of the dead were also powerful substances. The grease
from mummified corpses, the eyes, cheeks and genitalia of war victims, scrapings from skulls - particularly those of notable personages - were all consumed to obtain additional power in various undertakings. No doubt it was these beliefs that gave to the elaborate mortuary ceremonies and head-hunting their extraordinary importance. It is not clear whether these practices were associated with spiritism, for the Reports pay insufficient attention to this topic; but the spirits of the dead were and still are believed to intervene in the affairs of the living and, under certain circumstances, to imbue them with supernatural power. Ritual treatment of skulls brought dreams in which the dead appeared. I was told that certain practitioners, called madub le on Murray Island, could bring the spirit back to its mortal remains. One informant claimed to have seen this as a small boy, about sixty years ago. The German Wislin cult of Saibai and other cemetery cults of the post-contact period have been mainly concerned with communicating with and obtaining help from the dead. Power could also, under certain circumstances, be communicated from one individual to another through some sort of physical contact.

The magical and religious ceremonies were concerned with almost every phase of life, individual and collective: love, gardening, hunting, fertility, dancing, sickness, personal feuds and so on. The major cult on each island - Kwoiam on Mabuiag (and probably Badu), Malo-Bomai on Murray, Adi Buia on
Saibai - was concerned with war and head-hunting. The rites might benefit the community as a whole, as in the case of war, epidemics or fertility, or the individual, without regard for other members of the community. Thus, one strove by supernatural means to outshine one's rivals in dancing, love, gardening, or whatever it might be, or even to kill those whom one hated.

Knowledge concerning the use of power was always more or less esoteric. Private magic, like craft-lore, was jealously guarded and transmitted only to close relatives and friends. The introduction to the more elaborate, large-scale cults was through a formal initiation ceremony in which boys, usually around the age of puberty, were kept segregated from the women and smaller children, and taught the rules of social conduct and various means of dealing with the supernatural. They were introduced to the various impostures by which the uninitiated were terrorized and began to learn the ritual roles to which they might one day succeed. Probably everyone underwent the terrors and ordeals, necessary to acquire this knowledge, but the greater terrors and ordeals, through which it was necessary to pass in order to obtain a knowledge of the more potent and dangerous supernatural forces, associated with sorcery and spiritism, were endured only by the hardiest and most ambitious. Once established, these experts in the supernatural became powerful figures, through their greater capacity for helping
or harming the rest.

The 'culture heroes' who were believed to have introduced or who were associated with the various rites, were themselves men or, as some insist, spirits, of consummate power, who could transform themselves from one form to another, fly through the air, claim countless victims in war, and win the hearts of great beauties. But like so many other heroes they were not necessarily models of civic virtue. Kwoiam killed his own mother and other members of his own community; Malo, Waiat and Said were great 'larrikins'. They achieved the maximum degree of freedom from social and physical restrictions, but they were not omnipotent. According to myth Malo, Kwoiam and Waiat (of the Mabuiag myth) were all finally brought low by their enemies.

Magico-religious practice in Torres Straits reveals, familiarly enough, a desire for well-being and for power over others, either within or without the community, both on an individual and a collective level. Some practices required the participation of the whole community, or at least of representatives of its segments, and the roles were assigned rigidly according to traditional procedure. Others could be performed individually without particular regard for, or even against, the interests of other members of the community.

The European missionaries and, later, the Queensland government imposed their own system of law and order on the
Islanders. The new regime was already well established when Haddon and his colleagues came, with the result that their account of the indigenous system is extremely fragmentary. The early missionaries and administrators supposed that a significant degree of authority was vested in chiefs, whom they called mamooses. However, this word seems to be a corruption of the Miriam mam mug, meaning red hair, and it is supposed that this was the name of the man whom some Europeans took to be chief. The Murray Islanders tell the story that when their ancestors discovered what the white man meant by the term, numerous claimants offered themselves!

The missionary Hunt, who was on Murray during the 'eighties, states that there was a system of paramount and subordinate hereditary chiefs. Rivers who, "owing to an oversight", omitted to enquire definitely into chiefship and "the administration of justice", guessed that this was the same as the hereditary leadership of the Malo-Boma1 cult, which had become "a sort of hereditary government, whose authority no one would question". My own informants, who had never seen the system in action, agreed with Rivers. However, there is no clue as to how far this authority extended. Rivers also supposed that "the method of government ... was probably by the elders, who followed traditional custom in coming to their decisions". But this notion of gerontocracy may owe more to the pre-conceptions of ethnographers at that period than to the facts.
Concerning the Western group of Islands, Haddon writes:

"Although the affairs of the community....were regulated by discussion among the old men, whose decision was accepted, there were also a limited number of chiefs or head men who had a certain amount of position among the people of their several districts." However, he quotes the missionary, MacFarlane, as saying that these chiefs were "leaders in time of war, who have little influence or power in times of peace beyond their own families." (1888 : 26) He concludes that: "There is no reason to suppose these men had any marked social or political status, and probably their executive power was weak." (1904 : 265).

Writing in 1935, Haddon concludes:

"Any infringement of customary rules of the community was regarded as an offence against society.... Most taboos and regulations arose in the interests of the community, though some were designed to strengthen the authority of the old man. Any infringement of custom weakened that authority and tended towards individualism and disintegration of the community, which was a danger to be guarded against."

(1935 : 289).

He adds that:

"Crimes against the person would be punished by the injured party if he were strong enough, if he were not he would enlist the help of his friends or of a sorcerer. There is no doubt that their general vainglorious temperament led to frequent squabbles, but as a matter of fact most of the energy was expended in words."

(Ibid.)

With so little to go on, there is probably little profit in further speculation. The social order was presumably
maintained by sanctions, both diffuse and organized, and by self-regulatory processes. Probably sorcerers and men of outstanding physical strength and courage were least subject to social pressures and thus most able to give rein to that disruptive individualism of which Haddon spoke. He notes that by dint of blackmail a sorcerer might gain certain privileges, for example, exemption from marriage payments. And he says that, even after the establishment of European administration, a Murray Islander was afraid to claim land to which he thought himself entitled, because the present holder was a sorcerer.

The activities I have described called for organization on varying scales. Gardening, fishing and the practice of private magic might be achieved individually and required at most no more than a handful of associates. A dozen hands would be enough to operate the largest canoe and were more than sufficient for turtle and dugong hunting. By contrast, trading, raiding and the ceremonies connected with the high cults demanded larger numbers and sometimes involved whole communities. I shall now consider the question of group structure and recruitment.

Indigenous Social Structures

The social structures of the various island communities seem to have been essentially similar throughout Torres Straits and I shall therefore discuss them concurrently. The Reports deal mainly with Murray Island and Mabuiag, yielding relatively
little data concerning Saibai and Badu, with which, together with Murray Island, I am principally concerned. However, according to tradition, Badu was colonized from Mabuiag and it would appear from my own observations and from the Reports that the two can be regarded as forming a single system. I am largely dependent on my own research for information relating to Saibaian traditional social organization, and at this late stage much has perished.

According to Rivers, membership of the major social groups was based upon kinship, which was itself determined by birth or adoption into a nuclear family. Each island community was segmented into clans and except in the Eastern group, into moieties, membership of these being determined by patrilineal descent. But each member was linked with his own distinctive set of non-agnatic kin, towards whom he recognized certain obligations and from whom he exacted certain rights.

**Patrilineal Descent Groups**

The people of Murray Island, who, together with those of neighbouring Dauar made up the Miriam community, were beach dwellers, and their major social groupings were associated with continuous stretches of foreshore. On this basis there were twenty-eight clans, grouped into nine phratries, which in turn made up five tribes. Of these groups, only the clans were exogamous. All enjoyed exclusive rights to perform certain magico-religious rites on their own behalf or for the community
as a whole. However, there were also certain cult groups composed of clans or phratries whose territories were not contiguous.

The terms *su nei* - large or more inclusive name - and *kabi nei* - small or less inclusive name - conceptualized this system of segmentation. Thus, a phratry was *kabi nei* in respect of the tribe to which it belonged, but *su nei* in respect of its component clans.

The territorially-based groups were named after the places with which they were associated, while the cult groups were known by the names of the cult in which they became manifest. These names would be prefixed to the words *le*, which otherwise means 'brother(s)', or *boai*, which can also be extended to include all cognatic kin.

The genealogies which Rivers collected in 1898 rarely exceed five generations in depth, and some clans consisted of a number of lineages whose genealogical connection with one another was merely presumptive. It is not now clear whether the wider groups also shared a presumption of common descent. Certain clans, phratries and tribes each claimed connection with certain illustrious personages of folk history (*ad gig*) but did not claim common descent from them.

An apical ancestor was called the *gig*, a word also used for the stock of a tree or for the origin or source of anything.
His descendants were called his nosik; those in the male line his kimiar (male) nosik.

The Badu-Mabuiag community was made up of fifteen exogamous clans, each associated with one or more totemic species (augad) and a residential locality on one or both islands. Several clans whose territories abutted composed a 'tribe', but the moieties might be composed of non-adjacent clans and thus cut across the tribal groupings. The functions of the moieties seem to have been primarily in the sphere of magico-religious activities and we may regard them as more or less equivalent to the Miriam cult groups. As on Murray, only the clans were exogamous.

The clans were named by reference to their totems, the tribes by reference to their territories. The moieties were simply distinguished by the words 'great' and 'small'. In each case these terms were prefixed to the word buai, which seems to be an exact equivalent of the Miriam boai.

Rivers's genealogies, which cover both Mabuiag and Badu, average five or six generations in depth and never exceed seven. As with the Miriam, some of the clans were divided into lineages between whom there was no more than a presumption of common descent. An apical ancestor is called the kuik, a word which has much the same general meaning as the Miriam giz. His descendants are his kazil, but I am not clear whether gar-kazil - literally, male descendants - can be used for descendants in
the male line. The word for branch (*tamu*) may be used for a segment of a stock or clan.

The Cambridge Reports tell us little about Saibaian social structure, and I think that Rivers is wrong on a number of points, though at this late date it is difficult to be certain.

According to my information, there were seven totemic clans, divided between the 'big' and 'small' moieties. Each had its distinctive totemic species, by which it was known, but those of the 'small' moiety had the crocodile totem in common, and two of its clans also shared the snake totem.

There were two villages, Saibai situated on the beach at the north-west end of the island, and Ait situated half a day's journey away to the south-east. Saibai village belonged to the clans of the 'big' moiety, together with two clans of the 'small' moiety and sections of two others. Only one clan was exclusively associated with Ait. The clan which had the crocodile as its sole totem was divided between the two villages and the two segments inter-married with one another. But this had not occurred in the case of the heron clan, although it too was territorially divided. Indeed, it constituted a single exogamous unit with the pig clan, with whom it shared the snake totem. Thus, the seven exogamous groups into which the society segmented did not coincide with the seven totemic clans.

Rivers suggested that the Saibaian moieties, unlike those of Badu-Mabuiag, were intended to be exogamous and were only
prevented from being completely so through their unequal size (Haddon, 1904: 177-9). He presents a table of marriages which seems to bear out his argument, but since he ignored the existence of certain exogamous totemic clans, his data are open to doubt.

Rivers obtained no genealogies on Saibai. Those I recorded average five to six generations in depth, though a few cover eight. In only two clans could all the members trace their origin to a common ancestor. There was no genealogical connection between the segments of clans living in different villages.

The Saibaians speak a dialect of the Mabuiag language and the terms they use in connection with their segmentary organization are identical.

The relation between clan membership and residence is not altogether clear. All that Rivers says concerning the Miriam rules of residence is that a man did not necessarily live on the territory belonging to his clan. However, my own informants insisted that residence was normally patri-virilocal. One recalled a saying that a male member of a clan was 'forever pig' (nial borom), meaning that he was like a pig, penned up in one place.

Miriam marriage ceremonial enacts a transfer of the bride from her parents' to her husband's group, and wedding songs, both old and new, speak of her departing to her new home.
Today, although resettlement has resulted in the scattering of male clan members, most couples reside with the husband's close patrilineal kin. Rivers was told in Mabuiag that a newly-married couple often went to live with the wife's parents (Haddon 1904:229). Applied consistently, this would amount to a rule of matri-uxorilocal residence. However, perhaps Rivers's informant meant that the couple would only remain with the wife's parents during their lifetime, returning to the husband's patriclans brothers thereafter. Wilkin cites instances in which a woman's parents would come to live with her husband (Haddon 1904:288), but this may have been only when they had no male children. Murdock's conclusion from the Reports is that residence was bilocal (1949:235).

Wedding ceremonial had and has much the same character as on Murray. Today, as on Murray the male members of the Mabuiag clans are scattered, as a result of resettlement, but most couples reside with the husband's close patrilineal kin. My Saibai informants insisted that residence among them has always been patri-virilocal, and it remains so today.

Although a man normally inherited most of his property rights from close patrilinear, he might also inherit from his mother. Women often succeeded to a plot of land at marriage and to the whole of their parents' estate if they had no brothers. On Saibai, land was also transferred by way of marriage payment.
Wilkin's account of inheritance on Mabuiag seems convincing. He stated that the clans had collective rights over the reefs fronting on their territory and to certain tracts of land, but that other tracts were owned by clan segments or by individuals. Thus a man, and perhaps his brothers, inherited land from their mother, any land their father had inherited from his mother - and so on. It is not known whether brothers divided this inheritance or held it in common. Wilkin draws an interesting contrast with the inheritance of canoes, which passed only to sons or, if there were none, to the owner's closest patriline. I was unable to check this account against the contemporary system on Badu, since canoes are no longer owned and the old system of land tenure has been abolished for some years. However, it tallies with the Saibai system, which seems to be essentially similar. Here brothers hold their private estate in common and their male descendants likewise.

On Murray Island, the clans had communal rights over the reefs and fish traps opposite their stretches of foreshore, but garden land seems to have been owned individually or by smaller groups of close patriline. This is certainly the case today, and I have no reason to suppose that the system has changed very much. Female heirs received a portion apart from the male heirs. The latter might divide their inheritance, but if they did not the next generation would almost certainly do so. Wilkin makes no mention of canoe inheritance and since these
have not been in use for sixty years I could not make good
his omission.

Though the Miriam clans did not collectively own any
garden land, it seems that certain tracts in the vicinity of
the clan residential land were inherited in the male line
only. Thus, as on Saibai and Mabuiag, substantial blocks of
land remained associated with each clan. Inheritance through
both parents prevented the interior of an island from being
divided into clan blocks. Particular holdings might be widely
scattered - a fact that was made amply clear to me on Murray
in the course of surveying some of them.

It appears from the Reports that the magico-religious
life of Murray Island and Mabuiag was largely organized on
segmentary lines. Little mention is made of Saibai in this
connection and it is now too late to obtain the necessary
information. Clans or combinations of clans were vested with
the right to perform certain rites either on their own behalf
or on that of the whole community, or to play a particular part
in ceremonies involving others. But it may be that certain
ceremonial rights, such as the wearing of masks, may have been
vested primarily in certain lines and only secondarily in the
clan as such. However, cult groupings in Murray Island did
not cut across clan divisions as they sometimes did phratry
and tribal divisions. In Mabuiag (and, I presume, Badu) the
moieties, whose functions seem to have been mainly religious,
similarly cut across the localized tribal groupings.

This division of labour in the religious sphere had its counterpart in the secular sphere, particularly on Murray Island. Thus one tribe devoted its energies to gardening, trading its surpluses of vegetable foods for fish. Another tribe served as middlemen between the other tribes and Papuan traders. This degree of specialization does not seem to have occurred on Badu and Mabuiag or on Saibai, although there were some exchanges of produce between localities.

The Mabuiag system of chieftaincy was also based on a segmentary system. Haddon reports that there were two chiefs for each tribe, either one from each of the major component clans or one from each of the two major segments of the principal clan. Those few clans without their own chief were either very small or had died out in the male line. But if chiefly office was hereditary, as Haddon suggests, it was primarily vested in one particular line and only secondarily in the other branches of the lineage or clan. One of the chiefs seems to have been primus inter pares, but the nature of his primacy is obscure.

The Reports assign only one chief to Badu, but my own informants insist that there was one for each tribe. There seem to have been chiefs on Saibai and Murray Island, but the relation of this institution to the system of social organization is unknown. If, as earlier suggested, the chiefs were essentially war leaders, it seems probable that the groups with
which they were associated formed separate cohorts in battle.

Only in the case of the Badu-Mabuiag community were clans distributed over more than one island. But Saibai, Boigu, Dauan and some of the neighbouring Papuan peoples had much the same totemic clan organization and extended a sort of courtesy membership to one another. Similarly, visitors from other islands sought hospitality from those with whom they shared at least one clan totem. The Eastern Islanders were excluded from this arrangement by being a non-totemic people, but seem to have relied upon real or fictive inter-personal kin ties. Membership of shared or related cult groups may also have provided a mode of entree from one island to another.

The three societies I have been describing were all organized along segmentary lines, according to the principle of patrilineal descent. However, the manner of segmentation is somewhat unusual in Melanesia in that while groups A, B, C and D might associate together for certain purposes, another situation might find A and B in association with P and Q, to the exclusion of C and D. In the Miriam system, the clans may be regarded as the basic units, inasmuch as their component segments were not independently associated with segments of other clans, in the way that tribal segments were. By contrast, in the Badu-Mabuiag community, a clan might be divided between the two islands, each segment thus belonging to a different tribe, although to the same moiety. The same is true of those
Saibai clans divided between the two villages.

The exogamous clans varied in size between the three communities. We have no actual figures, of course, but an average size can be calculated by dividing the estimated population at time of contact (see footnote 3) by the number of clans. Thus the twenty-eight Murray Island clans numbered, on the average, 28.5 or 35.7, according to which estimate one accepts. The eight Saibai clans averaged 75 members. We have no population estimate for Badu, but supposing that the combined Badu-Mabuiag community numbered 700 - a fairly likely guess - the fifteen clans averaged 46.6 members.

The units at the lower levels of segmentation formed around interests of day-to-day importance such as land-use; those at a higher level around more occasional interests, such as the performance of magico-religious ceremonies once in the year or even less frequently. However, the need to perform these major ceremonies, and to combine for defence and offence, rendered the segments of a society interdependent in a way that they were not in their daily lives.

The paucity of information prevents us from answering a number of questions relating to segmentary systems. For example, we do not know whether the Torres Strait systems were static or whether new groups emerged from time to time. However, the practice of abortion and infanticide, which seems to have been widespread, may have meant that groups did not exceed a certain
size, while the equally widespread practice of adoption may have prevented groups from dying out. It is difficult to determine to what extent these societies can be appropriately termed agnatic. Real or fictive patrification determined membership of the major enduring groups, but not even all of the clans retained a unitary genealogical structure, while the groups of wider span had no genealogical structure at all; neither did any of these groups unite in any form of ancestor cult. Finally, the question of residence remains unclear.

If full agnatic descent is typified by African societies like the Tiv, the term cannot be applied to the Torres Straits Islands; yet it seems that group recruitment is not so loose as to merit the term "cumulative patrification" which Barnes has applied to some New Guinea Highlands societies (1962 : 6).

I shall now consider the question of individuation.

**Kinship Terminology and Non-Agnatic Ties**

Murdock has classified the Mabuiag system of kinship terminology as Hawaiian (1949 : 235) and the Miriam system as Iroquois (1949 : 237). The two systems are, in fact, very similar, some of the terms being mere dialectical variations of one another. The distinction lies in the failure of the Mabuiag system to distinguish between parallel and cross-cousins as the Miriam does. Curiously enough, the Saibaians, while using a terminology identical to that of Mabuiag, also make the same distinction as the Miriam, using a term for
cross-cousin which is a dialectical variant of the Miriam form. This means that they too must be classified as Iroquois.

Murdock, following Rivers, supposes that the Miriam had no special term for father's sister; but this proves to be incorrect, although no alteration in his classification is required.

In both systems, kin in the second descending generation are all designated and addressed by a single term. The same is true for the second ascending generation in the Miriam system, while in the Mabuiag system they are distinguished only by sex. The rest of the system is more complicated and can best be presented in tabular form.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ego addresses:</th>
<th>Miriam</th>
<th>Mabuiag</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Same-sex siblings</td>
<td>le</td>
<td>tukoiab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opposite-sex siblings</td>
<td>berber</td>
<td>babat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father &amp; father’s le/tukoiab</td>
<td>baba</td>
<td>baba (tati)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother &amp; mother’s le/tukoiab</td>
<td>ama</td>
<td>ama (apu)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same-sex child of baba or ama</td>
<td>le</td>
<td>tukoiab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opposite-sex child of baba or ama</td>
<td>berber</td>
<td>babat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father’s berber/babat</td>
<td>nerbet</td>
<td>neubet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother’s berber/babat</td>
<td>awa</td>
<td>awa (wadwam)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same-sex child of nerbet/neubet or awa</td>
<td>negwan</td>
<td>tukoiab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opposite-sex child of nerbet/neubet or awa</td>
<td>negwan berber</td>
<td>babat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own male child or of le/tukoiab or of same-sex negwan</td>
<td>werem</td>
<td>kazi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female ditto</td>
<td>neur</td>
<td>kazi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child of berber/babat or negwan berber</td>
<td>nunei</td>
<td>awa (wadwam)**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:** Mabuiag bracketed terms are referential.

* In Saibai, the term negwan is used for kinsfolk in this category.

** In the Mabuiag system, child of babat and parents’ babat address and refer to one another by reciprocal terms.

It will be evident to the reader by now that although full siblings are the primary recipients of the terms le/tukoiab and berber/babat, more distant kin in an equivalent position
are also included within the class. The rest of the exposition must be understood in this sense.

The distinction between cross- and parallel-cousins in the Miriam and Saibai systems is not all-pervasive. Ego does not distinguish between the children of these two categories of cousin, nor between the children of his parents' parallel- and cross-cousins. Thus, in this respect the Miriam and Saibai systems differ from the Mabuiag only in the terms used in ego's generation.

The terminology for affinal kin is somewhat hard to understand, but it seems to show the influence of sister-exchange marriages which were commonly, though by no means universally, practiced. Thus, the wife of the wife's brother is babat or barbet (i.e. sibling). In the Mabuiag system, ego addresses and is addressed by his wife's babat as imi; his wife's sister is ngaubat, and all his wife's kin of her parents' and grandparents' generation are ira. The spouses of those whom he calls kazil or awa are also ira. But the children of imi are wadwam, while the children of ngaubat are kazil. This seems to be a sort of reciprocation of the fact that imi calls ego's children wadwam, while ngaubat calls them kazil. But if there had in fact been a sister-exchange, the children of imi would be wadwam by being the offspring of ego's sister. The terms for parents' siblings are extended to their spouses: thus, the term for
father's-sister's-husband is the same as for mother's brother, as one would expect if a sister exchange had occurred; however, surprisingly, the term for mother's-brother's-wife is the same as for mother.

The Miriam system seems to be essentially the same, except that all wife's kin of her own and ascending generations are called najwet and referred to as awim.

If present practice is any indication, relatedness, whether consanguineal or affinal, constituted a charter for association. But it is evident that kinship terms can be extended to include a large part of the community, far more than any one would normally need to help him in his affairs. Patrilineal kin associated in certain activities, whatever the degree of their relatedness and whether or not it could be traced genealogically. Among non-agnates, there was probably some room for individual choice of associates with a tendency to select closer kin and to ignore and finally forget more distant ties.

The rules of exogamy provide an instance of this system in practice. Stated roughly, it was forbidden to marry with those kinsfolk with whom one was likely to associate. During the negotiation and celebration of a wedding, there was often considerable antagonism between the parties of bride and groom, which was permitted limited and formal expression at certain phases of the transaction, but which occasionally got out of
control. One of my informants suggested that the rules of exogamy were a means of avoiding such antagonism arising between kin (c.f. Firth 1936: 338). However, it was considered positively desirable to marry certain categories of very distant kin in order to contract a relation that was becoming too extended to be effective. One informant likened this process to the unrolling and rolling of a mat.

According to Rivers's Mirm informants, one might not marry members of one's own clan or that of one's father's mother, mother and possibly mother's mother. Certain other individual kin, such as mother's sister's child, were also inaccessible. Indeed, Rivers suspected that genealogical relatedness might be the real criterion. In none of the few instances in which individuals had married into forbidden clans, were the couple genealogically related. These rules persist to the present time and are observed with fair regularity.

Rivers's Mabuiag informants seem to have phrased their exogamy rules in terms of categories of kin - for example those whom ego called 'sibling of opposite sex'. However, as Rivers observes, this term could be extended so far as to render marriage almost impossible. In practice, as one can see from an examination of the genealogies, the system seems to be much the same as on Murray Island.

"... marriages between people nearly related to one another never occurred, while marriages between people related to one another even remotely were rare. No
single case occurs in Mabuiag or Badu in which marriage has taken place between own brothers and sisters, and no definite case between habab of the same clan. Only one case is recorded of marriage between first cousins and that is one in which it is almost certain that the genealogical record is incorrect. On the other hand, sixteen cases at least are recorded in which marriage has taken place between people related to one another by some degree of cousinship more distant than that of first cousin. In nearly all these marriages the relationship is either very remote (third cousins or second cousins once removed) or there are extenuating circumstances...."

(Haddon 1904 : 239).

So far as Badu is concerned, the rules have not changed very substantially, except that shorter patrilineages constitute the exogamous units instead of the old totemic clans. On Saibai the old system was almost certainly similar to that of Badu-Mabuiag and remains scarcely altered today.

Rivers confesses that he took too little account of individual kinship roles while he was on Murray Island, only realizing the importance of this problem when he reached Mabuiag. Non-agnatic ties were evidently important; relatives might adopt one another's children, borrow land and property, and request help in various undertakings. The importance of the mother's brother - sister's son relationship is particularly stressed throughout the Islands. The uncle took his nephew through the initiation ceremonies and figured prominently in the negotiation of his marriage, sometimes even providing his own daughter in a 'sister' exchange. On
growing up, the nephew must present his uncle with a substantial gift so that he might use the latter's property "without shame".

The negotiation and celebration of a wedding was often fraught with antagonism between the parties of bride and groom, and the mode of compensation of the bride's parents, intended to repair the breach, was in fact highly ambiguous. Affines were supposed to associate with one another harmoniously after the marriage had been effected, but relations remained somewhat formal. A man was formerly required to avoid his wife's mother, and even today affinal kin do not use one another's personal names. Rivers also notes that if a man were travelling in his wife's brother's canoe he must do all the work. At a funeral, the bereaved kin were considered to be so prostrate with grief that their affines must assume the responsibilities of the mortuary rites on their behalf and call them back to normal life at the end of the mourning period. The bride's kin renounced most of their rights over her once she was married. They should not intervene on her behalf in a quarrel; indeed, Haddon claims that a man had the right to kill his wife. But while her kin might prudently refrain from intervening in ephemeral family quarrels, I find it hard to believe that they would accept her death except when her offence was extreme. (A Boiguan informant strongly contradicted Haddon's view). Where organization ran along strictly segmentary lines, as with religious life, there would be little
room for conflict between agnatic and non-agnatic ties. But
in disputes and fights one's loyalties might well be divided.
Rivers indicates that on Mabuiag (and probably on the other
islands, also) such cross-cutting ties acted as a brake. Thus,
if a man had a wadwam (awa) in another community, he would feel
constrained to warn him if his own people were about to make an
attack. It was said that if in battle a man went over and
stood beside his wadwam on the other side, fighting would cease.
No doubt the relationship served a similar function within the
community.

It would seem that no large-scale enduring groups were
recruited on any non-agnatic principles, though significant
ad hoc groups, based on cognatic kinship at weddings (when the
persons of reference were the bride and groom) and probably at
work bees, emerged at certain times. However, the record is
so defective in this respect that no final statement can be
made as to the degree of patrilineal emphasis.

Conclusions

The individualistic character of many phases of traditional
Torres Strait Island life was countered by large-scale
organization in others. Thus, the rigidly structured segmentary
groups, which were in effect non-voluntary associations, were
countered by the system of individuation which cut across them
and probably allowed some room for personal choice of associates.
Similarly, the freebooting character of sorcery and other forms
of private magic was countered by the various forces working for the stability of the social order and the observance of a public morality. Again, individualism in economic activities was countered by the large-scale organization of the great magico-religious ceremonies. Indeed, these provided virtually the only occasion in which the wider segmentary groups acted corporately, and the socially recognized need to perform them rendered the segments dependent upon one another. Community integration may not have been primarily a function of these ceremonies, as among some peoples; the populations and islands on which they lived were too small for that; but they certainly intensified integration and gave it formal expression.

The processes of pacification, industrialization and religious conversion, following intensive contact with Europeans, deprived the larger enduring groups of much of their significance. War and the religious and ceremonial life came to an abrupt end; residence patterns were seriously disrupted, and the importance of the subsistence economy was reduced by industrialization. In some instances old groups took on new functions, but the long-term tendency has been for them to atrophy, while new ones emerged organized on different principles. Smaller-scale groups have been less radically affected. The classificatory kinship terminology is still in use, exogamy rules are generally observed, some attention is still paid to kinship rights and obligations at the interpersonal level, and
on most islands the traditional system of land-tenure persists. But the distinction between agnatic and non-agnatic kin has lost much of its importance. Moreover, although kinship is stressed, it may now serve only as an ideological legitimation for alliances which are primarily based upon other principles.

Notes to Chapter 1

1. In addition to its leader, A.C. Haddon, the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition of 1898 included W.H.R. Rivers, C.S. Myers, William McDougall, C.S. Seligman, S.H. Ray and Anthony Wilkin. Ray's interests were exclusively linguistic; McDougall was largely concerned with psychology; the others ranged more widely in their enquiries. With the exception of Wilkin, who died soon after the Expedition's return, all subsequently made a significant contribution to one or other branch of the study of man.

2. The titles of the volumes, listed below, reflect the Expedition's wide range of interests.

I. General Ethnography. (This is actually the latest volume in which Haddon summarizes and supplements information presented in earlier volumes).

II. Physiology and Psychology. Pts. 1 & 2.

III. Linguistics.

IV. Arts & Crafts.

V. Sociology, Magic & Religion of the Western Islanders.

VI. Sociology, Magic & Religion of the Eastern Islanders.
3. Regular censuses were not taken until 1913, by which time serious depopulation had occurred. However, some estimates of the populations of particular islands were made around 1870, and a few even earlier. It seems probable that at this early date contact with Europeans had been too recent and too superficial for populations to be radically affected. Below I list the islands inhabited at this time and their estimated populations, where these are available.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Island</th>
<th>Estimated Pop.</th>
<th>Date of Estimate</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Murray &amp; Dauar</td>
<td>800-1,000</td>
<td>1872-3</td>
<td>L.M.S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darnley</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>pre-1871</td>
<td>&quot; &quot; &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephen</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rennel</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yorke</td>
<td>80-90</td>
<td>1873</td>
<td>L.M.S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warrior I. &amp; Yam</td>
<td>200+</td>
<td>1873</td>
<td>&quot; &quot; &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sue &amp; Naghir</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>1846</td>
<td>McGillivray</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dalrymple</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1792</td>
<td>Lee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auedd</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prince of Wales</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moa</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>pre-1875</td>
<td>L.M.S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Badu</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mabuiag</td>
<td>300+</td>
<td>1872</td>
<td>L.M.S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saibai</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>1873</td>
<td>Moresby</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dauan</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boigu</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The significance of the Central Island estimates is uncertain, not merely because these were made at different
dates but because the populations were migratory and it is possible that the estimates overlap. However, if we accept these estimates we reach a figure of between 3,000 and 3,500. Of the islands for which no estimates are available, only Badu and Prince of Wales seem to have had numerous inhabitants — perhaps 200-300 each. The populations of Buan, Boigu and Stephen Island were small — perhaps 100-150, while those of Aureed and Rennel probably less than 100.

Sources: L.M.S. — Records of the London Missionary Society. For McGillivray and Moresby, see Bibliography.

4. Rivers's original intention was to obtain genealogies for tracing the inheritance of colour blindness; he therefore took no account of adoptions and his objective was to achieve the greatest possible depth. Genealogies, then, were often the joint product of a number of older men, some of whom may have been experts in this field of knowledge. Thus we get little idea of the average extent of genealogical knowledge or of the process of forgetting.

5. My own information as to which clans belonged to which moiety differs from that given to Rivers. However, it is possible to rearrange his table of inter-clan marriages, and in any case the predominance of inter-moiety over intra-moiety marriages is still apparent.
6. The equation of WBM with Z is also characteristic of exogamous moiety organization. However, there is no evidence of moieties on Murray, and the moieties on Badu and Saibai were not exogamous, though Haddon suspects that they may once have been so.
Almost a century ago Australia expanded its effective frontiers to embrace the Torres Straits Islands and Europeans established a permanent presence in the area. Commercial interests came to exploit its marine wealth and cheap native labour; missionaries to convert the heathen, and representatives of the Queensland Government to maintain its law and order among white and black. Yet the area has always remained on the fringes of modern civilization. Its commercial importance has never been great and is now declining, while the work of government and missionaries has aroused little interest in the outside world. Its European population has always been tiny and Thursday Island, the settlement where it is concentrated, is known only as a remote and unimportant outpost of civilization, 500 miles from Cairns, the nearest town of any size, 1,500 miles from Brisbane, the State capital, and bypassed by all the major travel routes. Thursday Island is 'at the end of the line': beyond it lie the other islands of the group which, being reserves, are closed to all but a few specially authorized Europeans.

The size of the indigenous population is uncertain (see
Appendix) but it probably exceeds 7,000, of whom perhaps 400 are resident on the Mainland. The remainder still live in Torres Straits, some 400 on Thursday Island and the others on outlying islands and settlements. To them Thursday Island is the threshold of the outside world and the point at which the external forces impinging upon their lives become manifest in the form of human representatives and material objects.

The Problem Defined

The Torres Straits Islands are considered here as a field of social relations, the geographical limits of which can be defined but the social limits only arbitrarily, for the convenience of study (c.f. Epstein 1958: xiv). This field includes both Islanders and Europeans who are linked to one another by multiple ties of interdependence; nevertheless, the dominant cleavage is that which divides them. In this study, the social system will be considered only insofar as it concerns the native section of the population, and more particularly those who still live on their home islands.

The general problem is to establish how far the Islanders' social behaviour is determined by external factors and how far it remains autonomous. We may call those aspects of European society which impinge upon their lives a social environment. Certain of the relations in which the Islanders are involved with one another arise in response to the demands made and the opportunities offered by this environment; others are spontaneous.
ous in the sense of not being conditioned by it (c.f. Homans 1951 : 175). However, the two sets of relations, which correspond to Homans's external and internal systems (1951 : 90-1), are mutually dependent. The Islanders' lives are partly conditioned by the environment, but they are to some degree free to determine how and how far they respond to it, and they are even able to modify it in certain respects.

The aspect of this problem with which I shall be particularly concerned, is the way in which the Islanders actively seek to influence the decisions which affect their lives. In short, this is a study of politics among a partially dependent people.

Smith defines as 'political' action which "seeks to influence the decision of policy" (1956 : 48). The process of policy decision, he writes, "always occurs within the context of competitive action by individuals and groups", and in terms of power and influence (ibid). Policy defines a programme of action, the execution and organisation of which is achieved by administrative process. The political and administrative processes are interdependent systems of action, components or aspects of government, which is "the process by which the public affairs of a people or social group are directed and managed". (1956 : 47; see also Smith 1960 : 15-33).

Barnes, discussing Smith's terminology, emphasizes that "Public and private are relative terms, and in this sense
government is also relative." (1959 : 14). So defined, it is not only some "widest effective group" which has government, but also groups of lesser span which retain some measure of autonomy in respect of certain activities. One might even speak of the domestic family having some kind of internal government, though it might not often be useful to view it in this way (c.f. Mair 1962 : 62). The point becomes particularly important in studies of segments of modern societies, for example rural communities, which may be little concerned with national or even municipal government — as these terms are ordinarily understood — but which are deeply concerned in the running of their own 'public affairs', even though they lack the specialized apparatus of government found at higher levels.

This leads to a further point. Although in modern states certain groups may be explicitly designed to be the locus of political action, not all that goes on within them is in fact political, while much that is political goes on outside them.

Smith developed his terminology as a tool for understanding segmentary lineage systems, in which the political units are clearly defined and enduring. 'Party politics' has, at least in theory, much the same fixed character. However, Barnes has pointed out that in some small, European rural communities, where the same people are involved with one another in a variety of situations, there are no enduring political units but only shifting and ephemeral factions which emerge in one situation
only to dissolve in another (1959 : 15). Pocock describes similar unstable political units in his discussion of factionalism in Gujerat (1957 : 296).

Early anthropologists often made it seem as though primitive peoples had no political life. Traditionally prescribed procedures were available to meet all contingencies and came into effect automatically as the occasion arose. The extent to which "Custom is King" has been exaggerated; nevertheless, it seems true that societies which have remained stable over a long period and which are not faced with unfamiliar problems, have devised procedures of proved efficacy which are broadly acceptable to the majority. Thus Meggitt writes of an Australian Aboriginal people:

"Whatever the source of the stimulus to action, its significance was at once apparent to the community members, who had early learned to recognize it. Similarly, they generally knew without prompting what roles to adopt in the subsequent activities.... Consequently, the people did not have to make ad hoc plans for action; the norms of the religious and kinship systems constituted an enduring master-plan, which met most contingencies and to which there were few approved alternatives." (1962 : 247).

In other 'tribal' societies, although general modes of procedure are fixed, there may be room for alternatives both in what is done and who does it. Oliver has shown how, among the Siuai of Bougainville, men's societies only achieve a high level of activity in those districts where there are effective leaders (1955 : 441-2).
Societies undergoing rapid change are unlikely to have ready-made solutions to the many new problems facing them, and old ways of dealing with familiar problems may no longer be practicable. Under these conditions they must improvise, and the policies which they tentatively apply may well require reformulation in the light of experience. In such situations of uncertainty and experiment there is wide scope for political activity. Leaders must — to use Homans's distinction — issue orders rather than implement norms and, inasmuch as new organization forms are being created, they will be determining their own roles (Gerth and Mills 1954: 416-21).

Where social change arises out of the interaction of two culturally diverse groups, the political process is likely to assume greater complexity and instability, since each group has an imperfect understanding of and only a limited interest in the other. For example policies devised by Europeans may assume a somewhat different meaning in the context of the Islanders' life and vice versa. Thus, in political units which cut across this dominant cleavage, the members of one group may become unwittingly or incidentally involved in the political affairs of the other. Where, as in Torres Straits, power is largely concentrated in the hands of Europeans, the success of the native politician may rest upon his ability to tap these sources of power for his own ends.

The raw data of any study of political process are the
careers of leaders, the histories of parties, pressure-groups and factions, and the tactics of contests. We may seek for order and regularity in this process, but the very fact that political action is occurring means that changes - whether structural or merely 'organizational' - are taking place in the social milieu. This is strikingly the case in Torres Straits, where both the social environment and the Islanders' appreciation of it are changing, and accounts for the strongly diachronic emphasis of this study.

Organization of the Study

There is a rich store of documentary material relating to the activities of Europeans in the Torres Straits from the end of the eighteenth century to the present time. Professional historians have already found these records a useful source of information concerning economic development, exploration, missionary work and the like. The anthropologists also can draw upon them to chronicle the development of the major European institutions that have impinged upon native life, but they provide only the most general information concerning the responses evoked. A balanced account of the emerging bi-racial society can be obtained only by direct observation of the contemporary scene and from the oral testimony of older Islanders. It was to obtain such information that I went to the Torres Straits in 1958.

An anthropological field study generally presupposes some
sort of community, that is, a body of people who interact with one another in a wider range of situations, and whose behaviour in one context is influenced by their commitments in many others (Barnes 1954 : 44). The community must be of 'manageable size' if the observer is to achieve a sufficient degree of intimacy with his subjects (Steward 1956 : 22). In the Torres Straits such communities are to be found in the various islands where the majority of the indigenous population still live. There are fifteen of these communities, none numbering more than about 500 and some very much less. They are not completely isolated from one another, but distances are sufficiently great and communications sufficiently irregular to inhibit the establishment of sustained and multiplex relations between their members. Relations with Europeans are more important, but limited by the same factors of physical separation and by the rules of social distance which normally govern interaction between black and white.

For these reasons I made the island community the principal locus of my field work, though using it as a vantage point from which to observe processes which involved it in a wider system of social relations. I shall show that the island community has an important degree of internal government but that it also acts, in certain situations, as a political unit in determining the affairs of a more inclusive group of which it is a part. Sometimes only a part of a community is involved in this way.
There are also groups within the community which may be said to have some kind of internal government. Political action occurs, then, at the community, sub-community and supra-community levels, but since the same persons are involved there is a close inter-connectedness between the three, though the relative importance of any one varies in different situations and in different communities.

European civilization confronts each of the communities in much the same way. To the extent that the demands of this environment are imperative, then we may expect them to be like one another, and we do in fact find certain externally-based institutions present in each. But they still retain a measure of autonomy both in determining their responses to the environment and over affairs unrelated to it. To this extent there is room for variation between one community and another. We have seen that the indigenous culture and social organization of the islands was fairly similar and I shall show that they have been exposed to much the same experiences and cultural influences as a result of contact with Europeans. One might, then, expect the degree of actual variation to be small, but in fact although we find many recurring features, some communities differ markedly in certain respects. In this study I shall make a comparison of several island communities in order to indicate at least some of the variations possible within the limits imposed by the environment. I have not always been able to discover the ultimate origins of these variations, though it
seems that one or two outstanding personalities in a community have sometimes had a decisive influence on the course of events. However, what is clear is that certain policies, once adopted, have wide implications for the general character of community life.

The Field Study and the Role of the Investigator

I spent twenty-three months in the Torres Straits, but although I visited all except one of the fifteen island communities I found time to submit only three of them to a full-scale investigation. These three, Murray, Badu and Saibai, each belonged to an island group which in pre-contact times was in certain respects culturally distinct. The first two are the largest native communities in the Straits, while Saibai is very much smaller. Today, each of them exemplifies a differing response to the social environment, that between Badu and Murray being the most striking, while Saibai stands in some respects intermediate between the two.

I undertook two tours of sixteen and seven months, separated by an interval of nine months, visiting each of the communities during the first and revisiting them more briefly during the second. My time was distributed as follows:
A number of weeks were spent in travelling and awaiting transport in Thursday Island, where I spent the time interviewing European officials and emigrants from the three Islands.

Like most modern field workers, I tried to maintain as close and continuous a contact with my subjects as possible, and to conduct my dealings with them in an informal and friendly manner. They knew that I was studying certain features of their life and probably never entirely forgot that I was an investigator, but I believe that, at least among my friends, this role became progressively merged with that of a member, though a transient and exotic one, of the community. As the months passed I became increasingly one who could and should be advised on matters of local etiquette, included in convivial gatherings, given and asked for help and gifts, and — most important — kept informed on current affairs.

The Islanders are always courteous to visitors and most of them respond readily to Europeans who do not try to maintain social distance. Thus, after a few weeks I was receiving
invitations to eat in private homes, and I was soon able to persuade some friend to let me take my meals regularly with his family and generally to identify myself with his household. Once established, I was able to linger as I pleased without causing embarrassment or provoking undue comment among the neighbours. Such identification can place the anthropologist in difficulties where there are political conflicts, but I found that I was able to escape involvement by lending a sympathetic ear to all points of view. On each island I was able to retain a hut of my own which served as an office and as a place where visitors might come and talk in comparative privacy. As time passed, an increasing number came to feel free to drop in casually and unexpectedly, while my own visits to them assumed the same character. Under these circumstances, the payment of informants would have been inappropriate. The refreshments which they received when visiting me were no more lavish than those which they provided when I called upon them. We made one another small presents, but this is a normal part of social intercourse throughout the Islands.

Although I found it necessary to record such data as genealogies and texts at the dictation of informants, I preserved the informal character of most interviews by keeping my notebook out of sight. I might try to guide the conversation in a particular direction but avoided the abrupt introduction of delicate topics and often allowed my companions to
follow whatever course they fancied. Such methods are time consuming and not suitable for every type of enquiry, but they are most necessary in any study of political life. In communities where the revelation or concealment of opinions and loyalties is an important part of the political process, a premature or tactless question will only cause embarrassment and probably evoke an evasive or misleading reply. If the investigator is to receive confidences he must show himself to be discreet, and it is often safer and, in the long run, more fruitful to allow informants to express themselves spontaneously.

Communication was possible from the beginning because all adults can speak and understand a form of English which is somewhat limited in vocabulary and syntax but by no means a Fidgin. Except on Saibai, even schoolchildren have some command of the language. It is not the normal medium of intercourse among Islanders of the same linguistic group, but is regularly used in dealing with Europeans and members of different groups. Unfortunately, the possibility of working in English reduced the pressure upon me to learn the vernaculars, and though I eventually acquired a limited knowledge of Miriam, which is a relatively difficult language, and a somewhat better knowledge of the Saibai and Badu dialects of Mabuiag, I did not normally work through these media. Had I been studying a strongly traditional culture this would have been a serious disadvantage; but since the Torres Straits Islands
have been heavily Europeanized and their political life occurs largely in the context of European institutions, I do not think that the loss of understanding was very great.

I found the technique of returning to each island after an interval of sixteen to eighteen months most useful in the study of political process. Finding myself able to discover most of what had occurred in the interim, I could establish sequences of events for periods of more than two years. The same interest led me to thrust my enquiries into the period prior to my first arrival. Indeed, in discussions of current affairs my informants often spontaneously referred to previous events which paralleled or were in some way related to them. The three communities differed markedly as to how far into the past such references penetrated. The Saibaians seemed to regard as relevant little that had occurred prior to 1945, perhaps because the major figures in the community had all begun their public careers after this date. The Miriam made occasional reference to events occurring during the late 1930s, largely in relation to men who were still prominent in the post-war period. In Badu I learned much more of what had happened as long as thirty-five years before. The community has been dominated by the same figure throughout this time and the radical social changes which it has undergone, largely as a result of his influence, are well understood to have begun during the 1920s. The gearing of such recollections to the careers of public
figures who are still active may have been exaggerated by my preoccupation with local politics, but it seemed to me that the people themselves most often drew upon 'history' in the course of current political contests.

European documents give some indication of broad trends in the Islands, but in investigating the careers of politicians and the fortunes of various factions and cliques, I was obliged to go to the Islanders themselves. I agree with Firth that in small-scale communities (such as Tikopia), with people highly accessible to personal enquiry and with some collateral evidence to hand, it is possible to recover much of what has happened in the past (1959: 22). But the anthropologist must constantly be on the watch for those distortions to which oral history is notoriously prone (Cunnison 1951: 21-2). Such distortions are themselves of interest, but they do not necessarily provide an insurmountable obstacle to the discovery of what really happened. People distort the past to serve present interests, but their testimony can often be cross-checked; more neutral outsiders may have witnessed the events and, occasionally, local records such as native court books and private diaries provide more reliable evidence.

In conclusion, I must mention a problem which present-day anthropologists have increasingly to contend with. In the past, there was little likelihood that what they wrote would find its way back to the area where they worked, and even less
that their subjects would be able to read it. This is no longer the case: in many parts of the one-time primitive world literacy is spreading and standards of education are improving. For this reason the many personal names I use are pseudonyms (though for the sake of verisimilitude I have employed names current among the Islanders). I cannot hope that those who know or live in the area will fail to identify the individuals to whom I refer, but perhaps this device will protect them from the curiosity of outsiders.

To sum up. What follows is a comparative investigation of political life on three Torres Straits islands, which exist in a state of partial dependence upon the outside world. The study begins with a historical survey of the relevant European institutions, based largely upon documentary sources, and proceeds to an examination of the impact of these institutions upon the life of three indigenous communities, carried out mainly through the standard techniques of social anthropological field research.
Chapter III

THE ENCROACHING EUROPEAN SOCIETY

The Torres Straits of today bears little resemblance to that described in Chapter I. Almost three generations of continuous European presence in the area have wrought a radical transformation. In this chapter and the next, I shall trace the history of contact between Europeans and Islanders from the beginning up to the present time.

I carry the account in this chapter up to the outbreak of the Pacific War. 1941 provides a convenient stopping place because the war created something of an interregnum, bringing normal life to a halt. When peace-time activities were resumed in 1946, conditions were somewhat different from what they had been previously. There is a further reason for choosing this point of termination. The present chapter is based largely upon documentary sources: only occasionally have I been able to draw upon the recollections of persons still living. In the next chapter I am able to supplement documentary sources with the testimonies of informants whose recollections of key events are still comparatively fresh, and with my own observations. My account of the post-war period is thus much more rounded and complete.

The period of contact up to 1941 can be divided into three
phases. During the first, from the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century to the mid-nineteenth, contacts were very infrequent and the two peoples did little more than become aware of each other's existence. The next phase amounted to a European invasion and was characterized by radical social change, during which Islanders and the various interest groups amongst the Europeans worked out a *modus vivendi*. By about 1880 a fairly well-defined and stable system had emerged and this persisted with only minor and ordered changes until 1941.

**Early Contacts**

The Spanish navigator Torres gave his name to the Straits, having passed through them in 1606, but it has been suggested that other unidentified Europeans preceded him at some time during the second half of the sixteenth century (Haddon 1935 : 3; Jack 1921 : 21). Indonesian and Chinese vessels may have frequented these waters at an even earlier date. There is no record of any British vessel in the area prior to Cook's voyage of 1770, and it was not until the Australian colony had been established that the Straits became an important water-way. Apart from a few survey vessels all were in transit, but occasional landings were made, some resulting in friendly intercourse, others in violence. Wrecks were frequent in these treacherous uncharted waters, and most castaways were killed, but there are at least three instances in which they were spared to live amongst the natives for a number of years. Haddon has
made a detailed and exhaustive survey of these early contacts (1935: passim), and I shall not discuss them further.

The European Invasion

Europeans did not establish themselves permanently in the area until about the middle of the nineteenth century when commercial fishing enterprises, a Christian mission and the Queensland Government all appeared within a few years of one another. The subsequent history of Torres Straits is largely bound up with these three institutions. Commercial fishing has been the only form of industrial activity in the area; the mission has not been subject to any serious competition from other religious bodies until very recently, and no rival government has ever appeared to contest the jurisdiction of Queensland. Torres Straits has always been remote from the main areas of European settlement and until the outbreak of war few came here except in connection with these three institutions.

There is no report of any commercial fishing vessel in Torres Straits until 1846, when MacGillivray saw or heard of one working out from Sydney for bêche-de-mer and turtle shell (1852: 308). Pearling probably began in 1868, with the establishment of a station on Warrior Island in the Central Group. The industry expanded rapidly and soon exceeded bêche-de-mer fishing in importance. By 1877 there were 109 registered vessels at work in the Straits and probably others which had not been registered; in the preceding year exports
of shell amounted to 460 tons, earning more than £50,000
(S.M.B. 7.5.77). In succeeding years the size of the industry
increased and its earnings had doubled before the century was
out.

Torres Straits Islanders and Mainland Aborigines were
gradually drawn into the industry, but up to 1941 they never
constituted more than a minority of the labour force. The
early pearlers and trepangers relied heavily upon foreign
labour, recruiting mainly from Asia and the South Pacific.
By 1875 there were 707 men employed in the fishing industry
the great majority of whom were coloured aliens (S.M.B. 3.4.75).
In 1904 1,619 coloured aliens were 'in articles' out of a
total labour force of 2,509 (V. & P. 1905).

Concerning the pearlers and trepangers of the early period,
Dalrymple wrote:

"There are, of course, among these men some of excellent
character and integrity of purpose, but there are
others of whom ... to say that they are about as bad
a lot as sail out of any port on earth is not to say
too much."
(S.M.B. 13.3.77).

Such men were virtually free from government restraint until
the 1880s and the Islanders suffered much at their hands. They
established themselves on outlying islands, terrorizing the
local population into working for them, abducting women and
plundering native plantations (L.M.S. 1871 : 69; Moresby 1876 : 14).

In 1872 it was reported that, as a result of European
depredations the "once confident and fearless" inhabitants of Mabuiag had become "cowed and sullen", 'going bush' as soon as a sail was sighted (S.M.B. 1872). Missionaries reported that the inhabitants of Moa were in a similar state of terror (L.M.S. 1875). However, not all the pearlers and trepangers were so ruthless; many were ready to pay their native labourers in trade goods which were highly prized and it seems that, for example, the Warrior Island station was established with the agreement of the local population (Moresby 1876: 20).

The Queensland Government established its first administrative centre at Somerset, on the tip of Cape York in 1863, staffed with a police magistrate and a detachment of marines who were presently replaced by Native (Aboriginal) Troopers. The post was intended to be a port of call and coaling station for the numerous ships passing through the Straits, but there were those who hoped that it might become a 'Singapore of the South Pacific'. This hope was never realized, but Thursday Island, to which the post was transferred in 1877, did become a small but thriving centre of the local fisheries industry. To it were drawn men from almost every nation on earth - Chinese, Japanese, Filipinos, Malays, Singalese, Indians, Arabs; African, American and West Indian Negroes; Europeans of many nations and Islanders from every part of the South Pacific. Small wonder that Thursday Island was called the 'Sink of the Pacific'. The population reached its greatest size around the turn of the century, when it exceeded 1,700.
When Somerset was established in 1863, the Islands were not under any government's jurisdiction. The first act of annexation, passed by the Queensland Parliament in 1872, included only those islands lying within sixty miles of the coast; the rest were not annexed until 1879. However, it was because they were already a part of Queensland that they escaped incorporation into the territory of Papua, which the British Government annexed in 1884. Even after 1879, Government control over the more remote islands was scarcely more than nominal until the Resident obtained regular use of a patrol vessel in 1887 (V. & P. 1887).

The Government's chief problem was to establish some control over the pearlers and trepangers, in particular to enforce the licencing of boats and the regulations governing the employment of labour, and to protect the native population from their worst excesses. Pacifying the Islanders was a far less formidable problem, since they had already been intimidated by the superior force of the invaders. As early as 1874 it was reported that:

"There is not at the present rate a single island - except possibly Prince of Wales - where a ship-wrecked crew would be in any danger." (L.M.S. 1874).

Even before the extension of Government jurisdiction, missionaries had persuaded the Islanders to abandon their war-like habits and established some form of local government.
The London Missionary Society, the first evangelizing body to enter Papua, started its campaign in 1871 by posting eight coloured teachers from the Loyalty Islands Mission on several of the Torres Straits Islands and the adjacent mainland. They received very little support from their white directors in the early stages of their work, but were given the support of the Police Magistrate in the area, who regarded them as a useful instrument of pacification and civilization not otherwise available (L.M.S. 1871). The demonstrations of European support may have convinced the Islanders that they had little alternative but to accept the mission, for almost without exception, they proved ready to receive the teachers, though by no means so willing to support them (Morestyn ibid.). However, according to the missionary McFarlane, they soon realized that the teachers provided protection against predatory vessels. The process of conversion proceeded much more slowly but by the 1880s pagan practices were being abandoned, natives were accepting baptism and islands without teachers were asking to have them (L.M.S. : passim.). In the next decade, Christianity became firmly established on all but Prince of Wales Island.

After a few initial clashes, the Islanders seem to have put up little resistance to the invasion of their world. Indeed, overpowered and intimidated as they were, they were in no position to do so. To add to the demoralization, exotic
diseases, and harsh conditions on the boats set off a decline in the native population that persisted to the end of the century. If the early estimates are correct, some island populations declined by more than half. Under these conditions, the Islanders could do little but come to terms with their new masters. If the government and the missions could protect them from the worst excesses of the pearlers (L.M.S. 9.1876), they must be accepted; and if the new sicknesses were indeed the wrath of the missionaries' God, Christianity must be embraced. If work on the boats was the only way to acquire the white man's wealth and power, work they must.

The Pearling and Bêche-de-Mer Industries.

The staples of the Torres Straits marine industry have been mother-of-pearl and trochus shell, principally required for button manufacture and ornaments, and bêche-de-mer or trepang, which are certain species of the Holothuria 'sea slug', prized as a gastronomic delicacy among the Chinese. Pearl-shell and trepang fishing have been carried on since the mid-nineteenth century, whereas trochus-fishing did not begin until 1912. In most years, pearl-shell has provided the major source of income for the area. Pearls also yield a rich reward (no exact figures are available), but their discovery is too infrequent and too uncertain to be a mainstay of the industry.

Bêche-de-mer, like trochus, has always been obtained by
skin-diving, a technique which could also be used to obtain pearl shell in the early years. But the industry was expanding so rapidly that by 1874 the shallower beds were becoming exhausted and pearling boats were equipped with diving apparatus (V. & P. 1877). Thereafter, only a minority of marginal concerns, mostly native operated, continued skin-diving for pearl shell.

The cost of installing diving equipment and the high rates of pay commanded by dress divers during the early period (v.i. p.) meant that pearling enterprises required much greater capital outlay than those working bêche-de-mer, which needed neither costly equipment nor skilled labour. For much of the period, pearling was dominated by large-scale enterprises, directed from outside Torres Straits (Bach 1961: passim.). Apart from two marginal concerns run by Samoans, the Master Pearlers were all Europeans. In the 1890s, Japanese divers threatened to gain control of the industry, but the 'danger' was averted by the Queensland Pearling Act of 1899, which granted licences only to native-born or naturalized British subjects. Entry into the bêche-de-mer industry was easier, since less capital was required, and a number of coloured seamen and even some Islanders established their own businesses, but these seem all to have been marginal.

In the early period both pearlers and trepangers set up
shore stations on many of the islands around the Straits.

However, these were closed early in the present century (Bach 1961: 107) when the Government declared the islands to be reserves, and since then all vessels have worked out from Thursday Island or the North Queensland ports.

In 1875 all but one of the dress divers were Europeans (S.M.B. 3.4.75) though the great majority of pump hands, seamen, and skin-divers were coloured. But in the years that followed Europeans became virtually unknown in this occupation (V. & P. 1897; 1908). A diver's earnings were quite substantial (v.i.p.) by the standards of the time, but the working conditions were evidently too unattractive. In the words of a Commonwealth Report:

"For many years, pearl shell fishing was a most hazardous occupation. One of the risks to which the whole crew was exposed was that of beri-beri, owing to the necessity for using preserved food with no fresh fruit or vegetables; another common hazard among divers was that of divers' paralysis, a result of too-rapid changes of pressure. Many men died of these diseases. The rough and ready life also took its toll. Living quarters were cramped and uncomfortable, the life was utterly monotonous, there was little provision for living on shore. It was taken for granted that luggers' crews usually spent the last part of their lives as physical wrecks. This has been vastly improved during recent years, especially in the use of "staging" as a preventative of divers' paralysis, but conditions are still very hard. This probably explains why almost 100% Asiatic labour composed the crews of the pearling fleets...."

(Commonwealth Government 1946: 8).

One might add that skin diving, in addition to being rough and arduous work, exposed one to attack from shark and groper.
Moreover, while the cleaning of pearl shell oysters is a fairly easy task, the cleaning of the trochus shell and the curing of bêche-de-mer is noisome work that may keep the crew up much of the night.

European pearlers and trepangers drew upon local supplies of labour, Islanders, Mainland Aborigines and - a little later - Papuans, but also imported labour from the Pacific Islands and Asia. During the early period, the majority of skippers and divers were either Polynesians, Malays or Filipinos, while local men and East Melanesians served as deck hands and skin divers. The Japanese did not appear in any number until the 1890s (V. & P. 1892) but thereafter achieved a dominant position by their superior industry and efficiency. The recruitment of Pacific Island labour ceased after 1900 and all but a few of those already in Torres Straits were repatriated. From this time up to the outbreak of the Pacific War in 1941, Japanese constituted about 30% of the total labour force and a majority of the dress divers and skippers, although a number of Malays continued in these capacities. Torres Straits Islanders averaged 20% of the labour force, Aborigines around 10% and Papuans around 17%. Few Islanders and no Aborigines or Papuans served either as dress divers or skippers. However, a considerable number of Islanders were employed on their own boats (which are not included in these figures), providing their own skippers.
In the early period, the shortage of good divers and the competition for them among rival firms kept wages high. Divers were able to return to Sydney at the end of the season with £300 - £400 (V. & P. 1897). Masters "treated and petted" their Polynesian divers "like children", (Q.P.D. 1881 : 264). The influx of Japanese labour in the 1890s reduced rates of pay, so that by 1908 the best divers were said not to be getting more than £200 a year (V. & P. 1908). I have not been able to obtain information about divers' earnings in the later period. Native employees at first received 10/- a month, together with food, sometimes for their families as well as themselves, while foreign pump hands and seamen received around £1. 10. 0. with keep (V. & P. 1879). During the next thirty years, wages ranged around £2 - £3 per month as the demand for and supply of labour fluctuated. Whether native labour was earning the same rates during this time is not clear, but after 1906 until the outbreak of war in 1941 Islanders were earning £2 - £4 per month (V. & P. 1906-40: passim.). Aboriginal and Papuan labour commanded a lower sum.

There were a few native-run boats at work before the end of the century, but they did not become at all numerous until 1904, when a former L.M.S. missionary, F.W. Walker, formed Papuan Industries Ltd., a philanthropic company designed to assist the Islanders to become "self-supporting and provident". In co-operation with the Government (V. & P. 1907), it purchased boats for groups of Islanders, allowing them to work
off the price over a number of years. It also marketed their shell at a fairer price than they might have got from the traders on Thursday Island and sold them consumer goods without taking exorbitant profits, as white store-keepers were prone to do (Haddon 1935 : 17-8; Bleakley 1961 : 265-6). In 1930 the Aborigines Department of the Queensland Government took complete control of the Company, renaming it the Aboriginal — and, later, Island — Industries Board.

These native enterprises, known as "Company Boats", generally engaged a majority of the native labour force, although the pay to be gained on European "Master Boats" was in most years higher. Older, married men seem to have preferred the "Company Boats" because of the more leisurely pace of work and the chance to return home at frequent intervals; however, European employers were able to attract the younger and more vigorous minority who did not mind being away from their homes for a whole season (V. & P. 1930-1; 1934-5).

The "Company Boats" did not offer any very serious threat to the private sector of the industry. There was no shortage of unskilled labour and the value of their catch averaged around $20,000 during the inter-war period, which was less than 15% of the total earnings of the local industry. Moreover, the native boats could scarcely compete with European concerns in pearl shell fishing, since they were not equipped with diving apparatus.
Islanders began working for wages during the early years of pearling, and by the turn of the century there was widespread dependence upon wage-labour as a means of livelihood. Industrialization was particularly advanced in the Western and Central Island Groups. Concerning Mabuiaq, Haddon wrote:

"The men now spend all their time 'swimming-diving' as it is called.... Some natives own their own boats, and make up crews on a system of sharing; others hire themselves out to white men.... All the time they are away they feed on tinned meat, biscuits, flour, and other white man's food. They get accustomed to this food, and as they are away from home so much, they cannot 'make' their gardens. Thus it comes about that agriculture, as well as fishing, is greatly neglected, and a considerable portion - and in some instances the bulk - of their food has to be bought from the stores. Should the supply of pearl shell fall off, or the price be lowered, the natives would suffer greatly; and if the store-keepers left the island, the people would practically starve.... With all their apparent prosperity, the people are really in a false economic position, and their future may yet be temporarily deplorable.

(Haddon 1901: 121-2).

The Eastern Islands were, by comparison, far less industrialized (Haddon 1901: 118), owing perhaps to the greater natural abundance, but even here items such as cloth, steel tools, flour, tea, sugar, rice and trade tobacco had become basic necessities for all. The economic depressions that Haddon envisaged have occurred from time to time, but the degree of dependence on the European economy has increased rather than lessened. The Aboriginal Industries Board established stores on every island in 1933 and the substantial turnover of goods ever since indicates the extent of this dependence.
However, the techniques of the subsistence economy have not been completely lost. Even the most industrialized groups continue to spear turtle and dugong from their luggers, while their women, who are left at home, continue fishing and a certain amount of gardening, as before. In the Eastern Islands and those off the coast of New Guinea, a section of the population has always preferred to maintain itself by gardening and fishing rather than go out on the boats.

Mission Activities

During its forty-three years' work in Torres Straits the London Missionary Society encountered no competition from rival denominations. In 1914 the Society decided that since its work of evangelization was accomplished, its energies would be better applied to new fields and gave its flocks into the keeping of the Anglican Diocese of Carpentaria (Goodall, 1954: 420). The Church of England likewise suffered no competition until about 1938, when Pentecostalism began to have some slight influence.

The main work of evangelization was performed by coloured pastors, the first batch being brought out by the Rev. Samuel McFarlane from the Loyalty Island Mission, and the second, from about 1890 onwards, by the Rev. James Chalmers, from Samoa and Niue. There were never more than two European Missionaries in the area and for part of the time none at all, so that
supervision was severely restricted. When McFarlane launched the mission in 1871, he regarded Torres Straits as being a stepping stone to New Guinea, but after his retirement in 1886 it became a backwater which was scarcely considered to merit the residence of a white missionary (L.M.S. Corr. 2.10.89). Chalmers administered it from Saguane, his Head Quarters on the Fly River, from 1890 until his death in 1900. Butcher, who succeeded him, resided for a while in the Straits but, finding too little to occupy him, made the recommendation which led to the Society's withdrawal (L.M.S. : 1906).

McFarlane and one or two of his colleagues have left quite detailed accounts of the early years of the mission. But the reports of the later years are either perfunctory observations on routine matters, such as one would expect from a brief tour of inspection, or taken up with the personal antagonisms that vitiated the later phases of the mission. The coloured pastors, who performed the real, day-to-day work of evangelization, have left no written records.

McFarlane made Murray Island his headquarters for most of his sojourn in Torres Straits and established there in 1878 the Papuan Institute, in which he proposed to educate the more promising among his Island and Papuan converts to be evangelists. By 1882, one hundred were in attendance there (L.M.S. Corr. : 1882), and a number were actually sent to the Fly River area or to various Islands to replace the old Loyalty Island pastors.
as they died or returned home. However, a considerable proportion of them were subsequently dismissed for immorality or incompetence and McFarlane’s successors considered them of little use, one condemning them as "worthless and wicked" (L.M.S. Corr. 9.4.91). By the time the last European missionary left Murray, the Papuan Institute had collapsed, though a few Islanders were subsequently trained at Saguane and worked in the Fly River area.

At first, the missionary was faced by an undifferentiated mass of unbelievers, but from among them sympathizers presently emerged who would eventually accept conversion and be baptised. These he formed into a "seekers' class" and elevated to full Church membership as their conduct and understanding commended them to him. Backsliders might be suspended from Church membership until such time as they reformed; those who continued along the right paths might become deacons, assisting the pastor in his work, while the most promising would be sent to study for the ministry. Once established, then, the Church offered to its converts access to all except the highest echelons, which were still reserved for Europeans. In the process, the missionaries became empowered with the right to grant, refuse or suspend from membership and to appoint or dismiss office holders. Moreover, insofar as they were recognized as the arbiters of the new code of conduct, they were empowered to expose sinners and backsliders before the congregation and threaten them with the torments of Hell.
So great was the fear aroused by these threats that on one occasion the Government Resident requested Chalmers to advise his coloured teachers that "threats of excommunication involving damnatory consequences should be sparingly applied" (L.M.S. 1897). The state of terror was probably enhanced by the readiness of missionaries to see in epidemics and natural disasters the wrath of an angry deity, much as they had done in Rarotonga (Beaglehole 1957: 35). Since the period of conversion was accompanied by drastic population decline, the Islanders were given frequent and dramatic demonstrations of divine displeasure.

The missionaries were armed with worldly as well as spiritual sanctions. The Government Resident gave them his protection and required them to advise and guide the native headmen whom he appointed in the 1870s (L.M.S. Corr. 17.7.82). Two white missionaries became Justices of the Peace, and it was later alleged that one of them had shown partiality towards Christian natives (L.M.S. Corr. 4.3.89).

Later, when the Government Resident attempted to secularize local government, he encountered some opposition from the L.M.S. On Murray he had to intervene to suppress a Church court, which the Samoan pastor was running in competition with that run by the Government's appointee (Haddon 1908: 179); and as late as 1911, there were reports of friction (V. & P. 1911).

Prior to Government intervention, the L.M.S. had gone some
way towards establishing a theocracy similar to that on Rarotonga. A night curfew was imposed as a means of checking sexual 'immorality', and fornication and adultery were punished by flogging, head-shaving and public humiliation (c.f. Beaglehold 1957: 62).

The coloured pastors demanded from their converts an almost complete abandonment of their old ways; indeed, there seems to have been a concerted attack on almost every aspect of the traditional culture. In the words of an Anglican priest who came to Torres Straits in 1917:

"There was sometimes rather too much of the idea of requiring the new converts to abjure that which was not actually out of harmony with Christian precepts." (MacFarlane, 16.7.59).

For example, drums and traditional dances were forbidden, although dances imported from Polynesia were not. McFarlane and Chalmers do not seem to have been so narrow (McFarlane 1886: 146-7; Chalmers 1902: 257), but it was the coloured pastors who effectively ran the mission and evidently their zeal was less tempered by moderation. Butcher seems to have shared their attitudes, for he forbade traditional dances, not because they were immoral but because any such restoration would be a "retrograde step, the effect of which cannot be for good" (L.M.S. 1906).

At least a nominal conversion was achieved in a remarkably short time. On Murray and Darnley Islands, after only two years of work, the Sabbath was generally observed and most of
the people attended services (L.M.S. 1873). The Saibaians were a little less responsive at first, but in 1883 McFarlane could write "God has turned the hearts of the people to receive His message" (L.M.S. 1883). In the 1880s, Island congregations were giving sums of £30-40 to the L.M.S. at annual gatherings (L.M.S. Corr. 14.8.84; 9.89), and by the 1890s they were erecting churches at their own expense. Such actions, to be sure, may have indicated nothing more than external conformity, but Bishop White, who took charge of the Islanders in 1914, considered that under the L.M.S. "the great mass of the people became not only Christian in name, but also to a large extent in practice" (White 1917: 9). Indoctrination was neglected; the people learned to read in their own languages and, to a limited extent, in English, and the New Testament had been translated into both the Miriam and Mabuiag languages before the century was out (Ray 1903: 187-9; 226-8).

In addition to its spiritual benefits, the Mission offered some more tangible advantages. At a time when the traditional bases for authority and prestige were crumbling, it offered a new status hierarchy and some positions of limited authority. It was associated with the superior power and wealth of the European invaders and it encouraged the people to gain wealth and to become in other ways more like white people. Belshaw has observed that "the first effective contact between two peoples is on the level of material advantage" (1954: 48),
and it seems very likely that mission converts expected the new religion to help them materially as they believed the old one to have done. There is an interesting report of an L.M.S.-trained native preacher likening Heaven to Burns Philp’s store in Thursday Island (MacFarlane 16.7.59). The outbreak of a Cargo Cult on Saibai in 1914, after a period of economic discontent, suggests that material wealth and supernatural forces were still closely associated in native thinking (Haddon 1935: 46-8).

Anthropological research has made it clear that changes in religion are to be expected in societies which are in other respects changing, especially when religion is used to explain and control external reality. The major cults of the Islanders were all concerned with warfare and thus rendered partially obsolete by pacification. But the indigenous religion was not of such a character as to rule out the acceptance of new practices and beliefs. It had been possible for several cults to coexist within the one community and, according to tradition, each had been introduced at a point in history, not at the making of the world, so that the adoption of yet one more was neither unprecedented nor inconceivable in terms of the indigenous system. The missionaries may have demanded the undivided allegiance of their converts, but one need not believe that they really obtained it. On Murray Island, at least, it seems fairly certain that certain practices connected with the
indigenous religion persisted into the present century (Bulletin 27.1.1910; MacFarlane 16.7.1959). Even today, some of my informants regard the old religion as in some sense 'true', even though rendered obsolete by the introduction of Christianity, and some minor pagan beliefs and practices still persist.

Canon Done, who took over the Islands from the L.M.S., on behalf of the Anglican Diocese of Carpentaria, informs me that the people accepted the change without demur, regarding it perhaps as a 'step up'. During the first years of the Anglican regime, three European priests visited the Islands regularly to administer the sacraments, leaving the day-to-day running of the parishes to the churchwardens. Later, during the inter-war period, three native priests and two deacons were ordained and took over parishes in the Islands and other parts of the diocese. More native priests have been ordained since 1945.

Formally, the organization of the Torres Straits section of the Diocese has differed little from any other. Each Island constitutes a parish, with its body of churchwardens, lay readers, etc., and its Mothers' Union. The position of the priest is theoretically somewhat more important than the old L.M.S. pastor, owing to the greater emphasis on sacramentalism, but since the priests were present only occasionally during the early years, the difference was not immediately apparent. On the contrary, with the withdrawal of the old
South Sea Island pastors, the local congregation was left rather more to its own devices.

The ideological shift was more important. As already mentioned, there was a greater emphasis on the sacraments, which has increased as the Diocese has become more 'high', but the change has been gradual and has not met any significant resistance. However, the replacement of public denunciation of sinners and their suspension from Church membership by private confession and penance, has deprived the priest of a potent sanction, although the old school of churchwardens kept up the practice for some years after the change-over. The Anglicans also took a much more tolerant attitude towards indigenous custom than the L.M.S. MacFarlane writes:

"Our policy was to 'christianize' old customs where possible, and retain native forms of expression (rather than so-called 'white man custom'), instead of arbitrarily cutting out everything" (16.7.59).

But here again, the churchwardens who had been brought up in the L.M.S. tradition retained their opposition to revivalism and there was no significant resurgence of pagan practice. It is a striking fact that the younger generation have been largely cut off from the magical heritage of their forefathers, particularly on Badu and Saibai. However, I was told that there has been a resurgence of sorcery and other sorts of magic, as a result of contact with the less 'civilised' Papuan and Mainland peoples.
But however one evaluates the conversion effected by the L.M.S. and the Church of England, there is no doubt that Christianity has effectively displaced paganism as the public religion and that the Church has become the centre of communal religious activity.

**Government**

For more than twenty years after the annexation of the Torres Straits Islands, their local government was conducted at the discretion of the Thursday Island Resident. However, an effective system was devised, which the Chief Protector of Aboriginals inherited and perpetuated when he brought the Islands within his sphere of influence in 1904. It was the belief, asserted by early residents and taken up by the Protector, that the Islanders were a distinct and more advanced people than the Mainland Aborigines, which led to their being administered quite differently from the latter.

Even before the formal establishment of Queensland jurisdiction, the Government Resident of Somerset had visited most of the islands and instructed the people to appoint "magistrates and police" (Chester 1878 : 9; L.M.S. Corr. 1882). Subsequently these magistrates, called *mamooses* (see above, p. 15) were appointed by the Resident as his local representatives. He himself made periodic tours of inspection to supervise their work and appointed a number of Europeans, including missionaries and pearlers, to act as Justices of the Peace and
deal with more serious offences. Around the turn of the century he ordered the Islanders to elect councillors who initially assisted the mamooses and eventually superseded them. Native officials received a nominal payment, but at this time the total expenditure amounted to no more than £25 per year. About the same time, European men and women were posted to the six most populous islands to serve as school teachers and to supervise the day-to-day working of local government.

The first Queensland Aborigines' Protection Act, passed in 1897, provided for the appointment of two full-time and other part-time protectors to administer its provisions, which were further extended in the Act of 1901. At first the Islanders were not thought to require such protection and control because of their 'superior mentality' and sophistication, and because a satisfactory system of administration was already in operation. However, in 1904 the term 'Aboriginal' was reinterpreted so as to include them (Q.P.D. 1938 : 408). I have found no reference to this in reports or legislation, and so I assume it was done informally. But the Government Resident continued to act as Protector for some years until, after the war, a full-time Protector of the newly formed (1918) Aboriginals Department was posted to Thursday Island.

The Chief Protector's report for 1907 on the administration of the Islands is worth quoting at length.

"The mamoose acts as police magistrate and governor,
with power to deal summarily with offences and breaches of local regulations, and is directly responsible for the behaviour and cleanliness of his village to the Government Resident and Police Magistrate at Thursday Island. He may inflict punishment by fine or imprisonment upon minor offences, but misdemeanours and serious offences must be reserved for the bench at Thursday Island. The councillors attend at the courthouse to assist the mamoose with advice and, in order of seniority, may act on his behalf during his absence. They also meet to confer monthly with the mamoose upon any question concerning the conduct of affairs.

The native island police, under a native sergeant, are responsible to the mamoose for the good behaviour of the inhabitants, etc., and may lock up offenders till the next meeting of court. They also have to inspect and see that each householder keeps his premises and grounds clean and that the portion of the public road adjacent to his residence is kept in good repair and order; also that public properties (coconut trees, fish traps, etc.) and buildings (courthouse, lock-up, schoolhouse etc.) are not damaged or destroyed.

The European teacher resident upon the island acts as clerk of the court and registrar of births, marriages and deaths, keeping all books and records and also as a treasurer, keeping an account and taking charge of all collections from fines, taxes upon dogs, etc., the mamoose having authority to expend all such collections upon public improvements, collections etc.

The island schools are, in most cases, in charge of European teachers paid by and responsible to the Chief Protector of Aboriginals, and under the inspection of the local Protector at Thursday Island, through whom the teacher forwards periodic reports, returns and requisitions to the head office.

He should teach the children the elements of the three Rs, and if married, instruction, if possible, should be given to the boys in agriculture and handicrafts, and to the girls in cooking, laundry, sewing, and ordinary domestic duties.

He also acts as the local medico....

The island fishing boats are the property of the tribe, and used for the general benefit. The mamoose is nominally in charge as representative of the village and is responsible to the Chief Protector of Aboriginals for the proper care of the vessel and the disposal of
the produce earned, through the Protector at Thursday Island, and the equal distribution of the nett proceeds. The Protector at Thursday Island takes charge of all such produce, sells it by public auction or tender, devoting 50% of the money to the payment of interest and redemption, another small percentage to repairs, removals, purchases etc. and the remainder is either handed to the mamoose or his agent or expended by the protector for the general benefit."

(V. & P. 1907).

The 'local regulations' or by-laws were and to a large extent remain the joint product of indigenous, mission and Administration influence. The traditional system of land tenure and inheritance was retained, and on some islands at least, sorcerers - or those pretending to perform sorcery - were punished. Mission influence was particularly evident in the regulations relating to sexual 'immorality', although the severity of punishments meted out in the early period was modified under the influence of the white teachers. Matters such as hygiene and the maintenance of the schools were the particular concern of the Administration. As a result of these combined influences there were few areas of life, public or domestic, which were not open to interference by the native police and island court. A child was punished if it stayed away from school, an adolescent for clandestine love affairs, husband and wife for quarrelling, a mother for neglecting her child, a father for beating his daughter - and so on.

The Islanders seem for the most part to have been amenable to the establishment of law and order. I heard of only one
case of murder (and two suspected cases) since pacification, and serious violence has been fairly rare among the Islanders. The Murray Island court books for 1885-1910 and 1927-1939, the only ones that have survived, list numerous trivial offences and squabbles, but nothing that could be regarded as serious. The majority of the offences listed are either domestic or neighbourly squabbles, or sexual 'immorality'. However, the illegitimacy rates for Badu, Saibai and Murray indicate that even fornication was kept well within bounds until a few years ago. Around the turn of the century there seems to have been a good deal of drunkenness among Islanders (V. & P. 1902), but during the period between wars, the supply was almost completely cut off. Home-brewing of tuba (toddy) flourished for a while (Bleakley 1961: 296) but was in due course suppressed. Only since the war has drunkenness become a serious problem again. The Islanders always seem to have recognised the authority of their local courts and to have been at times almost too ready to bring their private disputes before it (V. & P. 1911). In short, the system of local government proved generally satisfactory to the Administration and to the Islanders, who later pressed for additional powers to be given to their Councils.

In recent years the Queensland government has adopted the policy of assimilation for the native peoples in its charge, but the policy of the pre-war years was effectively one of
protective segregation. In a book of reminiscences published in 1961, the Chief Protector of those years reiterated his view that the Islanders were 'a race apart' who would gain nothing by participation in white Australian life (Bleakley 1961: 299). No Islanders were allowed to live on Thursday Island prior to 1946 and boat crews must sleep on board while anchoring there. Indeed, every attempt was made to keep them away from the 'temptations of civilization'. This was the reason for establishing the Papuan Industries station on Badu and the government kept it there until 1946, so that all Western Island 'Company Boats' unloaded and did their shopping there, although the Eastern Islanders continued to come to Thursday Island. The native crews of trochus vessels sometimes spent a few days at the ports of North Queensland, but no one was allowed to accept work on shore or make his home there. For the same reasons the islands were made native reserves, entry to which was virtually forbidden except to officials, churchmen and other authorized persons. The pearlers' shore stations were closed; foreign seamen were not allowed ashore except for special reasons and must return before nightfall, and those foreigners who had married native women and settled in the Islands, were either removed from the reserve or allowed to remain only by accepting the same status as the Islanders with whom they were 'habitually associating'. Further mixed marriages might only be contracted with the approval of the Minister, but in any case contacts were now so limited as to render such contingencies of
rare occurrence.

A Native Labourers' Employment Act had given the Government some control over the employment of Islanders as early as 1884. The Aboriginals Protection Act of 1901 gave the Protector more extensive control over employment, although this was not at first exercised in the case of the Islanders. He was, for instance, in a position to insist on certain rates of pay and working conditions for those under his care. An amendment to the same Act gave him control of the money and other property of 'Aboriginals' and it eventually became usual for him to receive all wages, compensation, etc., on their behalf. This enabled him to ascertain whether his charges were, in fact, receiving what they were entitled to. However, it also became usual for him to allow them only small sums in cash, placing the balance in a savings account, which could only be drawn upon for approved purposes (Bleakley 1961: 167). Once government stores had been established on the home islands, shopping was done by debiting purchases against savings recorded in a 'Pass Book' so that some Islanders scarcely ever handled cash. The system was designed to prevent the Islander from squandering his money on drink or trash, or being swindled by unscrupulous shopkeepers in Thursday Island (Bleakley, op. cit.), but it created a great deal of resentment among the Islanders and later gave rise to the allegation that they were being virtually robbed of their money (Workers' Weekly 21.1.36).
The same provision gave the Protector a powerful voice in the management of the "Company Boats" particularly after the Aboriginals Department had taken over Papuan Industries Ltd. Here again, the system generated a good deal of friction.

Although the Islanders worked enthusiastically at first, paying off the price of their boats with admirable promptness (V. & P. 1907), they tended to slacken off thereafter (V. & P. 1910).

The men then either hired themselves to European employers, worked on their own account from dinghies (V. & P. 1915) or fell back on the subsistence economy. What lay behind these fluctuations can scarcely be gauged with certainty at this distance, but since similar trends have persisted up to the present time we may perhaps be permitted a few guesses.

Firstly, it was scarcely to be expected that a people used to working in small units and by short bursts could readily achieve the requisite degree of sustained effort and cooperation without some sort of coercion. Secondly, the authority of native skippers may have been weaker than that of Japanese and others. Thirdly, the Islanders may have initially overestimated the rewards to be won from operating their own vessels and slackened their efforts as they became disillusioned.

No doubt they were made confused and mistrustful by the periodic disparities between effort and reward resulting from the sudden fluctuations in the price of shell, and they may well have laid some of the blame upon those who were managing their affairs.
Some impression of the friction arising can be gained by reports of the dismissal, fining and even imprisonment of those who did not work to the Administration's satisfaction (V. & P. 1910 : 1930-1). Boats were confiscated (V. & P. 1920 : 1931-2), and at one point the Administration had to take action to prevent some islands from selling their produce directly to private dealers instead of through the Protector (V. & P. 1916). The slump of 1913 was a period of "unrest and conflict" in which the Islanders withdrew from marine work (V. & P. 1914), and this was also the year in which a Cargo Cult erupted on Saibai (Haddon 1935 : 46). The great depression of the 1930s was also a period of unrest (V. & P. 1930-1) but most of the discontent seems to have been directed against the 'Company Boats'. The Administration admitted that there was a "temporary revulsion" against working on them (V. & P. 1934-5), and the official statistics indicate a gradual desertion to the European-owned vessels.

Discontent reached a climax at the beginning of 1936, when, in the words of the official report, "For a period of about four months the majority of men refrained from accepting employment on the 'Company Boats'" (V. & P. 1935-6). There is little reliable documentary evidence on the origins of the strike and the special report by the Police Magistrate of Townsville was never made public. What follows is an attempted reconstruction from contemporary reports and the recollections.
of my own informants.

The consensus is that the strike movement originated among the Murray Islanders, who had always been most antagonistic to the Administration. They sent letters to sympathizers on other islands urging them to join, with the result that the strike began almost simultaneously throughout the Straits. Bleakley claims that the movement was inspired by shopkeepers in Thursday Island, who were jealous of the Government's monopoly of native custom (1961: 270). But the Japanese divers had staged strikes during the 1920s (Age: 19.2.25), and this was also the time of the great Seamen's Strike of 1935-6. Islanders working on trochus boats may also have had contact with Communists in the North Queensland ports who, according to contemporary electoral results, were fairly numerous.

My own informants are now somewhat vague as to the aims and intentions of the strike, and probably their ideas have been coloured by subsequent events. Economic discontent may have created a fertile ground in which the seeds of rebellion could flourish, but it should be noted that the Islanders did not refuse to work on the Master Pearlers' boats, although the wages to be obtained on these had also fallen. The main blow was aimed at the Administration, and on some islands parents also withdrew their children from school. Bleakley's statement that they wanted "to control their own vessels and
handle their own money" (Bleakley 1961: 270) is probably near to the mark. The Communist Press, which took up the cause of the strikers, considered the Administration's control of native earnings the main cause of discontent (Workers' Weekly: 21.1.36). Some discontent with the existing system of local government was also voiced (Q.P.D. 1938: 464).

According to the Aboriginals Department Report, the strike lasted only four months: "when their grievances were rectified they enthusiastically commenced work" (V. & P. 1935-6). However, other accounts suggest that there was some coercion. Islanders told me that white policemen stayed on several islands for a while and that several Baduans were imprisoned for short periods - an allegation also made in the Workers' Weekly (21.2.36). The duration of the strike is not altogether certain either: for example, Murray Island had no boats to operate for some years after (V. & P. 1936-7) so that the strike became a lock-out.

However, the strike was followed by substantial changes in the system of local government. In the words of the Government report:

"A greater measure of responsibility has been given the councillors and they will now control a considerable portion of the domestic life of their communities which previously was the responsibility of the government teachers."

(V. & P. 1935-6).

A report for the following years attributed the disappearance of discontent to these changes, and expressed satisfaction at
the way in which the councillors were carrying their new responsibilities (V. & P. 1936-7). The councillors were given, among other new responsibilities, a greater say in the running of the 'Company Boats' (Bleakley 1961 : 270). Another minor concession was a reduction in the prices of some items in the Government stores (V. & P. 1935-6). A conference of councillors, convened in 1937, also made minor alterations in the 'local regulations'. These reforms were finally incorporated in the Torres Strait Islanders' Act of 1939, which also satisfied the Islanders' desire to be formally distinguished from the Mainland Aborigines.

But other than in the matter of local government, the new Act introduced no serious modification to the existing regime. The Protector retained his control over the persons and properties of his island wards; the reserves remained subject to the same controls of entry and exit and their inhabitants continued to be virtually confined to them.

Race Relations

From about the middle of the nineteenth century, Torres Straits was invaded by a large number of aliens, recruited from almost every nation in the world. The Islanders were virtually without defence against this invasion, overwhelmed by numbers, physical force, wealth and knowledge. The new society engulfed them and caught them up, willy nilly - as labourers, as converts, as subjects, even as rebels.
In this new, plural society, the Islanders were close to being the 'bottom dogs', ruled, indoctrinated, employed and at times exploited, with little power to influence the system in which they were caught. Europeans, particularly British and Australian, were the most powerful and usually the most distant in their relations with the Islanders. In the early period, there were a few Europeans who settled on various islands and married native women, but none has done so during the last fifty years. The coloured men who came to the area as labourers and missionaries, stood somewhere between the European and the native population - subordinate to the former yet sometimes placed in authority over the latter. But, particularly in the case of the Pacific Islanders, they maintained less distance between themselves and the local population. Indeed, many settled on the islands, living in a manner very similar to that of their neighbours and marrying local women. The Melanesians seem to have been little more sophisticated than their Torres Straits cousins, many having been 'blackbirded' from areas equally uncivilized, but the Polynesians were often far more advanced. Some had been recruited in Sydney, whither they had gone on whaling and blackbirding vessels (V. & P. 1879) and a few were acquainted with other great ports of the world (L.M.S. 1871). A number were literate and they were considered well able to take care of themselves (Q.P.D. 1881 : 264). These must have played an important part in interpreting the new world to the Islanders. McFarlane considered his coloured
teachers able to "get at the heathen of their class ... quicker than European missionaries". (1888: 138). The Pacific Islanders also introduced items of their own culture to the area. Polynesian influence, particularly, is evident in such things as music, dancing, cuisine and housebuilding styles.

The Administration had no power over these alien immigrants and sometimes found them a troublesome and disturbing element in the island communities (V. & P. 1885; 1914). The problem was eventually solved by amending the relevant Acts to cover half-castes and persons of any other nationality who "habitually associated with" Islanders. A number then withdrew from the Reserves, settling either in European settlements, the Anglican St. Paul's Mission on Moa Island or the Roman Catholic Mission on Hammond Island. However, some remained, particularly on Darnley and Badu Islands.

Despite the almost complete similarity of their cultural background, the half-caste offspring of these foreigners, whether 'free' or 'under the Act', remain something of a superior caste to the Islanders. Their foreign descent is a source of pride and they claim, and are to a considerable extent credited with, superior intelligence and ability. They also show a strong tendency to marry among themselves.

The Japanese seem to have maintained a greater social distance from the Islanders than the other coloured seamen, though perhaps this was partly due to the more stringent
controls on contact in the later period. None settled on the Islands or married native women, and there are only a very few Japanese half-castes. Relations may not always have been harmonious on the boats, but the Islanders whom I questioned seem to have pleasant recollections of them, while admitting that they were hard taskmasters. The Islanders readily took up arms against the Japanese in 1941, but my informants said they felt 'sorry' for their former friends and supposed that the latter did not bomb the home islands because they had a like sympathy.

The Europeans have generally regarded the Islanders as more advanced and intelligent than the Mainland Aborigines and Papuans, paying them higher wages accordingly. The Islanders themselves have taken up this attitude, regarding the others as dull-witted, unsophisticated and 'uncivilized' (i.e. ignorant of Christian belief and precept). Marriage with Papuans formerly occurred, but it has been discontinued for many years and there have been no recent marriages with full-blood Aborigines, although half-castes of European or Polynesian ancestry are acceptable. But both Aborigines and Papuans are accorded a certain respect in face-to-face relations because they are reputed to possess powerful sorcery such as the Islanders, on account of their conversion to Christianity, have had to renounce.
Conclusions

From the middle of the nineteenth century, the Torres Straits Islanders were brought within the orbit of the modern world and came into intensive contact with Europeans and many other nationalities. Their incorporation into the European-dominated industrial, ecclesiastical and governmental systems, and their exposure to a wide diversity of new cultural influences, brought about a drastic change in their traditional way of life.

After the disorder and confusion of the early years, the Queensland Government established its supremacy in the area and set about regulating the status of Islanders in the wider social system, with the result that their range of direct contacts with outsiders was somewhat more limited at the end of the period than at the beginning.

When fully developed, the Government's native policy amounted to something approaching segregation, with the Islanders largely confined to their reserves and encountering only those outsiders of whom it approved. Within these enclaves the Islanders were subjected to close and stringent supervision by white and native officials of the regime. Scarcely an area or phase of their lives remained unregulated from the domestic to the public, and from childhood to old age. And to the penal sanctions of secular government were added the mundane and supernatural sanctions wielded by the Church.
But it must not be assumed that the Islanders accepted social change and European domination only under duress. We know that although they resisted certain changes and tried to alter the course of others, they found many positive inducements to embrace the new way of life. Ideological conversion accompanied change, there were material rewards to be gained, and new positions of power and influence to be occupied. Thus at least some Islanders came to have a vested interest in the new regime and to participate actively in it.

Footnotes

1. The population of Thursday Island reached its greatest size in 1898. The breakdown according to nationality was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>European</td>
<td>608</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>619</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filipino</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Sea Is.</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cingalese</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Javanese</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL:</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,712</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(V. & P. 1898).
2. As noted earlier, we have estimates of only some of the island populations at the time of first contact. There is no complete survey until 1913 (V. & F. 1913), by which time some populations had been increased by migration from other countries and 'mixed bloods'. However, the following examples give some indication of population trends during the first 40 years of contact.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Darnley</th>
<th>Murray</th>
<th>Moa</th>
<th>Mabuiag</th>
<th>Saibai</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pop. at time of contact*</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>800-1000</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>300+</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Later estimate (L.M.S. Records)</td>
<td>29 (1889)</td>
<td>397 (1895)</td>
<td>150 (1876)</td>
<td>? (1895)</td>
<td>200-250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913 census</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>406</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* For sources of these estimates see Note 3 of Chapter I.

+ The 1913 estimate of Darnley Island population (301) does not distinguish between natives and foreigners, and is therefore omitted.

3. The Queensland government has generally published the total earning of the 'Company boats' but not the actual sums received by the workers. However, they made an exception in their reports for 1933 and 1934, publishing the total amounts received by workers on 'Company' and 'Master' boats. The average annual per capita earnings have been calculated by dividing the number of workers in each group into the total figure.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1933</th>
<th>1934</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Company boats</td>
<td>£17.3</td>
<td>£23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master boats</td>
<td>£29.9</td>
<td>£29.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. I am not clear why marriages with Papuans have been discontinued. However, native informants said that the Papuan Administration had forbidden it.
Chapter IV

THE WAR AND ITS AFTERMATH: EXPANDING SOCIAL HORIZONS

At the outbreak of the Pacific War in 1941, Torres Straits came under military control and normal peace-time activities and administration were suspended. The island communities were left very much to their own devices, but many of their menfolk were drawn into a military force which also included Europeans. Under war conditions the Islanders assumed a new role in Australian society which - to them, at least - appeared more worthy than any they had played hitherto, and although the old order was restored in 1946, many believed that they should and would be granted equality with white people.

Since the end of the war there has been a widening and intensification of political activity seeking to influence the determination of native policy. There has been a quickening of interest among white Australians outside Torres Straits; the authorities have consulted the Islanders' wishes more regularly, and the latter, finding new allies in the European sector, have sometimes tried to bring additional pressure to bear through unofficial channels. In keeping with the new climate of both black and white opinion, Church and Government have adopted a more dynamic approach to native policy and have
declared their ultimate goal to be the 'assimilation' of Islanders into European society. These political changes have encouraged the Islanders to expect substantial social and material improvements, often far beyond the bounds of what can be realized under present conditions.

The improvements which have so far been effected are limited and fall short of the Islanders' expectations. They have been given a somewhat greater say in decisions affecting them and they have been allowed greater freedom of movement outside the reserves, which has enabled them to widen their range of contacts with white people. Their level of material prosperity is higher than before the war, but still lags far behind that of the rest of Australia, and now that the local economy is in decline the economic prospects for the rapidly increasing native population (See Appendix) are not promising.

As in the last chapter, I shall be drawing largely upon documentary sources in my discussion of economic trends and developments in Government and Church policy. But my account of how the Islanders regard European society and their present and future place in it, is derived from the statements of my informants, men who have lived through the exciting and disturbing events of the last twenty years.

The War

The outbreak of the Pacific War in 1941 brought normal life to a standstill. The naval authorities commandeered all
fishing vessels and Japanese seamen were deported. The military authorities took over Thursday Island, requiring the civilian population, including white clergy and government officials, to evacuate to the mainland. Except for Badu, none of the island communities was occupied by white troops; native councillors carried on the work of local government, native priests and churchwardens kept the churches open and native schoolteachers carried on their work—all largely without help from Europeans.

The Commonwealth Defence Act does not require Islanders or Aborigines to serve in the armed forces, but a special home-defence unit, known as the Torres Straits Light Infantry was formed. Many Islanders volunteered to join this contingent which, at first limited to 250, was later expanded to 700, thus absorbing almost all the able-bodied men (Bleakley 1961: 271-2). They did not see active service, being stationed on or in the vicinity of Thursday Island, except for a handful at Merauke, in south-eastern Netherlands New Guinea. Their only experience of actual hostilities occurred during an air raid on a nearby air-strip. Most of the Island troops were employed in loading and manning the water transport service which plied between Cape York and the New Guinea coast, but they also received some ordinary military training and a few acquired some skill in truck driving, wireless operating and clerical work.
Most of the non-commissioned and commissioned officers were white, but a few Islanders were promoted up to the rank of sergeant and, at least in some contexts, received from white troops the respect appropriate to their rank. However, they were paid less than the usual rates and around 1942—the exact date is uncertain—staged a strike in protest against this discrimination. The action was quickly put down, though without serious reprisals, but pay was subsequently raised to two-thirds of the usual rate (V. & P. 1946).

If Island informants are to be believed, they had many friends among the white Australian soldiers (though few among the white or coloured American detachments). Some Australian officers sat on mats in native style, picked up fragments of Island languages and even learned Island dances. Lower ranks shared their liquor ration with Island friends and taught them to drink methylated spirits and other substitutes; more important, they promised them a 'better deal' in the post-war world. It seems fairly certain that some of the white soldiers held radical views and encouraged the Islanders to strike for higher pay.

In recalling the war years, my informants seemed to feel that they had achieved a closer rapport with the white Australian society and acquired a greater importance in its affairs than ever before or since. This, rather than any sense of hostility towards the Japanese, seems to legitimise their
participation in the war. Their use of phrases such as "fighting for King and Country", "for the motherland", "for freedom and liberty" imply a claim to citizenship and equality of status in Australian society. The experience of the war years convinced at least some of them that they could take their place in the wider society, associate with Europeans on a footing of equality and, given training, enter European occupations. These notions have been given particular emphasis in the ideology of the Ex-Servicemen's movement which I shall describe presently.

The Post-War Restoration

When the military authorities withdrew from Torres Straits at the end of the war, the European population, including government officials, clergy and pearlers, were allowed to return. But although the Queensland Government, the Church of England and the pearling industry have continued to dominate the scene, there has not been a complete return to pre-war conditions.

The Commonwealth Government which, prior to the war, took no special interest in the Islanders, has twice intervened to extend to them privileges hitherto enjoyed only by white Australians. During the war it rendered them eligible to receive certain Social Service Benefits, and in 1962 it extended to them and to Aborigines the Federal franchise.¹

The Queensland Government, which retains a much closer
control over the Islanders' day-to-day lives, has made no change in their legal status: none of its powers have been surrendered and no further privileges have been extended to them. Nevertheless, there has been a considerable change in the way in which the Administration has exercised its powers, and in its central policy.

The Sub-Department of Native Affairs (D.N.A.)\(^2\) report for 1946-7 described the post-war situation as follows:

"The serious disruption occasioned by the advent of war to the long accustomed mode of life practiced by the Torres Strait Islanders has had a profound effect on both the economic and psychological aspects of their makeup. From a cultural point of view the war contact was disastrous, in that it was swift and all-enveloping. In its aftermath came various degrees of bewilderment, for the rehabilitation of these people embodied, not a return to pre-war conditions, but a return to conditions changed forever by the wave of unprecedented prosperity that has swept over the entire area."

\(^{(V. \& F. 1947)}\)

In the same report the Administration set out its perspectives:\(^3\)

"Complete conversion to the life of the white races must come, and all concerned should realize the implications of such a transition and be ready to deal with any eventuality that may arise. The change has come rapidly, and to prevent disillusionment a carefully thought out plan of education must be instituted."

\(^{(ibid.)}\)

The aims expressed correspond to the assimilation policies which have been adopted by all the Australian governments responsible for native peoples, although the actual word does not appear in Queensland reports until 1956. In the 1958
report, the statement of policy begins:

"The policy of the Queensland Government applicable to its aboriginal peoples is clear and purposeful. It aims at the ultimate assimilation of all aboriginals and half bloods into the State's community life. Nothing in that policy, however, can be construed as an impetuous forcing of people to change their environment while they are unwilling to accept the responsibility of full citizenship."

(V. & P. 1958)

Although the Torres Straits Islanders are not specified here, one may presume that they too are covered by this general policy. Like some other assimilation policies, it leaves unanswered the question whether the existing native communities should be eventually dispersed among the general Australian population or retain their identity. Moreover, it remains to be decided whether communities should advance together—probably at the rate of the slowest—or whether exulés should be drawn off into the white community as they become 'fit' to do so.

The Queensland Administration has allowed a number of Islanders to migrate to Thursday Island and the mainland, not because of their special capacities but merely as economic circumstances allowed. Except in the case of persons of mixed descent, there are no legal provisions whereby Islanders may become exempt from the controls and restrictions of the Torres Strait Islanders' Act, but those living on the mainland are virtually free from surveillance except in a crisis. A few migrants got themselves onto the voting roll even before
1962 and most have been able to get admission to hotels, even though the law denies them access to liquor. Islanders living in Thursday Island remain under much closer surveillance, although they are not subject to the by-laws of their home communities and are largely free from petty interference in their domestic affairs. It might be said that while individual emigrants have been permitted to 'leak out' of the Administrative system, there has been no substantial change in the system itself. The policy of the D.N.A. regarding those who remain on the home islands, is essentially a continuation of what was done before the war, that is to say, local economic development, improvement of education and health, and the maintenance of an efficient system of local government. However, Islanders now play a greater part in the administration of these policies, though always in subordinate positions.

Local government has proceeded along the lines laid down in the Torres Strait Islanders Act of 1939. The Island Councils maintain law and order, try petty offences and serve as the lowest echelon of the administrative system. Since the Islanders do not have the State franchise, the councillors are their only officially recognized representatives. The D.N.A. brings councillors together at biennial conferences and when Parliamentary committees of enquiry visit the area, to give their opinions on such matters as enfranchisement, economic development, education and the reform of the liquor laws. The
Director of Native Affairs stated recently that the Islanders usually got what they asked for (Commonwealth Parliament 1961: Brisbane hearings), but although a number of reforms have been promised (A.B.C. 27.7.61) few have yet been made.

The D.N.A. is responsible for education on the island reserves, and the standard maintained is well below that of Queensland Department of Education schools. Although there is a qualified schoolteacher on each of the five most populous islands, he is assisted by native teachers who have no formal qualifications and whose knowledge of English, the language of instruction, is usually imperfect. On the other islands, education is entirely in the hands of native teachers. No child from a D.N.A. school has succeeded in passing the Queensland Scholarship Examination, although three Islanders from the Department of Education School in Thursday Island passed in 1959 and proceeded to secondary education on the mainland.

The Government has effected more substantial improvements in native health. Native orderlies run medical aid posts on each island and although they have no formal training, they are able to follow instructions given by radio from doctors in Thursday Island. Doctors, dentists and medical survey teams visit the islands from time to time, and there are ample hospital facilities for Islanders in Thursday Island. The Government has also carried out an extensive housing scheme,
erecting fibrolite cottages in Thursday Island and the new Bamaga settlement, and a smaller number on the home islands.

But whatever the value of these services, it is clear that the Islanders cannot make any substantial advance towards assimilation unless they are assured of a regular and substantial cash income. In fact, a great part of the Administration's efforts has gone into economic development. This must, however, be considered in the context of general economic trends.

Post-War Economic Trends

The post-war period has seen a marked improvement in the Islanders' living standards, although the local economy has not fulfilled the promise of the early years. Inevitably, their economic fortunes have been closely linked with those of the marine industry, which got off to a good start when work was resumed in 1946. The closing of the Chinese market put an end to bêche-de-mer fishing, but since no pearl shell or trochus had been produced during the war, demand and prices were high. Moreover, since the beds had not been worked during that time, shell was plentiful and easily worked. But presently it became scarcer and the market returned to its normal instability, with corresponding fluctuations in earnings and the size of fleets. The most prosperous years were 1955-7, when gross earnings in Torres Straits were more than three times what they had been in 1946-7. But if this increase is
set against the Australian retail price index it becomes apparent that earnings had, in real terms, only just kept abreast of the falling purchasing power of the pound. Now that buttons can be manufactured more cheaply from plastics, the world demand is likely to remain low, although pearl shell is still required for the manufacture of ornaments and the New Guinea market. In 1959-61, the industry's gross earnings fell below one and a half times the 1946-7 figure; a number of European firms have gone out of business, while the activities of the survivors have been radically curtailed.

Torres Straits Master Pearlers have not been able to recruit Asian or Papuan labour since the war, with the result that almost all their skippers and deep-water divers, as well as ordinary seamen, have been Islanders. The latter have thus been able to enter the more skilled and remunerative positions in the industry, which were previously closed to them. The D.N.A. retained its control over native employment and, in the new situation, was able to negotiate wage rates approximately four times greater than those obtaining before the war.

"Prior to the war, Islanders working under Japanese Captains were paid as crew members in the vicinity of £4 per month with keep. Following the termination of hostilities, the Islanders demanded and received a basic wage of £15 per month and keep. That basic wage determined in conference between the Director of Native Affairs and employers, has been gradually increased to a figure of £17 per month and keep, with bonuses payable as a result of production of a particular vessel. In effect, incentive payments are made to the workers."

(V. & P. 1954)
By 1958, the basic wage had again been increased, to £19; while divers and captains were earning even higher rates. I was told that during the height of the 'boom' divers were earning as much as £500 per annum, while one outstanding trochus skipper made over £4,000. Of course, not every boat was so successful, and when the market was less favourable many earned little or nothing above the basic rates. However when these basic rates are compared with the North Queensland retail food price indices, it can be seen that while, in real terms, the basic rate is still above the 1939 figure, it has fallen well below the 1947 figure.

The immediate post-war period also saw a considerable expansion of the D.N.A. fleet, which has remained the largest in the industry. By 1947 more than forty vessels, including twenty luggers, eight cutters and twelve cutter-launches, had been acquired, valued at around £30,000 (V. & P. 1947). A substantial part of the purchase money came from what the Islanders had saved from their war-time pay and post-war gratuities. Of this forty, only fifteen remain at work (V. & P. 1962), some having proved unsuitable for pearling, while others have been lost or have fallen into decay. However, most of the remainder have been equipped with engines, and most of those fishing for pearl shell with diving apparatus. As one might expect, the earnings of the D.N.A. fleet have been considerably in excess of the pre-war figures.
These native companies have had varying success. Some have failed to cover running costs through inefficiency or sheer disinclination to work, so that the Administration has been obliged to sequester boats, handing them over to other, more vigorous companies. Initially, every island had one or more boats, but by 1960 six of them had none while two others left their boats idle. As in Haddon's time, the Eastern Islanders have not prospered, but Mabuiag and Saibai, which had had a name for industriousness in the past, have not prospered either. Yorke and Coconut Islands have done better, but Badu has become the undisputed centre of pearl shell work, providing skippers for a number of master pearlers' boats as well as running its own fleet of eight luggers and one cutter.

These native ventures have been of several types. In some instances, the whole island has combined to purchase a boat; in others, a large body of relatives has formed a company; while in others again, the boats have been acquired by single extended families, employing wage labourers. The 'family' companies have proved more successful than the wider co-operative groups. Indeed, all but two of the fifteen boats still at work are owned by four families.

The gross earnings of the D.N.A. fleet have not fluctuated so widely as those of the private sector of the industry. After the boom of 1946-7, they declined to less than half the figure for that year. With a more favourable market and the
installation of diving equipment on some vessels, earnings returned to the earlier level in 1950–1 and then gradually rose to about a 40% increase in 1955–7. Since then, they have again declined and since 1959 have remained at or below the 1946–7 figure. These fluctuations are calculated in terms of monetary earnings. When it is realized that the Australian Retail Price Index rose from 1160 in 1946 to 2694 in 1959, and has risen still further since then, it becomes clear that the D.N.A. fleet’s earnings have drastically declined. There is no information concerning the earnings of the men employed on these boats, but it seems that in more prosperous years successful ventures have provided remuneration as good as and sometimes better than Master Boats, though the marginal concerns paid very little.

Alternative avenues of employment are very limited. The Government maintains a small number of teachers, medical orderlies, sanitary workers and storemen on the home islands, but since most of these are only part-time jobs the rates of pay are generally low; councillors also receive a small remuneration. There seem to be no great opportunities for marketing local produce and few for establishing new industries to supplement pearling. In 1960 private concerns set up a number of pearl culture stations in western Torres Straits, employing shore workers and sending out luggers to obtain 'live' shell. This may provide a partial solution to the economic
problem, but the venture is still at an experimental stage.

Thus, the industry which has hitherto provided the Islanders with their principal source of cash income is now in decline. Not only is it unlikely to enable them to raise their living standards but it will not provide sufficient employment for the rapidly increasing labour force. Commonwealth Social Service Benefits (other than Unemployment Benefit) assure the Islanders of a small income; indeed this is the only source of cash for the many who maintain themselves by gardening and fishing. But those who aspire to a higher living standard must leave their home communities and go either to Thursday Island, the new Government settlement at Bamaga or to the more closely settled parts of the mainland.

In 1948 the D.N.A. established a new settlement at Bamaga, on the tip of Cape York. It was originally intended to provide a new home for the people of Saibai, where living conditions were particularly unsatisfactory, but a proportion of its 500 inhabitants have come from other islands. A saw mill has been established and there is experiment in cattle raising and the cultivation of various crops. The project seems promising, but so far the rates of pay offered are well below European standards.

Islanders have been allowed to settle in Thursday Island since the war and there are now approximately 400 in residence. A number are employed there by the Government in unskilled and
semi-skilled capacities in its building, boat repairing, servicing and commercial concerns. The Town Council, hospitals and various private businesses also offer some openings, while Island women have been able to find work in the hospitals and as domestic servants. But since pearling is the staple industry of Thursday Island, its decline has produced a corresponding decline in servicing and commercial activities. The population (excluding Islanders) has fallen from the post-war peak of 2,052, in 1954, to an estimated 1,600 in 1960 (Q.Y.B.) causing a further decline in local commerce and the demand for labour. Opportunities are thus severely limited, and while a few Islanders in occupations covered by union agreements are drawing the same rates of pay as Europeans, the majority are living on much less and there are some who are simply dependent on their relatives. In order to check the growth of a semi-parasitic element among the Islanders, the authorities have attempted to restrict the flow into Thursday Island.

Emigration to the mainland has also been permitted since the war, but subject to strict limitations. Emigrants are required to obtain permission from their island Councils and to have a guaranteed job awaiting them. The flow began when, in the late 1940s, the D.N.A. sent cane-cutting teams to North Queensland. Some found other work at the end of the season and remained, subsequently finding employment for other relatives. Others have emigrated illicitly, by deserting from
trochus boats as soon as they docked at one of the North Queensland ports. These have also been able to find work and the Administration has not attempted to repatriate them.

There are now approximately 400 Islanders in Queensland, mostly in the north, the majority of whom are working as railway settlers for rates of pay which slightly exceed the State basic wage. Some have been away from their homes for ten years and more. It is uncertain how many will remain permanently, but a number have been joined by their families while others have married locally. 8

It is no great exaggeration to call Torres Straits a depressed area. With declining economic opportunities and rapidly expanding population, the improvement in the Islanders' living standards, effected at the end of the war, is now threatened. Increased emigration seems to be the most likely safety valve to release the mounting pressures of population and discontent, but in recent years the North Queensland economy has also been stagnating and there has been considerable unemployment. 9 The Islanders themselves are confused and dismayed to find their expanded economic horizons contracting again.

The Church of England Since the War

The Church of England remains the 'established' church for the Torres Straits Islanders, although it has recently encountered some competition from rival denominations. Its
essential structure has remained unchanged, but it has made some adaptations to the new post-war climate, by encouraging Islanders to play a more important part in its affairs and by concerning itself with their material and social welfare, even pronouncing on matters which are the province of the Administration.

At the 1959 Synod, the Bishop of Carpentaria declared his support for the policy of assimilation, stressing its implications of "equality of status, opportunity and responsibility" (D.O.C. 1959a). The same assembly, which was attended by Island and European clergy and laity, passed resolutions calling for a provision whereby Islanders might be exempted from the Torres Strait Islanders Act, and for the establishment of a Manual Training School in Thursday Island (D.O.C. 1959b). The Church has also declared itself in favour of Islanders being given legal access to liquor, and in 1961 the Bishop requested their enfranchisement (Commonwealth Parliament 1961, Queensland Hearings : 486).

The Church has also made an implicit criticism of Government economic policies. In 1957 the Co-operatives' Secretary of the Australian Board of Missions announced the establishment of a Christian Co-operative in Torres Straits (Tennent 1959 : passim) to further economic advancement. But although some Islanders showed considerable interest in the new project, no productive activity has yet begun.
The senior clergy in the Diocese are all Europeans, but the number of native clergy has increased from four in 1939 to twelve in 1960, while others are still undergoing training. The most senior among them was recently elevated to the position of Canon. Two native priests have had experience on the mainland and others have been sent there on deputation work. Lay attend annual synods where they can participate in the formation of Church policy.

The Cathedral of the Diocese is situated in Thursday Island and Islanders living there play an important part in its affairs. Both native and European clergy officiate and both groups are represented among the council of churchwardens. Island hymns alternate with English ones, and a native drum has replaced the customary organ as an accompaniment to singing. I was told that these concessions to native tastes had alienated some white Anglicans, and Islanders certainly predominated in every congregation. In North Queensland, where no such concessions are made, Islanders feel very much less at home.

The Roman Catholic and Presbyterian churches are also represented in Thursday Island, but there seems to be a tacit agreement between them and the Anglicans not to poach on one another's preserves, with the result that few natives have transferred allegiance. However, some of the newer, more radical sects have recognized no such restriction.

The Pentecostalist Assemblies of God (See Clark 1949:
106-7) have presented the Church of England with its most serious challenge. The North Queensland Assemblies have gone out of their way to welcome coloured people into their congregation, giving them ample opportunity for active participation in their services and training coloured pastors. Islanders first encountered the sect on visits to the North Queensland ports before the war and a considerable number of conversions have been made among migrant workers in recent years. A white pastor resided in Thursday Island for a number of years, establishing a small congregation there, which, during the period of my fieldwork, was under the guidance of a Murray Island pastor and a non-denominational white evangelist. Murray Islanders returning from Thursday Island and the Mainland also established a sizeable congregation among their own people. In keeping with the Pentecostalist tradition, local Assemblies enjoy a wide measure of autonomy (Clark 1949: 101), and the Torres Straits Assemblies have very little contact with the parent body.

The Jehovah's Witnesses (see Clark 1949: 45-7) made their appearance on Thursday Island in 1959, showing a great eagerness to win the friendship and sympathy of the Islanders. Few actual conversions have been made, but a number of Baduans have attended Bible study classes and the sect's literature circulates quite widely.
The Islanders and Australian Political Bodies

Prior to the war, Australian parliamentary parties and pressure groups took little or no interest in the Torres Straits Islanders and the latter were scarcely aware of their existence. More recently, some of these bodies have begun to take an interest in native policy and to criticise Government administration. The importance of such agitation must not be exaggerated, either in its effect on policy or its impact on the Islanders who have often been only vaguely aware of what was being done on their behalf. So far they have not been required to align themselves with one or other of the political parties (though now that they have the Federal franchise they will have to do so), but they have tended to reach out towards any European groups which seemed to show an interest in their affairs.

The Islanders have found most of their advocates on the Left. The Communist Party had supported them during the 1936 strike and was first in the field after the War with a book criticising Administration policy and proposing a Draft Programme of full citizen rights, increased financial aid for economic, medical and cultural development and increased native participation in the running of welfare agencies (Peel 1946 : 134). Similar criticisms and proposals have appeared in the Communist press from time to time (Tribune : 28.2.48; 6.3.48; 10.3.48). Such publications reached a minority of Islanders and may have helped to form their own policies, but neither the party nor
its central ideology have gained any foothold.

More recently, the local member of the State Legislative Assembly belonging to the break-away Queensland Labour Party, and the Labour Party member for Cairns have expressed criticism of Government policy, particularly relating to the liquor restrictions and economic development (Q.P.D. 1959 : 421-2; 1960 : 2197). A number of Islanders have approached the local M.L.A. with various complaints and petitions, mostly directed against the Administration, but none has shown any interest in his party.

Trade Unionism also has made little appeal. Some Islanders working in Thursday Island and elsewhere have been required to join the appropriate union, but none has taken any active part in its affairs and they do not seem to regard these organizations as a possible political outlet. Workers in the marine industry are not eligible to join any union and thus remain unorganized.

The most important political body to gain a foothold in Torres Straits since the war has been an ex-servicemen's organization. There are two such organizations in Australia, the Returned Soldiers', Sailors' and Airmen's League (R.S.L.) and the Legion of Exservice Men and Women, of which the former is the most influential. The Thursday Island branch of the R.S.L. declined to accept Islanders, but a member of the Legion, which is not otherwise represented in the area,
arranged for them to be admitted to its organization. A branch was formed in Thursday Island in 1949 and a sub-branch in Murray Island a few years later, both consisting exclusively of Islanders. But although members send subscriptions to the Brisbane Headquarters and receive badges and a monthly journal in return, they have little direct contact with their white comrades.

Despite this limited contact, the organization has formulated a policy with regard to Island ex-servicemen which is explicitly critical of the Administration. The 1960 Federal Conference referred to veterans of the Torres Straits contingent as a 'Lost Legion' who were being unjustly denied "full citizenship rights and repatriation benefits", and called for further training and education to enable them to become assimilated ("Aussie" Legion Journal, March–April 1960; see also editorial, March 1961).

Such statements serve to confirm Islanders' somewhat exaggerated belief in the ability of the Legion to aid their advancement, but the importance attached to the Torres Straits branches might not be so great if they did not also serve ends of more strictly local significance.

**Widening Horizons and Increased Communication**

Prior to the war the Islanders were deeply involved in the wider society without having much direct contact with white people. The officials, clergy and businessmen with whom they
principally dealt, acted as interpreters and mediators between them and the European society which otherwise took very little interest in them. Since 1941 their range of outside contacts has widened to include other Europeans to whom they do not stand in an explicit relationship of subordination. Formal contacts have been established with such bodies as the Legion and there have been innumerable informal contacts with individual white people. Cultural barriers and some colour prejudice among white Australians may have limited contacts and it is significant that Island emigrants have been drawn towards such atypical groups as the Pentecostalists, but their experience and perception of the wider society cannot but have changed under these new conditions.

The political position which the Islanders now occupy has also changed, for while the D.N.A. and the Church of England remain the official channels through which they may deal with the outside world, there are now other, unofficial channels. Both Government and Church are subject to pressure from various outside bodies and individuals who may also influence and be influenced by the Islanders.

Through their encounters with a more diverse range of white people, the Islanders have become exposed to many new ideas and ideologies which they have incorporated into their own formulations concerning their place in the wider society.
Ideologies of Race Relations

The term ideology has been used in various ways, but it is generally understood to denote a set of doctrines which have been rendered explicit, formulated and given at least an appearance of consistency. The component doctrines have a general rather than specific, and enduring rather than ephemeral reference; according to Parsons, they consist of both cognitive and evaluative elements (1952:308). No doubt, ideas and ideologies influence action (Kluckhohn 1951:401), though the connection between the two is complex and incompletely understood, but what is clear is that "ideologies will become the symbolic battleground of some of the principal elements of tension and conflict within a social system" (Parsons 1952:358). Here I am concerned with the formulations which Islanders make concerning their place in the wider society, as a means of legitimizing what they do and criticizing what others do.

All Islanders do not adhere to the one ideology; ideological differences are one aspect of the many conflicts which set them at odds with one another. Further, not everyone formulates his statements in exactly the same way, or with the same degree of articulacy. Nevertheless, from the diversity of the many individual utterances which I recorded, certain basic themes recur throughout the Islands, though expressed in different guises and given different emphases.
All Islanders are agreed that they stand in a relation of economic, political and social inequality to white people; the ideological differences between them lie in the way in which they explain and evaluate this inequality. There seem to be three basic variables. First, in what improvements are expected: whether gradual, limited, quantitative betterment of social and economic conditions or a sudden, qualitative and well-nigh miraculous transformation. Second, in the value given to this change, with the valuation tending to rise in proportion to the extravagance of expectations. Third, in the extent to which these objectives seem realizable. To the extent that they are valued and considered realizable, but seem not to be forthcoming, expressions of frustration and aggression against whoever is thought to be causing the obstruction are justified.

The ideologies which one may broadly characterize as conservative present any sudden and substantial improvement in native conditions impracticable. Given the economic situation and the backwardness of the Islanders, nothing is to be gained by getting rid of the D.N.A. If the Administration has any fault it is in not combating this backwardness with sufficient vigour. It is not surprising that the most prosperous Islanders tend to express a fair measure of satisfaction with things as they are and do not expect too much from any changes envisaged. Successful themselves, they are inclined to attribute the failure of others to laziness, improvidence and
stupidity. Many of them are of mixed descent and have a low opinion of 'Torres Strait Natives' in general. Having won the respect of the Administration, they identify themselves with it and cite their own success as an example of what others can do if they try.

The radical ideologies most usually expounded by those who have been less successful, envisage an improvement in the Islanders' circumstances so substantial that it patently cannot be achieved within the present framework. This is what is implied by the notion of 'freedom'. On first hearing the term used, I assumed that it meant no more than the removal of the Administration and of discriminatory laws, but on closer enquiry I found that much more was implied. The removal of the liquor laws, restrictions on movement, etc., is certainly involved, but the emphasis is principally economic. One Saibain put it thus:

"The main thing in freedom is white people's living - only little bit work and plenty wages. No get a hand dirty".

Another Saibain who had been influenced by 'Cargo' type beliefs in Papua and on his home island suggested there might be 'labour freedom' or 'full freedom' under which there would be no need to work. Wages on the boats and ashore and social service benefits would all rise to make the Islander's income equal to that of white people. Ex-servicemen would at last receive their long-promised repatriation benefits, which would
amount to a considerable sum — one Miriam informant suggested £25,000. The home islands would take on the character of European settlements. I was told of a Saibaian, now dead, who had seen in a vision "the new Saibai", become a city with a jetty, great buildings and a street filled with cars. Another man, who shows signs of mental unbalance, has set out on a map his plans for the new Badu, which is to have streets, cafes, a power house, and schools.

When native ambitions are so extravagant it becomes obvious that they cannot be achieved without outside aid. The limited success of the few prosperous Islanders is attributed less to their own efforts than to special favours from the Administration, so that, without it, there is little to be gained from redoubling one's efforts on the boats or modelling one's life more closely on that of white people.

This sense of helplessness is clearly expressed in two statements:

"We try and try to come up. But we stay poor. We got nothing. We can carpenter but we only learn ourselves. We like the Israelites with Moses."

"We very worried people these days. We come a little big good, but we look nothing change. Our houses are no good. We got no education. The boys can't find jobs. We like a bird shut up in a box: we want to come out and fly but we shut up".

But if the Islanders are powerless to help themselves, they believe that the white man's government or some other agency
can help them. Why then does it not do so, and how can it be persuaded to relent?

Some suggest that the fault may lie in themselves. Perhaps they are too uneducated, too undisciplined, too given to quarrelling among themselves, too sinful. The right to 'freedom' has still to be earned. But others insist that they have become 'civilized' by becoming Christians and have earned the right to 'citizenship' by 'fighting for King and Country', at a time when administrators and clergy 'ran away'. It is widely claimed that white officers and officials promised them 'citizenship' during the war, and there is no doubt that many still expect that 'promise' to be honoured. Even fifteen years after the end of the war, the visit of some distinguished personage has only to be announced for the rumour to go round that 'freedom' is imminent. Repeated disappointment provokes expressions of frustration and confusion. One Saibian, thinking back to the days of the German Wislin cult, said:

"The old people prayed and prayed but they got tired waiting and died. They said that good thing going to come some time. We waited and waited for freedom. Always coming near but never come yet."

Another, learning that Samoa had been granted self-government, suggested that white people had some sort of plan whereby the other territories would be granted 'freedom' one by one. But the long delay has revived the old suspicion that the authorities are acting in bad faith. In 1913, the leaders of
the German Wislín movement claimed that white people were stealing the Islanders' share of the Cargo (Haddon 1935: 41) while some of my own Saibaian informants told me that the spirits of the dead sent them gifts which were intercepted by a British warship and redirected. Most Islanders would dismiss such notions as fantastic, but some still allege that the Administration is misappropriating money due to them or at least limiting the amount they can obtain. The Administration's long-standing practice of holding their money for them, coupled with their own somewhat hazy notions of money matters, provides a fertile breeding ground for suspicion. Again, while most Islanders would admit that they are inadequately educated, some allege that 'proper' education is being withheld from them.

"They say we can't get freedom till we better educated. But same talk since before the war. When my father councillor they ask more education. How long we been ask that thing and never get it yet. Torres Strait people never will get education while they under the Act. While we're under the Act we'll always be down."

What is to be done? A wan and tiny remnant in Saibai express the hope that one day the spirit ship will come, bringing them 'freedom', or that the spirits will bring some supernatural power to bear to make the authorities relent. But if the sympathy of the Queensland government cannot be won, there may be other white people who will listen. Native leaders of the Ex-servicemen's movement, recalling the promises and friendliness of their white comrades during the
war, put their trust in the Legion. The appearance of the 'Christian Co-operative' (see p.117) aroused similar hopes. Ideological conflict has also arisen in the relations between Islanders and the Church. Never once, during the whole of my stay, did I hear an Islander challenge the basic doctrines of Christianity - belief in an omnipotent God-creator, a divine Saviour, Jesus Christ, the efficacy of faith and prayer, the truth of the Scriptures, the authority of the Ten Commandments. Although they are aware of other religions, they take no interest in them except as curiosities, while supernaturalism so pervades their thinking as to make atheism inconceivable. They have noticed that some Europeans fail to attend Church, but take this for backsliding rather than dissent. Islanders regard their adherence to Christianity as a proof of their 'civilized' state, marking them off from 'wild' Papuans and Aborigines, and giving them the right to membership of a society they believe to be Christian.

Religion did not become a matter for ideological conflict until Church affiliation became a matter of choice and rival denominations had to justify their claims to superiority. The Church of England in the Diocese of Carpentaria denies the validity of sacraments administered by non-episcopal churches, by reference to the doctrine of the Apostolic Succession. The gist of this doctrine, at least, is familiar not only to Island clergy but to many laymen also. Most
native Anglicans deny the right of other churches to proselytize among their people, arguing that, while Europeans may permit several churches to coexist, such diversity is inappropriate in the tiny Island communities, and since the Church of England was first in the field, it should not be challenged.

Despite opposition, the Assemblies of God have come increasingly to rival the Anglicans. Like other Pentecostalists, they stress the power of the Holy Spirit to work upon anyone, bringing faith-healing powers, the 'gift of tongues' (glossolalia, see Clark 1949: 93-8, 107) and the strength to resist 'worldly pleasures'. The charismatic emphasis in their beliefs is reflected in their organization, which is loose and non-hierarchical, so that the pastor is leader rather than priest. This egalitarianism carries across the colour bar. Islanders who have been on the mainland speak appreciatively of the warm welcome always given them by the white 'brothers and sisters' and the way in which they are encouraged to take an active part in meetings. They contrast this with the somewhat chilly reception given them in Anglican churches, which offer them no opportunity for active participation. All Island Pentecostalists are advocates of the 'freedom' ideology and they clearly regard their church as an avenue to racial equality. Even in their own communities they insist on wearing trousers and shoes to meetings, regarding
the customary *lavalava* and bare feet as 'not decent'.

However, one of the most frequently expressed Pentecostalist criticisms of the Anglican Church, relates not to doctrine or race relations, but to its financial policy. "Church of England too much ask money!" Anglicans are called upon to support the day-to-day expenses of the parish church, to contribute to building and other special funds, while able-bodied men must contribute about 25/- per annum, to the Diocese. As earnings have declined more and more Anglicans are failing to pay their Dues, and many justify their failure by echoing Pentecostalist criticisms. Some even allege that their earlier contributions have been misappropriated. The Island Pentecostalists, by contrast, contribute very little to their local church (pastors are expected to be self-supporting) and send nothing away from the community. They say that their white brethren will presently send them money to build a meeting house, and point out that several native pastors have been given training free of charge. In fact, the Diocese of Carpentaria is heavily subsidized by outside bodies, but Islanders seem unaware of this.

The Jehovah's Witnesses have not long been active in Torres Straits and I met no one who had a thorough grasp of their doctrines. What has interested Islanders, apart from the sheer novelty of the sect and the friendliness of its members, is that they have been made aware of many things in
the Bible of which they were previously ignorant. This leads some to allege that the Church of England has not been revealing the whole truth.

In contrast to the elaborate ideologies arising out of their relation with Church and Administration, Islanders have relatively little to say about their relations with the Thursday Island commercial community. They dislike some Master Pearlers and doubt their good faith. One who publicly criticized the quality of Island divers was taxed with ingratitude towards those who had made him rich. But, equally, others are both liked and trusted. Crews who are dissatisfied with pay and conditions may turn their resentment against the skipper or the D.N.A. rather than the employer. It is significant that in 1936 the Islanders withdrew their labour from the 'Company boats', but not from those belonging to the Master Pearlers.

The ideologies criticizing the Church and the Administration share the same basic assumptions, which is perhaps why opponents of the former are so often opponents of the latter. Common to both is a sense of alienation, a feeling that the Islander is a stranger in a world that is not of his making. He presents himself as inescapably subordinate to authorities, over whom he has little or no influence and of whose intentions he is largely ignorant. The hierarchical character of both Anglican Church and Administration requires their European
officers to exercise authority over Islanders in a wide range of situations and, as in so many hierarchies, there is a pronounced tendency for them to avoid situations in which they are not called upon to exercise authority, unless it can be given some formal recognition. Some junior Church officials and government school teachers, whose authority is confined to school matters and who, through their isolation, are most dependent upon the society of Islanders, form a partial exception to this rule, but divergent cultural interests and the disapproval which fraternization draws from the local white community, serve to maintain a degree of separateness. Thus, white officials are addressed by terms which recognize their rank; if they attend feasts they occupy the seats of honour; they do not join in Island dances or sing Island songs, but sit watching on chairs and go home early; they do not exchange hospitality with native families. Relations of this type have a quite different quality from those obtaining among Islanders. From long experience the latter have come to expect that white people will demand respect and maintain a distance, but they are nonetheless delighted if individuals do not. Thus ex-servicemen hark back to the time when Europeans were comrades-in-arms, and Pentecostalists adhere to a church in which white and coloured members are "brothers and sisters". An army education officer who became a school teacher in the Islands after the war, and who "lived
like Island man", learning their dances, eating their food and speaking their languages, is remembered with unqualified affection.

The relations between Islanders and both Church and Administration are inextricably bound up with money matters, and wherever money is involved Islanders are liable to express distrust. This is even the case among themselves; crews distrust their skippers, club members distrust the treasurer, families distrust the bread-winners. Although money has permeated Island society it is still regarded as an intrusive element. Very often, when I was enjoying Island hospitality, I was reminded by them that among my own people I would be expected to pay for what I ate. Their way was "proper Christian". Here again, the relations with white servicemen and Pentecostalists are closer to the Island ideal. One migrant told me how on his arrival in a strange town on the mainland he had been met by a white Pentecostalist family, who took him home and fed him for nothing; this was "proper love".

Money, to the Islanders, is not merely a medium of exchange but a symbol of alienation. The lack of it is what distinguishes white from black; and its importance as a medium in social relations is what characterizes the wider, European-dominated society in contrast to Island society. Moreover, since Islanders complain that they so often come off worse in their financial dealings with Europeans, it symbolizes
their inability to control these relations effectively.

The Islanders' inability to handle money is just one part of their general ignorance of European ways. The gap between their own understanding and what they believe white people to know, signifies their alienation in the spheres of mundane and esoteric knowledge. Islanders have certain categories of knowledge which they keep to themselves, and suppose that white people do the same. But just as Islanders reveal secrets to their friends, so friendly Europeans seem to be revealing white people's secrets to them.

This alienation has moral implications. Many Islanders consider that their inferior status among white people is not merely a product of cultural differences, nor even of differences in wealth or education, but of their low standing on the moral scale. This is made apparent to them by the refusal of most Europeans to associate with them as they themselves do with one another or as Europeans do with one another. They infer that this alienation from the moral community to which white people belong has its origin in the pagan savagery of their grandparents. But they are now Christians who have renounced the past and proved their loyalty to King and Country by bearing arms. What more is required of them? Some say that they - or, at least, their fellows - are still unworthy of moral equality with white people. But others insist that they cannot go further towards becoming what Europeans expect them to become without help, which the potent European society
is well able to give if it will. That it does not do so indicates its own moral delinquency, its lack of Christianity, rather than that of the Islanders. In this situation, the conflict is resolved by those Europeans who accept Islanders on terms of moral equality, for the good that is in them, and who seem ready to offer material help.

The way in which some Torres Straits Islanders formulate their relations with Europeans bears a general similarity to the 'Cargo' ideologies found elsewhere in Melanesia. Burridge's analysis of some 'Cargo' beliefs in the Madang District of New Guinea provides some insights which are relevant to the present discussion. For example, the friendly, egalitarian Europeans who figure in the Island ideologies bear a close resemblance to the 'moral Europeans' of his analysis. He writes:

"...access to cargo is not simply access to European goods, but to European goods within a particular moral relationship. A relationship characterized by Europeans admitting that they ... were lucky... (i.e. to be wealthier than the Papuans) ... but not virtuous. From that point - the admission of moral equality - co-operation becomes possible."

(Burridge 1960 : 267)

Island radical ideologies contain a measure of anti-European sentiment, but the prevailing tone is more reproachful than defiant. 'Freedom' does not mean a disengagement from Australian society, but rather a closer integration, without the mediation of administrators or missionaries. Since the
wealth and knowledge and dignity which the Islanders seek is only to be obtained from Europeans, they cannot but continue to be dependent upon them.

**Political Action**

The radical ideologies are critical, implicitly if not explicitly, of Administration and Church. Uttering them at all is a form of political action implying a proposal that something should be done; uttering them in certain types of situation might amount to a courageous act of defiance, might even spark off collective direct action. However, the grumbling of the arm-chair politician in the privacy of his own home, involves neither risk nor consequence: his fellows know well that he is content to be discontent. I cannot pronounce on the state of public opinion throughout the Islands; but if my experience among the people of Saibai, Murray and Badu and among migrants living on Thursday Island, is at all representative, there are few who do not at some time permit themselves the luxury of grumbling about the authorities. Those who subscribe openly to either the conservative or the radical ideologies are very much fewer in number, while between them stand the **attentistes** and those who appear largely indifferent.

Individual acts in contravention of Government laws and regulations are more common than direct, concerted opposition to the regime as such. For example, almost everyone takes
alcohol when he gets the chance, and native councillors and police do not usually interfere unless behaviour becomes scandalous. Probably the extent of these contraventions has been mainly instrumental in persuading the authorities to consider revising the liquor laws. Other actions are more ambiguous. For example, some who choose to work on European-owned vessels rather than those managed by the D.N.A. represent their preference as a rejection of the Government's economic policies; again, some represent emigration as an escape from D.N.A. domination; however, we need not assume that all those who work on Master boats or emigrate do so primarily as a political protest.

The Islands ex-servicemen's movement has been associated with more explicit opposition to the Government, and those who wish to stand well with the authorities take care not to be identified with it. But although it has a formulated policy, it has virtually no means of effective political action, and its leaders have often kept interest alive only by rumormongering. In December 1960, they announced that the limited reforms which the Government was then considering amounted to full 'freedom' and were the direct result of their efforts.

The biennial councillors' conferences provide the Islanders with a legitimate outlet for their queries and criticisms of Government policy, and a more effective even though limited medium of political action. No conference occurred during my
stay in Torres Straits, but I understand that the strongest opposition has come from the Eastern Islands, whereas other representatives have been more amenable to official guidance. Nevertheless, a number of limited demands have been made, mainly relating to improved education, economic development and the liquor laws. Seventeen Island representatives also testified before the Federal Committee on Voting Rights, all declaring themselves in favour of enfranchisement.

Political contests within the Church of England have been largely confined to the issue of Dues, and many of those who complain most bitterly on this point still continue to play a full part in the life of their local churches. In most communities, people attend church regularly and those few who do not, present themselves as backsliders rather than rebels. Dissensions within the Church have perhaps been reduced by the defection of those who are most deeply disaffected; however, Pentecostalism has made little headway except among the Murray Islanders and only a few emigrant Beduans have become sympathetic Jehovah’s Witnesses. As a result, serious sectarian conflicts have been confined to Murray and have rarely involved the Islanders as a whole, though both the Anglican Synod and the Councillors’ Conference have recorded their opposition to intrusion by other denominations.

Unity and Division Among the Islanders

The rule of the D.N.A. under the Torres Strait Islanders Act
and the incorporation of the area within a single diocese of the Church of England, have both imposed a measure of unity upon the native population. Ideologies arising out of the relations between the Islanders and these bodies have consequently tended to reflect this unity, though not to include any wider category of coloured or subject peoples, such as Papuans or Aborigines. But the majority of Islanders live in small communities which are physically isolated from one another; thus while most Murray Islanders have visited Darnley and a number have been to Yorke, few have been to Badu and almost none to Saibai or Boigu. Even between neighbouring islands, marriages are rare; between the more distant they are almost unknown. Under these conditions the development of inter-island solidarity is hard to achieve.

The war did for a few years provide an opportunity for intensive inter-community contact and now that Thursday Island is open to Islanders it provides a meeting-place for emigrants and visitors. But the barriers remain: visitors usually stay, and settlers usually associate with their own compatriots. The people of one community tend to hold stereotyped notions about the people of others. When boat crews are in town and there is liquor about, inter-island brawls occur. Probably the divisions will have less meaning for the younger generation who have lived all their lives in Thursday Island, and I suspect that inter-marriage among them is already more frequent.
In the strike of 1936 all the island communities concerted their efforts to bring pressure to bear upon the Government, but this unity has not been retained. At councillors' conferences the representatives from different islands are often in disagreement. The Legion organisation has been riven by dissension between the two main contingents from Badu and Murray. Similarly, because the Murray Islanders were the first to become Pentecostalists others have tended not to join. Moreover, as I shall show in later chapters, such political and religious alignments, though apparently concerned with race relations, can only be fully understood in the context of the local island community.

Conclusions

Despite the war-time interregnum, the European-dominated governmental, ecclesiastical and economic structures retain much the same form as they had before 1941. But whereas, formerly, almost all relations between Europeans and Islanders occurred within the framework of these systems, today new, subsidiary sets of relations have been established outside them. Moreover, it is now possible for at least some Islanders to withdraw from these systems. In the case of the economic and governmental systems, withdrawal usually necessitates emigration from the area, but those living on Murray and Thursday Island do not have to emigrate in order to withdraw from the ecclesiastical system.
The withdrawal of a number of Islanders has been more than compensated for by the natural increase of population and it has not significantly affected the structure of the governmental, economic and ecclesiastical systems. In normative terms, the new, egalitarian model of race relations may stand in contradiction to the old, hierarchical model, in which Europeans always occupy a superior and superordinate role, but authorities have been more than strong enough to resist such pressures towards change as native dissidents have been able to exert.

Closer analysis reveals that certain minor, but nonetheless important changes have occurred at what Firth would call the organizational level. The authorities now consult the Islanders more regularly in policy matters, while retaining the right of final decision. Moreover, they must now take into account the possibility of criticism from outside bodies. More Islanders are taking positions, even though subordinate ones, in the various hierarchies: there are more native priests, clerks, craftsmen and boat skippers than previously, who often enjoy a higher standard of living than their fellows. In later chapters I shall suggest that such persons sometimes see themselves as having a vested interest in maintaining the status quo.

Among the less fortunate minority a sense of alienation is widespread and affects the tone and content if not the
structure of relations between them and the authorities. It has also encouraged them to reach out towards other, apparently more sympathetic bodies in the wider society, and to establish new relations there. However, there seems to have been no increase in solidarity among the people of the different islands: the Islander's first loyalties continue to lie towards his home community, even if he no longer lives there.

The changes which I have here treated as minor or 'organizational', in terms of the governmental, economic and ecclesiastical systems, must in some instances be treated as structural in terms of relations within particular island communities. This point will be examined further in later chapters.

Footnotes

1. The sections of the Commonwealth Electoral Act of 1918-61 relating to the position of Torres Straits Islanders were as follows:

"(6) An Aboriginal native of Australia is not entitled to enrolment under Part VII unless he -

(a) is entitled under the law of the State in which he resides to be enrolled as an elector of that State and, upon enrolment, to vote at elections for the numerous Houses of Parliament of that State, or, if there is only one House of the Parliament of that State, for that House; or

(b) is or has been a member of the Defence Force."

The relevant sections of the Queensland Electoral Act of 1915-59 state:
"(11A) No person —

(1) Who is an aboriginal native of the Islands in Torres Strait or whose parents are aboriginal natives of the islands of Torres Strait (usually referred to as Torres Strait Islanders), shall be qualified to be enrolled upon any electoral roll or entitled to vote at any election of Members of the Legislative Assembly."

According to the terms of the Commonwealth Act, former soldiers of the Torres Straits Light Infantry were entitled to vote, but no provisions were ever made for them to do so, until in 1962 members of the Federal Committee on Voting Rights of Aborigines pointed out the anomaly. In the same year the Commonwealth Electoral Act was amended to enfranchise both Islanders and Aborigines.

2. Until 1962 the Sub-Department of Native Affairs was responsible to the Minister of Health and Home Affairs; in that year it was transferred to the Minister of Education.

3. Mr. C. O'Leary has been Director of Native Affairs since the end of the war, and it seems that he has maintained a broadly consistent policy throughout the period.

4. Section 3(b) of the Torres Strait Islanders Act of 1939, includes under the heading of Islander, "descendants of the native race of the Torres Strait Islands" who are "habitually associating with islanders". The implication is that the Act does not apply to those who do not habitually associate with Islanders.

5. Queensland schoolchildren normally sit the Scholarship Examination around the age of fourteen and, on passing, become qualified to receive secondary education.

6. Torres Straits Master Pearlers have often expressed dissatisfaction with Island labour and in 1958, despite D.N.A. opposition, succeeded in gaining permission to import a small number of Ryukyuan divers. But by 1961 the industry had declined to such an extent that their employment was terminated and all have returned home.

7. While using the Australian retail price indices in gauging the real value of the earnings of an industry whose controlling interests are not always located in the area, it has seemed appropriate to use the North Queensland Indices in gauging the real value of Islanders' earnings.
Retail price indices, of course, provide only an approximate indication of the real value of the pound (all indices taken from the Queensland Year Book).

8. Only one or two Island emigrants have married white women, the others have married part-Aborigines or women of Pacific Island descent.

9. There was a substantial increase in unemployment throughout Australia in 1961; but in North Queensland the rate has been particularly high and mechanization in the sugar industry has meant a permanent reduction in the local demand for labour.

10. The Assemblies of God seem to have acquired considerable influence among all the coloured groups in North Queensland not already resident on missions. A few small Pentecostalist missions have also been established on the fringe of small towns such as Yungaburra.
Chapter V

EXTERNALLY BASED INSTITUTIONS IN THE ISLAND COMMUNITY

So far I have considered the Torres Straits Islanders as a more or less undifferentiated group, taking little account of the fact that all of them are associated with and the majority continue to live in, distinct and partially isolated island communities. However, in this, the second stage of the study, I shall focus attention primarily upon three of these communities. Although external forces press upon them in much the same way, they make their responses independently of one another. But because the people of a particular island live together in some degree of interdependence, their responses tend to be co-ordinated; indeed, external forces sometimes require them to act as a unit. It is, then, in the context of the island community that the impinging institutions of the wider society take on a specific meaning and function. In each of the next three chapters I shall consider from this point of view one of the communities in which I carried out field work. However, in order to avoid repetition, I shall devote this chapter to describing the uniform features of the externally based institutions represented in every community. A preliminary discussion of these will also allow me to outline some of the problems to be considered later in greater detail.
Communications, Populations and Residence

The fourteen islands where the majority of Torres Straits natives still live are widely scattered and all more or less remote from the centres of European population. Each is in daily radio communication with Thursday Island but transport facilities are limited. A Government cargo boat visits them once or, at most, twice a month, and apart from this the people are dependent upon such pearling vessels as happen to be working in the vicinity. Isolation is further increased by the fact that the islands are reserves under the control of the Government, and as such closed to outsiders. Migration from one reserve to another is permitted, but in fact it occurs rarely, with the result that the majority on any island have lived there all their lives and most are descended from its original inhabitants. Since the war, some Islanders have been permitted to emigrate from the reserves, but owing to natural increase most populations are now above their pre-war figure, though none exceeding six hundred while some remain below one hundred.

The Europeans who established churches, schools, stores and pearling stations on the islands found it most convenient to place them near a good anchorage. They also preferred to have the people living in one place, near to these buildings to facilitate administration and conversion, while the people became increasingly ready to do so as they became more dependent upon the outside world. As a result, whatever its size, each
island population is concentrated in a single fairly compact waterfront village. This pattern of residence has important consequences for the frequency and intensity of contact within a community, and the speed at which news can travel.

Local Government

The Torres Strait Islanders Act of 1939 constitutes each island reserve a unit of local government under the D.N.A. and provides for appointment of native councillors and police. According to the size of the community, the number of councillors ranges from one to four and the number of police from one to six. Since 1949, three senior native officials, called delegates, have supervised the work of the Councils in the Eastern, Central and Western island groups.

According to the Act, councillors should be elected at three-yearly intervals, on a date decided by the D.N.A. Ordinarily, those appointed remain in office until the next election, but the Administration may dismiss them sooner for some misdemeanour or on receipt of a petition of grievance from at least two-thirds of the electorate. The delegate conducts the election, at which all persons over eighteen may vote and nominate candidates, and also stand for office if they have not committed any offence during the preceding two years. After a secret ballot, the candidate topping the poll becomes chairman of the Council and the runners-up take the junior positions. In two instances the D.N.A. has waived
these rules to allow the chairmen of Badu and York Island to be elected for life. As senior councillors of the most important islands in the Western and Central groups respectively, these men are also *ex officio* delegates. In the Eastern Islands the newly elected councillors choose one of their number to be delegate for the ensuing three years.

D.N.A. reports emphasize that the Torres Strait Islands enjoy a large measure of local self-government, but native officers are also representatives of the Administration, from which they receive a small salary. Although they are allowed some discretionary powers, the general scope of their authority and responsibilities is prescribed in the Act, and they are required to carry out any instructions that the D.N.A. may issue. The Council must maintain law and order, sitting as a court to try petty offences; it must organize work parties to keep the village clean and tidy, and ensure that public health regulations are observed. Police are appointed by the Council to assist it in its various activities, but their routine duties consist in patrolling the village during waking hours, investigating irregularities and reporting them to the chairman.

The laws enforced on the reserves include some offences which are also recognized amongst white people, such as theft, assault and drunkenness, and others which are not, such as swearing, quarreling, adultery, fornication and sorcery. It
is also an offence to disobey a "reasonable order of the Council". These, together with a list of the more common petty offences, are set out in a cyclostyled code of Island By-Laws, which are enforced on all the islands. Individual Councils may also enact additional by-laws, subject to D.N.A. approval, but few have done so.

If the police allege that an offence has been committed the Council must investigate the matter. Serious cases can only be dealt with by the Thursday Island magistrate but the island court is empowered to judge petty offences and to impose small fines and short terms of imprisonment in the village lock-up. The code of by-laws prescribes the punishments to be imposed for each offence, though these are not always strictly followed. Private disputes over such matters as inheritance and land rights may also be settled in the island court. Decisions are reached by a majority vote among the councillors, but it is possible to appeal to the delegate or to the D.N.A. itself.

Discussing the governmental process, Smith writes:

"Inevitably, administration is confronted by situations in which the administrator must either act first and seek authority after, or enjoys opportunities for ultra vires action which his superior may never know fully about. Inevitably, also, at any level of an administrative structure the decisions made may have some implications for policy."

(1960:27-8)

Smith's point is that administrators generally have some scope
for political action, but that this scope is greater when
the administrative system is 'loose'. Such looseness occurs
when there is:

"(1) Insufficiently rigorous supervision.
(2) Impotence of the population affected to
protest against ultra vires administrative
action.
(3) Administrative participation in policy-
making processes."

Hogbin's account of the New Guinea headman, Bumbu, provides
what is perhaps the most well-known example of loose adminis-
tration in a colonial context (1951: 152-60). Supervision
is not so lax in Torres Straits, but though the white officials
of the D.N.A. are in daily radio contact with each island,
they visit only rarely and briefly. The delegates maintain
more regular liaison between the Administration and the local
Councils and should provide fairly rigorous supervision;
however, on their own islands they are themselves members of
the Council which they are supposed to supervise.

The people have an effective means of checking ultra vires
action if they can readily depose their councillors at
elections or by petitions. They may also be able to protest
to the D.N.A. either through their delegate or directly to
white officials, if these persons are prepared to give them a
sympathetic hearing. But when Islanders deal with the
Government only through their councillors and delegates they
may have no means of discovering what its policies are, nor of
what constitutes ultra vires action, and native officials have an opportunity for misleading them. Alternatively, the people may know that their officials are exceeding their authority or neglecting certain duties, but join with them in concealing the fact from those above.

In some situations, the Government requires the native official to represent not itself, but the people who have appointed him. For example, in judging a land dispute, in which it has no direct interest, he should apply local standards of what is right and wrong. Again, in councillors' conferences, he should act as a mouthpiece of local opinion in whatever policy matter is being discussed. If he can be readily removed from office, the people have a means of inducing him to fulfill his duties, but while they can keep a close check on what he does within the community, they have no way of checking what he does outside, particularly in private consultations with the Government. In this respect, senior councillors and delegates, who deal more often with white officials, have more scope for ultra vires - that is, political - action, than junior councillors and police who act largely within the community.

The system of local government in Torres Straits allows for native officials to play both administrative and political roles, but it is intended that the two should be kept distinct. There are situations in which they may participate in the formation of policy, even exert a decisive influence, but once
policy has been determined they should implement it. In practice, to the extent that the administrative structure is loose and supervision of their actions, from above or below, is insufficiently rigorous, they may act politically where they should act administratively. Where the political aspects of local government office are prominent, we may expect it to become a prime object of political competition (c.f. Smith 1960: 28).

The Church

Except on Murray, where there are some Pentecostalists, the Church of England is the only denomination represented on the reserves, and children are invariably baptised and subsequently confirmed into it. Each island is a parish within the Diocese of Carpentaria, having its own church and, in all but the smallest, a priest in residence. Laymen occupy various minor offices, such as churchwardens, lay readers, councillors, Sunday School teachers and sidesmen, while the female section of the congregation is organized into the Mothers Union and the Girls Friendly Society, each run by an elected committee.

There are eight island parish priests, of whom one is European and the rest Torres Straits natives who have been trained at the St. Paul's theological college on Moa. Students are accepted for training on an estimation of their intellectual abilities and general character; however, a number leave before completing their training, having failed to pass examinations or
to maintain a sufficiently high standard of moral conduct. Upon ordination they receive a stipend of about £20 per month, which is modest, even by Torres Straits standards. The Bishop decides where they shall work and it is his usual practice to transfer incumbents at intervals of approximately three years. However, churchwardens may request him to transfer their parish priest at an earlier date.

The manner of appointing lay officers is variable. Some churchwardens hold their positions subject to periodic elections, while others continue in office for an indefinite period; others again are appointed by the Bishop, who also licences lay readers, generally upon recommendation from the parish priest. Minor officers may be either elected or appointed by the priest or churchwardens.

A priest has the sole right to administer the sacraments, solemnise marriages and hear confessions; churchwardens always have charge of parish finances; otherwise, their respective spheres of influence are not clearly defined. This enables lay officers to carry on the non-sacramental parts of church activity when the priest is absent, but provides a field for competition when he is present. However, it is permissible for the priest to leave a great deal to his lay assistants, though his superiors may hold him responsible if things go wrong.

The priest of today has fewer powers than the old L.M.S.
pastors. The island by-laws recognize as offences many of
the acts which the Church regards as sins, but the priest cannot
judge offenders and he can impose only trivial penances or
dismiss those who happen also to hold lay office. The old
practice of denunciation from the pulpit has been discontinued.
The priest may recommend that the Bishop excommunicate one of
his parishioners, but such an extreme measure can only be taken
under the gravest circumstances. He may refuse to solemnize
a marriage, but his grounds for doing so must be sound if his
decision is not to be reversed by his superiors. Churchwardens
have no sanctions at their disposal beyond the right to
castigate people at public gatherings. For ordinary parishion-
ers, participation in church activities is a voluntary matter:
the authorities may urge them but cannot oblige them to do so.

Much that I have said concerning political and administra-
tive action in local government also applies to the Church:
diocesan authorities are normally remote from the parish and
although the people have some opportunities for appealing to
them, the administrative system is somewhat loose. A priest
enjoys certain discretionary powers and may sometimes have the
opportunity to act ultra vires; but since this position is
beyond the reach of ordinary islanders and attained only after
long training, it cannot be an object of political competition
as lay offices sometimes are, even though they offer less scope
for political action.
The Marine Industry

Despite the recent decline in the local marine industry, at least a few men from each island are still employed in trochus or pearl shell fishing. The boats - usually luggers, carrying about fifteen men - are owned either by native companies or by European Masters. Native companies are always identified with a particular community and never include members from more than one; similarly, Master Boats generally work out from one island, usually that of the skipper, and draw most of their men from it.

The Government, which supervises the formation and running of native companies, has allowed them to take a variety of forms; some are coextensive with an island community, others are composed of only one family. It manages all their financial affairs, but leaves the day-to-day running to their leaders and allows them to select their own skippers. European enterprises manage their own financial affairs, of course, and select their own skippers, but allocation of profits is made under Government supervision according to regulations which the Masters must accept in order to employ island labour.

In most years the majority of skippers are men who have held the position previously; however, there are occasional opportunities for newcomers, though fewer now that the number of boats at work has been reduced. In selecting a new skipper, native companies already have some idea of the relative
capabilities of the men available. European employers, who
do not go out on the boats, have to seek the advice of some
established skipper whose judgement they trust. Labour is
recruited by a voluntary agreement between the seaman and the
employer, whoever it may be, but once articles have been signed
they remain in force for a year. Ordinary seamen require no
special qualifications or licence, except for deep-water
divers who require medical certification of their fitness to
endure the rigours of this kind of work.

The skipper is in sole charge of the boat when it is at
sea, and he is responsible for the success of the season's
venture. It is said that "a good skipper with a bad crew does
better than a bad skipper with a good crew". He must know
where shell is most plentiful, understand the movement of the
tides and the best techniques of work. He must see to it that
stores and fuel are not wasted, so as to keep down costs.
But his principal problem is to maintain a steady pace of work.

Trochus and pearl shell fishing differ in some respects
as to rhythm and conditions of work. Trochus is found on
shallow reefs and is obtained by skin-diving from dinghies.
Work becomes more difficult at high tide, particularly during
spring tides, but by moving to different reefs it may be possible
to work throughout the month, except in rough weather. The
shell is found in various parts of Torres Straits and down the
Barrier Reef as far as Mackay, but it is more plentiful on the
reefs which are further away from the islands; however, working far south prevents the men from visiting their homes at regular intervals. A trochus skipper, then, has the task of persuading his men to stay away from home for long periods and to keep at work for as long as possible. Pearl shell is most plentiful at greater depths (ten to forty fathoms) and is usually obtained by diving with helmet and corselet. During spring tides and in rough weather, the water becomes too cloudy for work to continue, and since the working grounds are all in the vicinity of Torres Straits it is possible to return home for at least part of each month. Nevertheless, it is necessary for a skipper to have his men out on the working grounds as soon as 'clear water' begins and to keep them hard at work while they are there.

Although skippers generally earn more and sometimes considerably more than ordinary seamen, everyone's earnings increase with higher production. Those who are ambitious for promotion have additional reason to work hard, but we shall see that others find these incentives insufficiently attractive. Against laziness and indiscipline skippers have only limited sanctions. They may dismiss trouble-makers and have the right to dock the wages of persistent malingerers. Some may use invective and even physical violence, but if, as in some native companies, the crew have a hand in the appointment of skippers, such methods must be used with caution.
Master Boat skippers are not vulnerable in this way, being appointed from above, but if they acquire too bad a reputation they may find that no one will work under them.

The Store and the School

The Government Island Industries Board maintains a branch store on each island, staffed by native employees. Managers are paid a small percentage of the turnover and those on the larger islands may earn as much as £12 per week. The job is attractive but it is open only to those with appropriate qualifications, of which a knowledge of elementary book-keeping is the most important. Many purchases are made simply by debiting purchases in Pass Books; however, a store generally has a small supply of money and since most Islanders prefer to handle cash the manager has the power of granting or refusing it to them. More important, he has the power to grant or refuse credit to those who are temporarily hard up. However, if he allows more credit than he can readily recover he may have to make up the deficit from his own pocket or face the prospect of dismissal when his accounts have been audited.

Little needs to be said concerning the native school-teachers, for their authority is confined to the schoolroom and they have no special role to play in the community at large. They have no particular qualifications beyond a good scholastic record and none earns more than £17.10. a month.
Intercalary Role in the Island Community

The various offices and positions discussed above have one important feature in common: their incumbents are all local representatives of institutions based outside the community, in the European sector. Unlike their white superiors they have direct and continuous contact with their subordinates and they share something of the predicament of the 'first-line supervisor' (foreman) in industry, of having risen from the ranks - with perhaps the prospect of returning to them - and of implementing policies in the determination of which they have had little say (c.f. Argyris 1957: 163-7).

Where in one set of relations they are members and perhaps representatives of a local community, while in another they are members of an administrative hierarchy, representing white people, their positions may be termed intercalary. And where the interests and loyalties arising in these two sets of relations are in conflict, they will be caught up in a contradiction (c.f. the position of the Tribal Elder in the Rhodesian Copper Belt, Epstein 1958: 65). Their dual role in the community as public representatives and private individuals may involve them in further contradictions for they may be unable to satisfy both the demands of disinterested and impartial administration and of particularistic ties and loyalties (c.f. the position of the Village Headman in East Africa, Gluckman 1949: 93, and of the Soga Civil Service Chief,
Fallers 1956: 239). In such situations of conflict, political action will be directed towards influencing their decisions, which are likely to incline towards that quarter from which the strongest pressure comes. However, as I have suggested already, native administrators may sometimes be able to evade supervision of their actions and thus play an independent political role.

Footnotes

1. This system of voting is not fixed. Usually each elector wields one vote and the candidates receiving the highest number succeed to office. This amounts to 'proportional representation', inasmuch as each group commands only its proportion of votes and therefore all the main followings in the community will be represented. Occasionally electors have as many votes as there are positions vacant. Thus, a majority group which had decided upon a panel of candidates may capture all the seats, thus leaving the minority unrepresented.

2. In the period 1958-60, local government personnel were paid as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Salary per month</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Delegate</td>
<td>£10 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chairman</td>
<td>9 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Councillors</td>
<td>7 10 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police Sergeant</td>
<td>10 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other police</td>
<td>5 10 0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. The usual Anglican practice is for a parish to have only two churchwardens. Hitherto some island parishes have had as many as eight, though the Bishop now proposes gradually to reduce their numbers (see Chapter VIII). There is no restriction on the number of lay readers, church councillors etc.

4. The priest is the only person in the Islands who is licenced to perform a legal marriage ceremony and this monopoly may enable him to impose conditions before
agreeing to do so. Thus he may refuse to marry a couple who, he believes, have consented to the union only under pressure from kinsfolk (see Chapter VIII). Pentecostalists wishing to marry have been required to return to the Church of England (see Chapter VI). Priests may not remarry anyone who already has a living spouse. The Church does not recognize divorce and, in any case, Islanders living on the reserves do not have access to divorce courts.

5. The Government regulations concerning the payment of Islanders working on Master Boats are too lengthy and complicated to be discussed here. Briefly, when skipper and crew are drawing only the basic rates the difference between their respective earnings is minimal; however, earnings are geared to production and as they rise the gap progressively widens. On native-owned vessels there are no basic rates and no fixed differentials; nevertheless, the same general rule applies.
Introduction

Murray Island is one of the largest native communities in the Torres Straits, with a population in 1960 of 536. Its distance from Thursday Island and the infrequency of communications permit only limited direct contact with the outside world; nevertheless, the Miriam are deeply concerned about their present and future place in the wider society, and several externally based institutions occupy a central place in their lives.

But although the Miriam response to the environment has often been positive, it has not always been as the authorities would have wished. Though they express a strong desire to improve their economic circumstances, they have never engaged more than half-heartedly in the marine industry and their own pearling enterprises have been failures; by 1960 the great majority were employed in subsistence activities. Much of the resulting economic discontent has been directed against the Administration, towards which the Miriam have long been antagonistic. Since before the war, Murray has been a stronghold of the 'freedom' agitation and it has a flourishing
Ex-servicemen's organization. It has also been the main centre of Pentecostalism in Torres Straits, though the majority still adhere to the Church of England.

Within the community life is varied and eventful. Although subsistence activities are organized on a small scale, religious, recreational and political activities result in the formation of larger though somewhat unstable groups. Much energy and interest goes into these activities, but cooperation is frequently disrupted by disputes and rivalries. The Miriam have a saying that, among them "everyone is mamoose", meaning that everyone wants to be a leader. This spirit is reflected, on the one hand, in resentment of authority, and on the other, in fierce and widespread competition for office, particularly on the Council. Since most positions are filled by election, competition is for the public favour, and electioneering often takes the form of exploiting contentious issues in order to discredit rivals.

The Murray population is essentially homogeneous: almost everyone is of full Miriam descent and little is made of ethnic differences; there is little differentiation in terms of economic function, wealth or living standards, and there are no major concentrations of power. Nor is there any segmentation along kinship lines, for the old unilineal kin groups are largely irrelevant in modern life. The sharpest cleavage lies between the two churches, but membership of one or other
is only sometimes definitive of what people do outside; moreover their memberships are not stable. Indeed, life on Murray is highly optative, allowing many alternatives in loyalties, alliances and procedures. This is particularly evident in politics, where electoral followings are inconstant and leaders rise and fall in the public favour with remarkable rapidity.

But although many phases of Miriam life are unstable, the community does not seem to be undergoing any radical change. Its general structure is not greatly different from what it was in 1946, nor, probably, from what it was before the war. In the following account I shall note such changes as have occurred, but concentrate upon those features which seem to be characteristic of the community. After giving the relevant information on physical setting, population and resources, I shall describe the main sectors of organized activity — domestic life, subsistence economic activities, commercial fishing, religious life, politics and recreation. I shall then consider what general principles, if any, underlie group recruitment and association. Finally, I shall give what is, in effect, a political history of the community over the recent period. This will permit a deeper analysis of the political process, of politics in action, that is to say, of tactics, intrigue and electioneering.
Setting, Population and Resources

Murray Island lies at the easternmost end of Torres Straits, within sight of the Great Barrier Reef. It is the island of the archipelago most distant from Thursday Island, which lies some 140 miles - about two days' journey by motor lugger - to the south-west. With Darnley Island, situated some 30 miles to the north-west, and Stephen Island, lying a further 15 miles in the same direction, Murray forms what is called the Eastern Island group.

Immediately adjacent to Murray are two other islands, Dauar and Waier, at present uninhabited. Like all the Eastern group, they are of volcanic origin. Each is surrounded by coral reefs and fringed by sandy beaches which extend back a few yards; thence the ground rises sharply, often to a considerable height. Murray is the largest island, measuring almost two miles in length and a little over one mile in width. Its western end is dominated by three grass-covered hills, the highest of which reaches 750 feet. From these the ground slopes away gradually towards the densely vegetated, undulating table-land of the eastern half.

Dauar is very similar to Murray. Waier is the crescent-shaped shell of an old volcano whose walls rise almost vertically out of the sea. There is a little vegetation on its
inner side, but otherwise the island is rocky and bare; probably it has never been inhabited.

Estimates of the Murray and Dauar population in the early 1870s range as high as 1,000 (L.M.S. : 1873), but rapid decline followed and the first Government census reports only 406 (V. & P. : 1913). Since then there has been a steady increase to an estimated 682 in 1960, though, as can be seen from Table I, 151 of that total now live elsewhere, mostly on the Mainland. All but one of the present inhabitants have some known kinship with the indigenous population, and there are only eight who were not born and bred on the island. Considerable miscegenation between native women and Pacific Islanders occurred during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, but around 1900 the Government sent most of these foreigners and their families to live on Darnley Island. There are still some sixty-nine persons of mixed descent on Murray, about half of whom are visibly distinct.

The age distribution of the local population in 1960, set out in Table II, is much as one would expect in a situation of rapid increase. The predominance of females in the teens and twenties (males 71, females 128), is due to the high rate of emigration among males.

I have not distinguished the people traditionally associated with Dauar in these figures. The island has been inhabited for short periods during the present century, most
TABLE I

Distribution of Murray Islanders* in 1960

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Murray Island</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>531</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other islands</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bamaga</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday Island</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainland Australia</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL:</strong></td>
<td>345</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>682</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Murray Islanders are here defined as persons who have been born and raised on Murray or Daur, or who regard themselves as belonging primarily to this community.

TABLE II

Age distribution of persons living on Murray Island in 1960

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-9</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>30.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-19</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>20.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>17.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-79</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>233</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>536</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Ages of persons over 60 are approximate.
recently during 1948-56, but since then it has been visited only for gardening. At the present time, all the people from Dauar and Murray live in a single village on Murray.

Murray's natural resources are abundant, providing a sound basis for a subsistence economy. The sandy foreshore is not suitable for gardening, but coconut palms flourish there, and fruit and nut-bearing trees grow to great size. The volcanic upland soil is fertile and well drained, permitting the successful cultivation of yam, banana, sweet potato, cassava and corn. Many useful plants grow wild in the bush, including coconut palms and others providing housebuilding materials. There is little game to be got on Murray beyond a few sea birds, but fish are plentiful. Turtle can be found on the neighbouring reefs and during the dry season (November - January) the females come ashore to lay their eggs, which are considered a delicacy.
Brod Patterns of Community Life

The Miriam live in a single village, situated on the west-north-western side of the island, consisting of ninety houses, strung out along more than a mile of foreshore and flanked by a well-kept street. The houses, most of them made from local materials, are often placed no more than twenty yards apart, but are secluded and shaded by coconut palms, great fig and almond trees and flowering shrubs. The school, two churches (also built of local materials), the store and dancing ground, are all situated at a midway point. Behind the village, steep paths wind up the hillside to the high lands where gardens are.

All village land is owned either by the Government, the Church or by private persons, who have in most cases acquired their rights by inheritance. Sections vary in size from a mere sixty square yards to as much as four hundred. Some of these are overcrowded and either for this reason or because of some quarrel, persons having the right to live there may prefer to live on another section to which they also have some claim, or belonging to another who is prepared to give them access to it. Since most houses are built of local materials, moving is not a very difficult matter although it occurs only rarely.

The houses are generally small, often covering an area
of only fifty square yards and consisting of only one room; however, they are used mainly for sleeping and storage, a large part of waking life being spent out of doors. Sometimes the occupants of two neighbouring houses form a single domestic unit, preparing meals at the one cooking shed, eating at the one table and co-operating in the daily round of tasks such as fetching water from the well, firewood and garden produce.

Everyone belongs to a domestic unit, of which there are seventy-four with an average of seven members. The core of each consists of a nuclear family or the survivors of one, and forty-one of the households include no other persons. Twelve more are composed of extended families and the remaining twenty-one include other, miscellaneous kinsfolk who are either unmarried or widowed. Every normal person marries, usually in the mid-twenties, and at some time forms the core of a domestic unit, but a couple may remain attached to a larger household for the early years of their married life.

Everyone helps to maintain the domestic group to which he or she belongs, contributing either labour or a share of cash earnings. The usual practice is for women to do such domestic chores as washing, mending, cooking and minding children. However, both sexes may go fishing, work in the gardens, fetch firewood and water. Girls begin to play a part from about the age of puberty; boys help very much less until they marry, though if they are working on the boats they will certainly
contribute a large part of their earnings to the household exchequer.

The authority structure of the domestic group is variable. Nominally, parents have authority over their children, husbands over their wives and, in composite households, the senior male over the rest. How and how far this authority is exercised varies with individual personality. It is not unusual (though, strictly, illegal) for men to beat their wives and daughters, but henpecked husbands are not unknown and most wives do not fear to contradict and even ridicule their menfolk. Children generally treat their parents with some deference and rarely go against their wishes in any important matter.

Since contact the Murray economy has always been mixed, in the sense that while some of its men have gained a livelihood in the marine industry, a large number have continued to rely mainly upon subsistence activities. With the recent decline in the trochus industry, the latter have become the great majority. This can be seen from the following table:

### TABLE III

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Seamen</th>
<th>Other Jobs</th>
<th>Subsistence</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: 'Work force' here covers all able-bodied males between the ages of 16 and 60.
In pre-contact times, gardening was regarded as the proper occupation for mature men, important not only as a means of livelihood but as a source of prestige. This tradition persists and there is still open rivalry among expert gardeners, culminating in competitive displays of produce at the annual Church Harvest Festival. Even when wages were good, mature Murray Islanders preferred not to work on the boats, and crews were recruited mainly from among the younger, unmarried men who were not yet of an age to start gardening.

The traditional system of land tenure persists, with ownership rights transmitted by inheritance and generally vested in individuals or a group of brothers. Everyone owns some land, though some are said to be short while others have more than they need. However, land is often loaned for varying periods and I do not think that anyone's gardening activities are limited by shortage.

Yams, bananas, sweet potato and cassava, which are the principal crops, can all be cultivated by one or two persons working together and gardening is, in practice, always organized on a small scale. Two or three households may join in clearing a plot, but they always divide it afterwards and cultivate separately. Usually the gardening team is drawn from the household, but yams are planted and tended only by mature men, working quite alone and in seclusion, since
each has his own secret methods for producing a large tuber.

Fish and turtle are regarded as welcome additions to a predominantly starch diet, but they take second place to garden produce. During the height of the planting season (September to January) the Miriam give little time to hunting and fishing and few ever trouble to go spearing turtle, preferring to catch the females, when they climb ashore to lay their eggs, by the simple expedient of rolling them on their backs. Not all households own fishing nets, lines and spears, and there are only twenty dinghies on the island — although these items can often be borrowed. As with gardening, fishing and hunting are carried out by individuals or in groups of no more than two or three.

House-building and repairs sometimes engage much larger groups. The thatch and palm-leaf structures require extensive repairs every three or four years and complete replacement every seven to ten years. The work can be done by the members of a single household, but it is common to invite as many as fifty people to join a day's bee. Such gatherings have a highly convivial character; no one works very hard and there is plenty of time for card-playing and gossip. The hosts provide an evening meal for the helpers and there is an implied readiness to reciprocate help at some future date. However, the occasion may not arise for several years and there is no strict accounting.
Those who live by subsistence activities can follow whatever routine of work they please, since the amount of co-operation involving persons outside the household is small. Table IV suggests that the amount of time spent in production is variable and that everyone has ample time for participation in religious and civic activities, recreation and plain loafing. By contrast, trochus fishing requires a more regular routine of co-ordinated work, and leaves less time for other activities. Evidently many find such constraints on their freedom uncongenial.

The Miriam were working in the marine industry as early as the 1860s and they were among the first to acquire their own boats. However, this type of work has probably never engaged more than about half of the work force - mainly the younger, unmarried section. In 1958, which was a comparatively good year for the industry, only 38% were working on boats (considerably less than on Badu and Saibai); with the collapse in the trochus market in 1960, the number declined to almost nothing (see Table III). Local enterprises do not seem to have had much success at any time, and since the war they have continually suffered from ineffective leadership and indiscipline among the crews.

The Miriam own two luggers, one purchased by public subscription, and the other by a company of forty-six men.
Activities of five Murray Islanders over 66 consecutive days during December 1960 - February 1961.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>II</th>
<th>III</th>
<th>IV</th>
<th>V</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gardening</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housebuilding</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trochus work</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village work</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church work</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clubs &amp; Ex-Service Ass.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feasts</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holidays</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sick</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idle</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaccounted for</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: 'Holidays' includes Sundays as well as Christmas week, New Year, Australia Day, etc., all of which were observed. It should be remembered that there are more holidays at this time of the year than at any other.

Village work is compulsory, being organized by the council. Church work is voluntary.

I cannot claim that this 'sample' is in any way representative of Miriam men as a whole. Only IV was unmarried, but he was helping to maintain three unmarried sisters and their children. II had a reputation for being a keen gardener; I and III were regarded as somewhat lazy.

The Council has managed the former since its acquisition in 1946 and the latter since 1951, when the members of the company quarreled. The earnings of these boats have been consistently
among the lowest of any in the D.N.A. fleet owing largely, it would seem, to irregular and inefficient work. During the months I spent on Murray they remained completely idle; though they were nominally manned, no one seemed disposed to work. I was told that crews were always slow to go out, insisted on working only nearby reefs and demanded to return home after a few days at sea. There have been frequent squabbles among the crew, and skippers have been unable to exert any very effective control.

The Council nominates a list of candidates for the position of skipper but allows the crew to choose which one they prefer. If a skipper is too 'hard', they will not re-elect him for another year, but if he is too 'soft' the Council will not renominate him and may perhaps dismiss him before his term is up. Caught between these two pressures, skippers have found it difficult to do anything and a number have resigned their positions half way through the year. More than eighteen men have been skippers since 1946, few with any distinction, and the rapid rate of replacement has prevented any one from acquiring much expert knowledge or the habit of command. So bad is Murray's reputation that the Master Pearlers have not appointed a single Miriam skipper.

The position of skipper is so bound up with squabbling and failure that its occupants are more likely to reduce rather than improve their standing in the community; perhaps
this is why skippers have almost all been nonentities. Nor has there been much financial inducement. Since production is low, skippers' earnings have been scarcely greater than those of ordinary seamen, but even this small difference has caused resentment. The generally low and steadily declining level of earnings has probably still further reduced the inclination to work. By 1959, most Miriam seemed to be convinced that there was no point in further effort, blaming either their fellows, the Council or the Government.

In most years up to 1959, Master Boats came to Murray to recruit labour for trochus fishing. This kind of work was not attractive to everyone since the boats worked off the mainland and were thus unable to return home during the year; however, some of the better Miriam workers were attracted by the prospect of earning higher wages than could be got on the local boats and of seeing the mainland ports. Working under established skippers from other islands, in whose appointment they had no say, they often proved more industrious than when working under Miriam skippers. But when the trochus market collapsed in 1960, recruiting ceased.

With the failure of local enterprise and the cessation of outside recruiting, the Miriam are left with few ways of earning money. There are a few Government jobs to be had, but the pay is low and the competition for them intense. Small groups may take dinghies to neighbouring reefs for
trouchus, but the price is low. Under these circumstances, the most promising alternative is emigration to the mainland, where wages at European rates can be earned. In fact, considerable numbers of Miriam have emigrated since 1948 and by 1960 more than 15% were working in Queensland. As can be seen from Table V, the number was already large by 1958 and increased substantially in the next two years, while few returned home. Unmarried men remain in the majority, but the proportion of married men is increasing. Some of these have married locally while others, with families at home, have arranged for them to come south. In general, it seems likely that many will never return to Murray. Except for occasional gifts to relatives, all the emigrants may be said to have withdrawn from the local economy.

**TABLE V**

The number of Murray Islanders residing on mainland Australia in two years, classified according to sex and marital status.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>71 (28 : 43)</td>
<td>11 (7 : 4)</td>
<td>82 (35 : 47)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>95 (40 : 55)</td>
<td>13 (7 : 6)</td>
<td>108 (47 : 61)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

No. returning after 1958 | 2 (1 : 1) | 0 | 2 (1 : 1) |
No. dying on mainland after 1958 | 3 (3 : 0) | 0 | 3 (3 : 0) |

Net increase in emigrants after 1958 | 29 (13 : 16) | 2 (0 : 2) | 31 (13 : 18) |

Note: The figures in brackets give the proportion of married to unmarried emigrants.
I estimated that in 1958 the average annual **per capita** cash income was approximately £52\(^5\) of which about £38 came from Government sources in the form of wages and Social Service Benefits. Since then the figure has undoubtedly fallen with the decline in employment. Even during more prosperous years, differences in income have not been great. The store manager who has also been delegate for the past six years, has been earning perhaps £15 a week; otherwise, the wealthiest are those in employment or drawing a pension. However, these differences do not result in proportionate differences in living standards. Those who are better off are under strong pressure to contribute to public purposes, such as the Church, and their households are likely to include a larger number of dependents. Moreover, the island’s two friendly societies (the Welfare and Southern Cross Clubs) have redistributed wealth by raising funds at concerts and dances, which they then lent to persons having special needs.

Although Murray’s standard of living has always been low, compared with other islands such as Badu, they have grown used to having a certain number of imported goods. Diet normally includes considerable quantities of rice, flour, tea and sugar, and most adults are heavy smokers. Every household has its bed linen, mosquito nets, enamel plates and pannikins, cheap cutlery and pressure lamps. Many have sewing machines and everyone needs cloth for the usual lavalavas or dresses.
Money is also needed for contributions to one or other of the churches and the various clubs, and for admission to concerts and other entertainments. Occasionally, larger sums are needed for weddings and funerary celebrations. A groom and his kinsfolk must provide a wedding feast for the whole community and it is proper for as much as £100 to be presented to the bride’s family. A death is another occasion for a large feast and the deceased must in due course be commemorated by the erection of an imported tombstone, costing as much as £50, and yet another feast.

With the decline in cash incomes, the Miriam have found it increasingly hard to maintain the standards to which they have become accustomed. Friendly society funds are dwindling as members fail to repay what they have borrowed; Anglicans have fallen behind on their Church dues; local produce figures more prominently at feasts and in domestic diet. People are spending their incomes in anticipation, forever begging credit from the store manager and ‘booking up’ rather than paying entry fees to concerts and dances.

The Murray Islanders view this economic decline and the increasing emigration of their young men with dismay, and many are inclined to lay the principal blame upon the Government. Consequently, economic discontent has tended to take a political form and there has been a marked increase of activity on the part of the local Legion of Ex-servicemen, whose leaders have
promised that members will receive large sums as soon as the
Government can be made to release Rehabilitation Benefits.\(^6\)
In the same way, the Anglican Church's demands for financial
contributions have aroused increasing resentment which has
been exploited by its Pentecostalist rivals.

Murray is the one island in Torres Straits where the
supremacy of the Anglican church has been seriously challenged,
and during the last decade there has been continuous sectarian
conflict. Pentecostalism first made its appearance in 1938
when two men who had been converted on the mainland held
prayer meetings and carried out faith-healing on Murray. The
Council suppressed the movement by imprisoning all concerned,
but when migrant workers renewed contact with the sect in the
late 1940s, there was a revival which the Council has been un-
able to suppress. By 1958 they constituted more than a
quarter of the population and by 1960 had slightly increased
(see Table VI).

**TABLE VI**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>47 (24 : 23)</td>
<td>83 (32 : 51)</td>
<td>130 (56 : 74)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>59 (29 : 30)</td>
<td>96 (42 : 54)</td>
<td>155 (71 : 84)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The figures in brackets give the proportion of children (under 16) to adults.
The two churches are in open competition for membership and a hard core of Anglicans have declared their intention of eradicating the minority sect altogether. Conflict has found expression both in the utterance of opposed ideologies and in political contests most usually centring on the Council. Anglican-dominated Councils have placed severe restrictions on the Pentecostalists' activities, while the Pentecostalists have sought to have these restrictions rescinded.

For most of its life the Murray Pentecostalist church has carried on without a pastor. In 1958 a Miriam was sent from the mainland to take up this position, but the Council forbade him to carry out his duties and he left after a few months. Since then the congregation has been led by its most prominent member; however, all decisions are taken by the adult members of the congregation. When permitted, Pentecostalists follow a fairly set pattern of Sabbath observance, Sunday and weekly services, work bees and feasts, which closely parallel those of the Anglicans.

Although it has lost more than a quarter of its members the Church of England remains as lively as ever. The Sabbath is strictly observed; almost everyone attends two services on Sundays and others during the week; work bees are well supported and there are large numbers holding major or minor lay offices. There were eight churchwardens until 1959 and
there are still four holding this office; there are twenty-seven lay readers, nine church councillors and innumerable sidesmen, servers and Sunday School teachers. Only the churchwardens play any political role and many of the lesser positions are scarcely more than empty titles; nevertheless, competition for them is keen, which may in part explain the high level of participation in religious activities.

The day-to-day running of parish affairs is conducted by the priest and churchwardens. The relative influence of each has varied with individual priests. In 1958-9, the incumbent was a European who remained largely withdrawn from practical affairs; his successor, a Boiguan, took a more active part. The matters decided are generally of a routine character and I heard of no important disagreements among them and only two between them and other members of the congregation, neither of which resulted in an open political contest. However, the parish authorities have had to move with caution for fear that their opponents might defect to the Pentecostalists.

The Council consists of four members, one of whom represents the old Dauar community, though like the rest he is appointed by the whole electorate which thus forms a single constituency. Since the office was created, the Eastern Island councillors have always chosen one of the Murray councillors to be their delegate.

When the Murray Council was first established, the
Government teacher-supervisor predicted that the Miriam coveted office to such an extent that they would seize on any excuse for holding an election (Haddon 1908: 180). Ever since that time councillors have been changed with considerable frequency and on two occasions since the war the electorate has petitioned for the Council's deposition before its term of office had been completed. No councillor can be assured of re-election or even of completing his term, while his rivals have reason to hope that they can eventually replace him in the public favour. Perhaps this is why it is common for as many as thirty candidates to stand for election. Because competition is so intense, Miriam politicians are constantly on the watch for issues to exploit in order to draw support to themselves and away from their rivals. Furthermore, because competitors need issues to exploit, any contentious matter is quickly drawn into the arena of Council politics.

There are no political parties on Murray: indeed, candidates are often nominated on the spur of the moment, without prior consultation. However, the two churches have sometimes acted as pressure groups when matters affecting their interests were at stake; and the local Legion of Ex-servicemen has increasingly come to claim representation on the Council. But neither they nor the Pentecostalists are numerous enough to determine the outcome of an election without outside help, and the waxing and waning of electoral followings is a highly
complex matter which even the most able politicians are unable to predict accurately. I shall return to this problem again later; here I shall only suggest that specific political issues do seem to rally support to particular candidates and that candidates frequently act as though this was the case.

In forming their domestic policies, councillors are often subject to more intense pressure from their fellows, who maintain a close scrutiny of what they do, than from the Administration, whose supervision is relatively lax. Law and order is fairly strictly maintained, but most convictions are for fornication and drunkenness, offences which everyone recognizes, and it is usually the young people, the least influential section of the community, who commit them. Only rarely do court decisions become political issues, when victimization or favouritism is alleged. In other matters which are more certain to provoke widespread antagonism, such as health regulations, the Council may try to evade its duties, and there is a tendency to shelve contentious matters such as property disputes or refer them to higher authority. However, the Council's restrictive policy towards the Pentecostalists, though contentious, has been virtually forced upon it both from without, by the Church of England and the Administration, and from within, by a large and vocal group of Anglican diehards.

The dominance of local pressures is also apparent in
Council policy towards the Government. Since the 1936 strike and perhaps earlier, the Murray Council has been persistently antagonistic towards the D.N.A. and since the war the 'freedom' ideology has been the stock-in-trade of some of its politicians, notably those of the Ex-servicemen's movement. Councillors have been under considerable pressure to demand political and economic concessions from the Government, but it seems that when confronted with European officials their courage has sometimes failed them; however, in these dealings they have been more remote from the surveillance of their people and have thus been able to solve the contradiction by saying one thing in Thursday Island and another in Murray.

The close supervision to which councillors are subject, particularly within the local community, leaves them relatively little leeway for serving their own, private interests except when these coincide with those of a large part of the electorate. The scope for ultra vires action is consequently limited. Why, then, is office so widely sought after? The small wage is probably an inducement in a community where money is so short, and although tenure is uncertain, the office does bring some interim powers, which render the people in some degree dependent upon their councillors and consequently oblige them to show some deference. Moreover, if the powers are limited, there is no other position which carries more. However, there is also strong competition for Church office
which brings no remuneration and few real powers, and I am inclined to believe that formal office is valued for its own sake. At all events, Murray councillors are usually drawn from among the most able and best educated members of the community.

Recreation, which figures largely in life on Murray, also requires a brief discussion. Feasts are frequent being, as on other islands, the means of solemnizing an important occasion; who conducts the celebration depends on the type of occasion. A wedding or funeral feast is conducted by the kinsfolk of the principals, a secular holiday by the Council, a religious holiday by the churches. If the occasion is one of rejoicing there is dancing. Most feasts are open to everyone, except for those organized by the churches, in which case the two denominations go their separate ways. Pentecostalists should also avoid watching or participating in dancing which they regard as sinful, though some find it hard to resist the temptation. It is said that all those invited should attend these gatherings, out of respect for the Church, the Council or, if it is a private affair, the hosts; but attendance is quite voluntary and there may be some absentees, though rarely enough to affect the success of the celebration. How many join in dancing is also variable, and seems to depend on the prevailing mood. In the Christmas celebrations of 1958 the dancers were few, consisting largely of young Anglicans; in
1960 almost everyone joined, young as well as old, Pentecostalists as well as Anglicans.

Concerts, consisting mainly of 'hula' displays, and European-style dances, are organized by various bodies as a means of raising funds. Here again, participation is voluntary and often erratic, and the people are under no obligation to attend, though they often choose to do so. When, as sometimes happens, concerts organized by some Anglican body, the two friendly societies and the Ex-servicemen's Legion occur within a few days of one another, people's interest tends to flag and the limited supplies of cash in circulation get used up.

The Miriam are a factious folk who find co-operation difficult to sustain, and there are few regular activities which involve them all. The Council is the one institution which unites them and this is maintained from without. Nevertheless, the community is a lively one, with a large number of small and medium-sized groups engaging in spasmodic co-operative activities, usually of a recreational character. Some idea of their frequency can be obtained from Table VII.

The type of organization necessary to sustain these activities is loose. The participation of any particular person is rarely important and if people are not in the mood on some particular occasion, no great harm is done. The
### TABLE VII

**Community Activities during Nov. 1958 - March 1959 (133 days).**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizing Group</th>
<th>Work</th>
<th>Feasts</th>
<th>Concerts</th>
<th>Services</th>
<th>Meeting</th>
<th>Games</th>
<th>Dancing</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Church of England</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pentecostalist Church</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex-Servicemen's Club</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welfare &amp; S. Cross Clubs</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Committee</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbourhood Groups</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private groups</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>27</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>409</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:** The period included the 40 days of Lent during which no dancing, feasts or games were permitted, and the Christmas period, when feasts and dancing are almost continuous.
frequent duplication of bodies, ranging from churches to clubs and (particularly in dancing) ad hoc groups, all doing much the same thing, may appear wasteful, but it provides the opportunity for more people to try their hand at leadership, and it enables those who have quarreled with one group to transfer to another and carry on with the same sort of activities. But while this looseness serves well enough in the rather haphazard business of recreation, it is less suited to economic activities where regular routines, sustained cooperation and fixed authority are required.

Although it is possible for enemies to avoid associating closely with one another, they cannot avoid meeting from time to time, in so compact a community. But a casual visitor would suppose that all was amity and peace, for very rarely would he see conflict expressed openly. Under normal circumstances bitter antagonisms and rivalries are concealed behind a mask of courtesy, even affability. Such conventions permit day-to-day life to proceed smoothly, despite conflicts. Perhaps one may go further and see them as an expression of what community life should be like, but the reality is very different.
Group Recruitment and the Principles of Association

In this section I shall consider the questions, how the various groups which compose Miriam society are recruited, and how far membership of any one is definitive of other alignments. In many simple societies it seems that social organization can be reduced to a set of more or less fixed, mutually consistent principles. For example, in some simple societies it is possible to predict the main groups to which a person belongs by establishing his place within the kinship system, deviation from the norms of kinship behaviour being either virtually impossible or highly disadvantageous. Indigenous Miriam social organization seems to have been of this type (see Chapter I), but it is so no longer, having undergone drastic change; the present system is highly optative and the factors influencing group recruitment are diverse and variable.

Membership of the segmentary kin groups had defined peoples' roles in the various phases of the indigenous magico-religious life, and when this was terminated with the acceptance of Christianity, the groups were shorn of one of their principal functions. Membership had also determined where men lived, but Mission and Government were soon urging them to concentrate in a more compact village on the side of the
island where the church and school were situated. But since residential land remained privately owned, those who came in from other parts could only settle where they had rights through non-agnatic kin. Thus, when the process of resettlement was completed, by the 1920s, the old residential groups had become widely dispersed. Today, of the twenty-two clans surviving, only two have all their male members living in one place (apart from three represented by one adult male only). The Government had given official recognition to the tribes when, around the turn of the century, it constituted them the groups to appoint councillors and run the 'Company Boats'; however, at some time during the 1930s the Miriam voluntarily dispensed with this mode of organization. Why they did so is not now clear, but it seems that they considered it anachronistic under modern conditions.

The old segmentary kin groups are still remembered but are now virtually functionless, except that clan exogamy is still strictly observed. The only stable and regularly effective kin group is the nuclear family: marriage is indissoluble and children are required by law to live with their parents until marriage, unless these are dead or they have been adopted out. Up to marriage children form, with their parents, the stable core of a domestic unit. Daughters seem to feel the need to obtain their parents' permission before marrying, but they leave home immediately afterwards and cease
to be closely dependent upon them. Sons rely upon their parents to provide a wedding feast and to contribute to the bride price (though a few have found other relatives willing to do so when their parents refused), and many continue with their families as part of the parental household for a number of years. However, this is a matter of convenience rather than necessity, and in the long run almost all establish their own, independent households.

Sons or, if there are none, daughters have the right to build their homes on their parents' residential land, and to inherit a part of it when they die. If the land is undivided the senior among the co-heirs has the formal right to allocate house sites, but if there is any disagreement they may ask the court to sub-divide it. Houses situated on the same section may be only a few yards apart, and since a great part of domestic life goes on out of doors their members see a good deal of one another. If relations are good there is frequent co-operation in minor activities, but the extent is variable and is a matter of convenience rather than necessity. If relations are bad or if there is serious overcrowding, one of the co-owners may move elsewhere. Many have rights to more than one section and it is often possible to obtain hospitality from other owners, although most do not like to be dependent in this way (only nine families were living on borrowed land in 1960). In the majority of cases, first
degree male patrikin live on the same section; those more
distantly related are generally residentially dispersed.

The rules governing the inheritance of garden land are
essentially the same, except that daughters may be given a
small share at marriage. In 1960, eight out of fourteen sets
of brothers who had inherited jointly from their parents
continued to hold their land in common, but in only two in-
stances had the sons of brothers continued to do so. If joint
ownership is maintained, the senior among the co-heirs has the
formal right to allocate garden sites, but if there is dis-
agreement a division will be made. Attitudes towards division
vary: some regard it as a regrettable consequence of disunity,
others as a way of avoiding possible disputes. But since, in
either case, each household makes its own gardens independently
and often apart from the others, the matter is of little practi-
cal importance.

It is apparent that adult brothers are not placed in a
relationship of inescapable interdependence. The Miriam say
that they should help and love one another and I found that
many are in fact united by close bonds of affection and family
pride which are expressed in frequent co-operation; but there
are some who have chosen to go their separate ways, suffering
no great disadvantage as a result. Much the same is true of
kinship ties outside the family. Indeed, most Miriam recognize
far more potential ties than they can normally activate. Although genealogical knowledge rarely extends back more than two generations beyond the oldest living ascendant, clansmen are automatically included amongst kin, while the classificatory kinship terminology permits relatedness to be remembered after the precise genealogical link has been forgotten. Under these circumstances, people often have to choose among kin, but the kinship system does not give any one category precedence; choice must therefore be based on other sorts of criteria.

There is a further problem. The only groups which can arise from undifferentiated cognatic and affinal ties are 'personal' or 'ego oriented'; and any person belongs, potentially, to as many such groups as he has relatives who are not full siblings, though their memberships will partially overlap. The members of such a group will be united, initially, only in their relatedness to the principal, but if it is to persist and to retain their adherence in competition with other ties which, are in terms of the kinship system, of equal validity, some more enduring interest must be found.

The Miriam speak as though kinship ties were a factor in group recruitment. In many small and medium sized groups the majority of members are demonstrably interrelated (though we must remember that in such a small, stable and largely endogamous population, any random sample is likely to include
some kinsfolk), and certain ones, for example those who assemble
to mourn the dead, are restricted to kin. But sometimes kin-
ship ties are only discovered after an association has been
formed, and sometimes they are concocted. Thus, when I
became identified with a particular household, my hosts and
their kin assigned to me a fictive kinship status, on the basis
of which they made and recognized reciprocal claims. There
is, in fact, a kinship ideology which is used to legitimize
and so strengthen relationships. But other forms of legi-
timation, in terms of politics, religion, morality or personal
characteristics, may also be offered.

Whatever its importance in group recruitment, the kinship
system does not enable us to predict alignments; nor are there
any other principles upon which firm predictions can be made.
In general we expect members of any group to try to order the
other relations in which they are severally involved, so as to
be consistent with its interest; when this need conflicts
with their other interests they must decide which alternative
will bring the greater benefits and incur fewer social costs.
But if there is another group which offers most of the satis-
factions of the old one and does not involve the same conflicts
with private interests, the solution will be to join it. In
Murray, as I have already noted, there is frequent duplication
of groups - for example, of clubs and churches - and the degree
of movement between them suggests that the Miriam regard them
as being, in some sense, alternatives. In a stable context
one might expect people to work out which groups and alignments
suit their interests best and adhere to them. But Murray is
not like this: particularly in the political sphere, new
issues frequently arise causing people to reconsider their
positions and to realign themselves accordingly. Indeed,
politicians exploit issues in the hope of bringing about a
realignment in their own favour, as we shall see in the next
section. In this highly optative system the kinship ideology
has a positive function; by its very vagueness and elasticity,
it can serve to legitimize with equal validity a wide range of
alternative relationships.

In this study I am principally concerned with politics
and the next section will be devoted to following the most
important contests occurring on Murray over the last twelve
years. Since, as I have said, most political contests are
conducted through the medium of the Council, the discussion
will centre on that institution. One of my tasks will be to
establish the connection between electoral followings and the
alignments and oppositions occurring in other spheres of
activity. However, I cannot hope to achieve it fully: the
electoral followings of major figures may number more than two
hundred persons, all of whom are, no doubt, to some extent
swayed by personal considerations which may never be made
explicit and which are consequently hard to discover. It is
much easier to establish a relationship between electoral followings and the larger, relatively stable groups such as clubs and churches. It is also, perhaps, more important to do so, since these often act as political pressure groups and indicate, either through their unity or internal divisions, some of the more enduring alignments and oppositions in the society.

IV

Community Politics, 1950-1961

I was able to learn something concerning pre-war politics on Murray, but found little that had any bearing on recent events. Four who held office in those years also figured in the post-war scene but only one of them, Sekmet, played a major role in both periods. He, in fact, dominated the Council from 1947 to 1951, overshadowing those who served with him (all but one of whom are now dead).

Born in 1886, Sekmet represents the divided world in which his generation grew up. He is old enough to be steeped in traditional lore, for which he has a high regard, and in his prime he was the best gardener on the island. Even now that he is old, younger men still seek his advice on such matters. At the same time, he has a far better acquaintance with white people than many who are younger. He spent a number of years on the mainland before 1914 and studied at an Island theological
college during the 1920s, though factors beyond his control prevented him from finishing the course. The Pacific War found him too old for military service, but he had some contact with white troops and with white communists after the war had ended. Government-sponsored visits took him to Brisbane and Cairns, and on the latter occasion he was presented to the Queen.

Sekmet has held Council office intermittently for about seventeen years, being chairman for ten of them and Eastern Islands Delegate for five. Throughout his career he has been at odds with the Administration: he was one of the leaders of the 1936 strike and a few years later tried to free Murray from the D.N.A. by suggesting to the Bishop that it should come under Church control. In the post-war period he was, in his time, the most prominent advocate of 'citizen rights' and there were many who believed that he would one day represent Torres Straits in the Queensland Parliament. Despite his radicalism in external affairs, Sekmet introduced no changes into the life of the community and in his attitude towards the maintenance of custom and the old mission-inspired by-laws he was conservative. Throughout much of his adult life he also held Church office and is still the community's most eloquent preacher; however, in 1950, under circumstances which I shall presently describe, political interests caused him to flirt with, though never to join, the Pentecostalists.

Although Sekmet dominated the political scene in the years
following the war, he encountered considerable opposition, notably from three descendants of Koit, who had been Government mamoose in earlier years. One son of Koit was parish priest, an old man who enjoyed considerable esteem for his piety and his faith-healing powers, and who spoke publicly against Sekmet's campaign for 'citizen rights', though prevented by his office from participating directly in secular politics. However, his sister's son, Tapee, who represented Dauar for several years, clashed with Sekmet on this and other, more ephemeral matters. Later on in the scene, but destined to play a more important role, came Daniel Koit, the priest's brother's son.

Daniel (born c.1912) has a somewhat better scholastic record than Sekmet, his English is good and he has worked for much of his life as a Government school teacher. However, though less versed in traditional lore than Sekmet, he is currently the island's most skilled gardener and he also enjoys a considerable reputation as a faith-healer. In both external and domestic affairs he has always been conservative and following in the steps of his uncle, he is a devout member of the Church of England. He first entered public life around 1950, when he helped to engineer the split in the Welfare Club, of which Sekmet was a founder, and formed the breakaway Southern Cross Club, with himself as leader. However, he did not enter Council politics until the following
year, when the resurgence of Pentecostalism created a crisis.

In the late 1940s a number of Miriam had been converted to the new church on Thursday Island and the mainland, and in 1950 one of them arrived on Murray to proselytize and act as pastor. Although Sekmet was an Anglican churchwarden and had in earlier years been severe towards the minority sect, he now allowed them full freedom to work and a piece of his own land on which to erect a meeting house. My informants all agreed that he did this to spite the parish priest and the white Archdeacon of the Diocese, with both of whom he had clashed over the issue of 'citizen rights'.

Miriam Anglicans raised the Pentecostalist issue at the next synod, which resolved that other denominations should not be allowed to proselytize on the reserves; a Councillors' conference subsequently confirmed this policy. Sekmet was duly excommunicated, but he still remained Chairman of the Council. Daniel Koit and others then set about organizing a petition for a new election, which was presented and accepted by the Administration in 1951. In the ensuing ballot, in which each elector had one vote to cast, Daniel won first place with 128 votes, but Sekmet was only four votes behind him; Tagai, another school teacher, with views similar to those of Daniel, took third place with 122. In the separate election for the Dauar councillor, another member of the Koit family, Abi, took first place. Sekmet's vote had fallen, but not as
much as his opponents had hoped. In the preceding election he had polled 181 votes (47% of the total, the balance being split among seventeen other candidates); now he polled 124. Since this number was considerably in excess of the number of Pentecostalists, it is clear that some Anglicans continued to support him. He subsequently gained readmission to the Church of England and ceased to champion the break-away church; by the 1953 election he had regained sufficient popularity to take first place once again, while Daniel fell to second and Tagai was replaced by a new man, Harry Niu, of whom I shall speak in a moment.

Even as chairman, Sekmet could not assist the Pentecostalists further, since the other councillors were bitterly opposed to them. From that time up to 1959 the minority sect laboured under continual disabilities and restrictions. Its members were disqualified from holding any public office and its services limited to singing practices and at times forbidden altogether. Pentecostalists returning home from places where their adherence carried no penalties, found their faith put to severe test. Some succumbed to the pressure and returned to the Church of England, though often retaining a regard for the other religion; and some Anglicans, though privately sympathetic, refrained from joining the Pentecostalists, being unwilling to give up offices they held in Government or Church service. Such considerations were of greater importance for
men than women, to whom few offices are open, and this may
be a factor in the heavy preponderance of women among Pentecostalists (see Table VI). In a number of instances, men who
were more or less sympathetic to the minority church remained
Anglicans, but allowed their wives and children to be converted,
but there were no instances of men being converted while their
wives and children remained Anglican. Almost all the men who
have joined have been either poorly educated and uninfluential,
or very young, and thus in either case unlikely to be chosen
for any public office.

During the early 1950s a man called Calico returned from
a period of residence on Thursday Island with a mandate from
the local branch of the Legion of Ex-servicemen to form a sub-
branch on Murray. The organization soon attracted more than
forty men, almost all those eligible, including members of
both churches. The only veterans who did not join the Legion
were five close associates of Daniel - he himself was not
eligible - who dismissed Calico and his followers as ignorant
and gullible and ridiculed their talk of 'freedom'.

The Legion soon began to act as a pressure-group in
Council politics, but having no suitable candidates among its
members - Calico, being then a Pentecostalist, was not qualified
to stand - it was obliged to back outsiders. In 1953 the Ex-
servicemen gave their vote to Sekmet, whose policy was closely
similar to theirs. But he was now growing old, and over the
years his severity in the island court had earned him many enemies. It seems, moreover, that people were growing weary of his endless talk of 'citizen rights' since it had produced no tangible benefits. In the 1956 elections the Ex-service-men and many others transferred their support to Boro, a somewhat younger man (born c. 1898); he had just returned from the mainland and Miriam working there recommended him to their relatives at home as one who "knew plenty". In the ensuing contest Boro took first place while Sekmet fell to fourth, thus failing to gain a seat on the Council for the first time in eleven years. Harry Mue rose to second place, while Daniel Koit fell to third. Abi Koit who had previously represented Dauar was replaced by Amoamo, a very young man and a newcomer to the Council. Previously, the chairman had been delegate, and Boro expected to succeed to this office, but when the Eastern Island councillors met, they chose Harry instead. Boro's activities were thus limited to the local sphere and even in this his career was brief and disastrous. His plans for "straightening up the island" turned out to be no more than a series of trivial and irritating regulations, while his excessive severity in court earned him numerous enemies. One victim of his severity, who had narrowly escaped banishment for methylated spirit drinking, discovered Boro doing the same thing and by reporting him to the rest of the Council secured his dismissal. His disgrace
was mourned by no one and he was never again proposed for office. It is perhaps significant that the man who informed against him was a kinsman and close associate of Harry Mie, who now became the senior councillor.

Harry (born c. 1923) was of mixed descent, one of his ancestors coming from Mie, another from Murray and another from Darnley, but he had been brought up on Darnley — a fact which may have favoured his election as delegate. When he came to Murray in 1947 to take up the post of store manager, he was recognized by a number of his kinsmen, although the connection was very distant, and further integrated himself into the community by marrying a local girl. These kinsfolk and affines have always been his closest associates. He was (and remains) the most sophisticated man on the island, with an unusually sound understanding of money matters and a fluent command of English, though not of the vernacular. He had been selected to run the Welfare Club soon after his arrival and he was obviously a likely candidate for Council office. His political outlook also ensured a fairly wide appeal, for while he declared his readiness to press the Administration on a number of popular issues, he did not fall into the naive extremism of such men as Sekmet and Boro.

With the removal of Boro, Harry should have succeeded him as chairman of the Council, but instead he allowed Daniel, with whom he was on friendly terms, to assume this office. By
doing so he evaded responsibility for many matters of local government, such as court duty, which could earn him much unpopularity, and was left free to concentrate on dealings with the Administration, from which more popularity was to be gained, especially since the people were largely dependent on his own accounts of what he did. The place on the Council left vacant by Boro should have gone to Sekmet, who had taken fourth place in the poll, but instead Harry appointed another man who enjoyed no great respect, although he had served as councillor some years before. Both this man and Daniel were deeply obligated to Harry and although the Dauar councillor was not, he too followed Harry’s lead. This was the Council which held office when I arrived in October 1958.

At this time, the dominant personalities in the community appeared to be Harry, Daniel and Calico. Sekmet still enjoyed some measure of respect, but most considered that he was now too old for office. Boro was discredited and very much isolated. Among these three, Harry was in several ways the most firmly established. As delegate he dominated the Council, two of whose members owed their positions to him, and he had also been able to appoint one of his kinsmen to a new, paid position as delegate’s clerk. In his capacity as store manager, he had been able to appoint two other relatives as junior assistants and his readiness to grant credit, which he had often to recoup out of his own pocket, placed many in his debt.
Being relatively wealthy, he was also able to maintain yet other kinsmen as virtual dependents in his own household. Despite these many commitments, he remained president of the Welfare Club and, supported by two kinsmen, dominated its committee.

Daniel Koit was much less well placed to dispense favours and his political influence was narrower in scope. However, as chairman he conducted the routine work of local government and used his position to harry the Pentecostalists relentlessly. He was senior churchwarden and, since the priest was at that time a European, exercised a dominant influence in parish affairs. He also continued to lead the Southern Cross Club, the core of which was formed by a number of his close relatives and friends. This placed him in competition with Harry's Welfare Club, but the old antagonism between the two had subsided into a more or less friendly rivalry; some people belonged to both and there was talk of eventual amalgamation, although Daniel and his close kin preferred to remain independent.

Calico was also on the committee of the Welfare Club, but his principal sphere of influence lay within the Legion. Having been appointed by the Thursday Island committee, he did not owe his dominant position directly to the members, but although there was also a large elected committee he remained the dominant influence. He was, by this time, in
his late fifties, a man of little sophistication and less formal education, but a forceful and eloquent speaker none-theless, and there were many who were ready to listen to his talk of 'freedom'. His earlier career had been by no means distinguished, though he spoke as if it was. He claimed falsely to have been a leader of the 1936 strike; he boasted of his years as a councillor, before the war, though in fact he had served only a few months and been dismissed by the Administration. He had served as an army cook for part of the war, but had been invalided out following a mental breakdown. In 1945 he had been banished for incest - an offence which Miriam consider particularly disgraceful - and it was during his years of exile spent on Thursday Island that he first joined the Legion and became a Pentecostalist. However, early in 1958 the Bishop had induced him to return to the Church of England by giving him the position of churchwarden. Nevertheless, most of his close kin remained in the other church and it was an open secret that he had not lost his old sympathies. Since he was now eligible for Council office, many of the Pentecostalists looked to him as a possible saviour, and, having a foot in both political camps, he was well placed to dominate the Legion, which included members from both.

In late 1958, the main social groupings were aligned in the following way. The Pentecostalists, numbering 74 adults, refused to belong to either of the clubs, denouncing their
concerts as worldly. However, all the Anglicans belonged to one or other, in ratio of about three in the Welfare Club, to two in the Southern Cross. All those Pentecostalists who were eligible did belong to the Legion and, somewhat inconsistently with their principles, even participated in its concerts. But the majority of the Legion's forty members were Anglicans, all of whom belonged to one or other of the clubs. The only ex-servicemen who did not belong to the Legion were six of Daniel's kinsfolk.

The triennial Council elections were due in January 1959 and I soon discovered a number of people hoped for a change. The Pentecostalists hoped for a Council which would afford them greater tolerance and since they were themselves ineligible for office, Calico seemed the most likely candidate. Calico himself, together with some of his most devoted followers, threatened "civil war" if an Ex-servicemen's Council were not elected this time. Among them also, he was cited as the most likely candidate, while others spoke of Abob, who also belonged to the Legion.

Among these three leading personalities, the strongest hostility lay between Calico and Daniel. Not only was Daniel bitterly opposed to Pentecostalism and contemptuous of the 'freedom' movement, but he had earned Calico's lasting enmity by prevailing over him in a land dispute some thirteen years before. Between Calico and Harry there were no signs of
hostility while Harry and Daniel were on excellent terms.

The election was conducted by Harry in his capacity as delegate. In calling for nominations he announced that not only Pentecostalists but anyone who had committed an offence against island by-laws during the preceding two years would be disqualified from office. These disqualifications were according to the regulations, but the second took many by surprise since it had never been invoked before. When it was discovered that eight out of the twenty-four nominated, including Calico and Abob, were ineligible, there were noisy demonstrations of indignation. The election eventually proceeded, but Harry and Daniel were opposed only by non-entities.

The speeches which the candidates then made were for the most part of no consequence. I shall refer to only two. Daniel revealed his conservative attitude by declining to make extravagant promises, preferring to stand merely on his past record. Harry, in a fiery speech, laid his main stress on the fruits of his negotiations with the Administration. He claimed credit for the promised introduction of a cinema and undertook to hasten the introduction of a piped water supply — although it is uncertain whether his representations had any influence on either. His only reference to local matters was to remind those whom he allowed credit in the store that he did so at his own risk, warning them that he might not be so
indulgent in future.

In the voting that followed, each member of the electorate cast four votes — one for each candidate — instead of two (one for the Murray councillors and one for Dauar). 90% voted for Harry, 68% for Daniel. The sitting Dauar councillor, Amamo, was returned and the nominated councillor was replaced by Serib, a popular young man of twenty-four who assisted Harry in the store. Harry's position was now stronger than ever and he had even secured the votes of some of the Ex-servicemen's Legion and a few Pentecostalists. Yet, within six months he and his colleagues were thrust from office.

The crisis began with an ordinary enough occurrence, the birth of an illegitimate child; however, the father proved to be the delegate's clerk, who was Harry's kinsman. It was generally understood that he would be dismissed from his position for the offence, but the court meeting which established paternity referred this matter to the delegate, whose appointee he was. Harry, who was just about to leave for Thursday Island on business, postponed the decision since he needed the clerk's help. Scarcely had they left than the rumour went about that Harry had no intention of dismissing his protege. Nor was this all. One of the matters to be decided in 'town' was whether the mother (who was already there) or the father should have custody of the child, and somehow the rumour came back to Murray that Harry had forced
the girl to surrender the child against her will. Whether true or not, the report was widely believed and the girl's father marched up the street, brandishing a knife and shouting that he would kill Harry. Being a member of the Legion, he then went to Calico for advice. Calico and his henchmen acted promptly and within a few days had collected some 220 signatures to a petition for the Council's deposition. Having done so, they then drew up a list of specific complaints to strengthen their case. In addition to the two already mentioned, they accused him of misappropriating Welfare Club funds to buy a typewriter and a refrigerator (a charge which was never substantiated), and of conducting the previous election improperly. As a means of discrediting him with the D.N.A. they also alleged that he had got persons employed on the store pay-roll to do his domestic work. It seems that they hoped for his dismissal as manager and his removal from the island altogether. They also laid the complaint against Daniel Koit that he had failed to bring charges against four of his relatives who were widely known to have been guilty of sexual immorality.

The Administration accepted the petition and appointed the teacher and former councillor Tagai to conduct new elections and carry on the work of government until the new Council took office. But Calico and his followers refused to recognize his authority and for six months the island had
no government at all. Even the police, several of whom were members of the Legion, refused to take orders from him and when a brawl occurred between Ex-servicemen and some of Koit's relatives, no charges were laid. At this time, Calico was the only one to exercise any authority, and he renewed his agitation for the eventual election of an Ex-servicemen's Council, making extravagant promises of the benefits which it would bring, in the way of 'citizen rights' and rehabilitation benefits. The Pentecostalists also took advantage of the interregnum to conduct their services without interference, outraging pious Anglicans with their displays of enthusiasm and glossolalia.

It was not until March 1960 that a white official of the D.N.A. arrived to conduct elections. This time no restrictions were placed on nomination and some thirty candidates stood for office. I was absent at this time and my information, though reliable as far as it goes, is incomplete. The voting figures available are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Order</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Votes</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Votes in 1959</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Abob</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>Chairman</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Calico</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>2nd Cllr.</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Harry Miue</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>3rd Cllr.</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Daniel Koit</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>not elected</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Jack Calico</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>not elected</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Serib</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>not elected</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It seems that few voters divided their support among the candidates of both factions: for example, few, if any, voted for both Abob and Calico and Daniel or Harry. But while most of the Ex-servicemen's faction voted for Abob and Calico, their third choices were scattered among a variety of candidates who, though members of the faction, split the vote by accepting nomination. Thus, Harry Niue was able to capture third place instead of Calico's son, Jack.

The contest for the Dauar representative gives rather a different picture:

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Gelam</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>elected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Amosmo</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>not elected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Abi Koit</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>not elected</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

not much can be gleaned from these figures since there was some confusion in the voting arrangements, but it appears that the Koit family nominated one of their number to stand against the sitting councillor, although he was politically in agreement with them. By so doing, they allowed Gelam, a Pentecostalist and a member of the Legion, to capture the position.

It is to be noted that Abob and not Calico topped the poll. He was a man of about forty-five, considered popular and intelligent, but hitherto his career in public life had been undistinguished. Sexual misconduct had caused him to
be dismissed from the office of lay reader and policeman some years before. He had been elected President of the Legion, but had never made any attempt to challenge Calico's dominance. His role during the preceding months seems to have been somewhat enigmatic, and according to other informants he remained very much in the background. Although not associating himself with the Pentecostalists, he absented himself from Anglican services. However, when I returned to the island in November, 1960, he was denying all complicity in the petition and even insisted that he had been unwilling to stand for office, although others denied this. Subsequent to his election he had punished several members of the Koit family for immorality, but now he was trying to ingratiate himself with Daniel, who was his next-door neighbour, and also with Harry. In particular, he had resumed Daniel's policy of restricting the activities of the Pentecostalists, who complained that he had betrayed them. He also absented himself from most of the Ex-servicemen's meetings. However, such approval as Daniel and Harry expressed for his actions was qualified, and neither expected that he would be returned to office at the next election.

The open antagonism of earlier months had now been replaced by the customary show of amity; moreover, a number of individuals had privately made their peace with Harry and Daniel. Some of these had signed Calico's petition but were not Pente-
costalists or Ex-servicemen. They now insisted that they had added their names because everyone seemed to be doing so, but had never intended any harm to Harry and Daniel. Several Ex-servicemen and close associates of Calico had also approached Harry in secret in order to make their peace, though he suspected that their action was prompted by the need to obtain credit in the store.

Only two members of the Legion, both friends of Harry, had withdrawn at the time of the petition and only one did so subsequently—remarkably enough, the father of the girl whose baby had started all the trouble. But there were, by November, signs of restlessness among the members. Although a treasurer had been appointed, Calico, in fact, handled the funds and it was said that he had misappropriated them. Private grudges were also voiced. Calico's Pentecostalist relatives had usurped land belonging to an absentee, thus antagonizing some of the owner's kinsfolk who belonged to the Legion. Another member had been alienated because his son had been severely punished for some offence by the island court, and also because of a land dispute with another Ex-serviceman. In addition, many were asking when 'citizen rights' and the army Rehabilitation Benefits, which Calico had promised them, would be forthcoming.

However, Calico's resourceful imagination devised new projects which revived confidence in his leadership. He
proposed that they should take a dancing troupe to the main-
land where, he assured them, they would be able to earn
enormous sums of money. When the Legion headquarters failed
to provide them with transport as he had hoped, he explored
various possibilities and when I left was proposing to take over
one of the island lugger's which was lying idle in the anchorage.

Circumstances also played into Calico's hands, for the
Administration sent word that the Federal Government would
consider granting Islanders voting rights in the coming year,
and that the Queensland Government would also consider certain
changes, including a relaxation of the liquor restrictions.
Many Ex-servicemen seemed to believe that 'freedom' was immi-
nent and that its advent was due to their efforts under Calico's
leadership. Spirits were high and when Calico ordered the
formation of an Ex-servicemen's dancing team to celebrate this
auspicious Christmas season, not only Anglicans but Pentecosta-
lists joined. The friends and relatives of Harry, Daniel and
other dissidents formed rival teams, as they had done the
previous year. 13

The political disputes of the preceding months had split
the Church of England in such a way as to allow the Pentecosta-
lists to secure certain advantages, although most of the
Anglican Ex-servicemen were not explicitly sympathetic to them.
The same split was perpetuated in a dispute centring round the
native priest who had succeeded the European incumbent a few
months previously. The dispute was not obviously connected with the earlier conflicts, but the factions aligned themselves in exactly the same way. When the Bishop transferred him in November 1960, it was widely believed that a report from Calico had been the cause. However, while Calico might still be recognized as leader of the Ex-servicemen, his Anglican supporters did not regard him as fit for Church office. When churchwarden elections were held he was not even nominated for return to the office which he had previously held on the Bishop's order. Abob's brother also lost his position. In their stead, two of Daniel's brothers were chosen (he himself had been nominated by the Bishop), together with Harry's wife's-mother's-brother and young Serib.

The native priest who now came had been selected for his shrewdness and experience, in the hope of combating the drift to Pentecostalism. His affability ingratiated him with all groups and appeared to close the division in the Church. As an Ex-serviceman (which his predecessor had not been), he identified himself with the Legion, and he even claimed a tenuous kinship with some of the leading Pentecostalists. In the new situation, a few were even drawn back into the Anglican fold.

The Pentecostalists had improved their position since 1958, not only by gaining representation on the Council and a limited freedom to hold services, but by increasing their numbers to
almost 29% of the population. Most of the new converts were women, but five were men; moreover, a number of longstanding Pentecostalists had come home from other places. The rumour that their pastor would be allowed to practice freely in the near future further raised their morale. They were somewhat dismayed by the return of some of their number to the Church of England but, in fact, most of these were young boys or girls and none were Pentecostalists of long-standing. The hard core observed grimly that "the dog does not return to his vomit".

Antagonism towards the Pentecostalists had certainly increased since 1958. The supporters of Daniel and Harry were virtually absolving their Anglican opponents from all responsibility for recent events and laying all the blame on the Pentecostalists. Die-hard Anglicans circulated the rumour that the Administration would shortly banish the minority church to some uninhabited island. However, the Pentecostalists were not altogether isolated and they were able to secure yet another victory over the Anglicans in November 1960.

The dispute involved the Dauar community which had been transferred to Murray in 1956. In the interim, all of them, with the exception of the Koits and one other family, had become Pentecostalists. The Murray Anglicans requested permission to use the iron from the old Dauar church and were granted it by the few Dauar Anglicans, but the Dauar Pentec—
costalists were not consulted and on discovering what was to be done, came down and reclaimed 'their property' at the very moment when it was being placed on the Anglican church. The Bishop, when appealed to, asked the Council to settle the matter, and Daniel was eager for a trial of strength. However, Abob and Harry were not, preferring to postpone the hearing for an indefinite period. I heard none of the Anglican Ex-servicemen express any criticism of what the Pentecostalists had done.

There was further conflict, along similar lines of division, in February 1961. This arose out of a marriage between a girl whose father was a die-hard Anglican and a boy of Pentecostalist parentage. Antagonism between the two 'sides' is usual at weddings, but in this instance it was aggravated by the sectarian and political rivalry current in the community, as well as by several private disputes. The wedding would probably not have proceeded had not the Council already ordered it to take place. In the event, the bride's 'side' boycotted the ceremony and the celebrations.

Ideally, on these occasions, people align themselves according to whether they are related to the bride or the groom, or, if related to both, they select the connection which is closer. I had seen these rules operating more or less regularly at weddings during 1958-9; but on this
occasion political and religious alignments seemed to be the principal consideration. For example, the bride's father's brother and his son, Gelam, who were ardent Pentecostalists and associates of Calico, aligned themselves with the groom, although their connection with him was tenuous. The celebrations were held around Calico's house, although he had no connection with the groom and was, in fact a close affine of the bride. Weddings held in the preceding July had revealed similar alignments.

Calico and his followers made no attempt to take control of the two Friendly Societies; instead, they withdrew. The allegation that Harry had embezzled the Welfare Club's funds had served to discredit that organization, while the Southern Cross's funds had almost all been spent. The remaining membership of the two clubs was now so small that they were virtually obliged to join forces for the only concert staged during my second stay. The same alignment appeared in a number of minor activities and relationships. The Ex-servicemen's and Pentecostalist faction provided their own dancing team during the festive season, and their own work-bees for fellow members.

This was the situation at the time of my final departure from Murray, and I know nothing of later developments. Although there may have been a lessening of tension between the opposed groups, it seems unlikely that there would have been any immediate change in political alignments. However, the sub-
sequent election may well have seen the downfall of Abob and perhaps some improvement in the position of Harry.

The changes in the Murray Council over the period 1950-1960 are set out in Table VIII, with councillors distinguished by name and according to their political attitude towards the Administration. The division into conservatives and radicals is fairly clear except in the case of Harry Niue, who might be classed as a moderate radical; nevertheless, I class him as conservative since, unlike the others, he has never been identified with the 'freedom' agitation.

In 1950, the Murray councillors were all radicals although the Dauar representative (at this time elected only by those living on Dauar) was conservative: it appears then that the prevailing mood, at least on Murray, was radical. This was upset in 1951 when the sectarian division, just then emerging, became a political issue - although it must be remembered that Sekmet's encouragement of the Pentecostalists was directly related to his quarrel with the conservative priest. However, in the new election, approximately two-thirds of the electorate voted for conservative candidates though some Anglicans still voted for Sekmet. This voting pattern was maintained up to 1959 (although the radicals slightly improved their positions in 1953 and 1956), except that Harry
## TABLE VIII

Appointments to the Murray Island Council, 1950-1960

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>SEKMET (181)</td>
<td>Daniel (128)</td>
<td>SEKMET (?)</td>
<td>BORO (?)</td>
<td>Harry (224)</td>
<td>ABOB (230)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>TOM (133)</td>
<td>SEKMET (124)</td>
<td>Daniel (?)</td>
<td>Harry (?)</td>
<td>Daniel (169)</td>
<td>CALICO (210)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>ESKI (36)</td>
<td>Tagai (122)</td>
<td>Harry Niue(?)</td>
<td>Daniel (?)</td>
<td>Serib (131)</td>
<td>Harry (168)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dauar</td>
<td>Tapee (26)</td>
<td>Abi Koit (?)</td>
<td>Abi Koit (?)</td>
<td>Amoamo (?)</td>
<td>Amoamo (180)</td>
<td>GELAM (82)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The figures placed in brackets are the votes each successful candidate received.

The elections of 1950, 1953, 1956 and 1959 were the normal triennial elections; those of 1951 and 1960 were special elections precipitated as the result of a petition.

Names in upper-case letters are radicals; those in lower-case conservatives.

**Notes**

1. Dauar councillors were elected by Dauar residents only, until 1956; thereafter by the whole electorate.

2. In elections prior to 1959, each voter had only one vote to cast for the three Murray seats. In 1959 and 1961, each voter had three votes.
Niue was somewhat more radical than Tagai, whom he replaced.

The 1959 election, in which the conservatives gained an overwhelming victory, differed from previous elections in two important respects. First, Harry replaced the old system of 'proportional representation' by one which placed all seats at the disposal of any minority bloc; secondly, he disqualified all the leading radicals from standing. Even so, Sekmet was supported by 23% of the voters, taking fifth place, while another radical came sixth with 19%. The 1960 election represents a dramatic swing to radicalism and a reversal of the whole trend to conservatism which had persisted since 1951. It also represents a reversal in terms of the sectarian issue which had lain virtually dormant since 1953, when Sekmet had abandoned his Pentecostalist proteges and they had been disqualified from office. Now, Abob, whose loyalty to the Church of England was in some doubt, Calico, who was known to have a foot in both religious camps, and Gelam who was a declared Pentecostalist, all gained office. Hard core Anglicans and Pentecostalists may have still voted with the sectarian issue uppermost in their minds, but it is evident that the majority did not.

The strong swing to radicalism was precipitated by an ephemeral issue, the affair of the delegate's clerk. But how far was it a material factor in the change rather than a mere pretext for holding a new election? It is hard to evaluate
the extent of the change between 1959 and 1960 because in
the first election radical voters had only second-rate can­
didates to back, and many of them seem to have backed Harry as
the most radical among a predominantly conservative list.
Had Calico and Abob been allowed to stand at that time, his
vote might have been far smaller. However, if we assume that
Harry would have, in any case, attracted a number of radical
votes, it is possible that the affair of his clerk may have
induced some to seek a less compromised alternative candidate,
just as radicals had transferred their support from Sekmet to
Boro in 1956. But against these interpretations, we may place
the fact that the votes of all the conservative candidates
decayed and that, among conservative voters, Harry still
received greater support than Daniel or Serib. There are
indications that there was an increase in radicalism during
the period 1959-60. Calico's campaign involved much talk of
'freedom' and there was a substantial rise in activity in the
Legion. The increasing economic distress at this time may
well have been a factor in this trend.

The increasing dominance of the radical-conservative
cleavage during 1959-60 is also evident from the fact that the
split in the Anglican congregation, and the formation of
'sides' at several weddings, followed the same lines, while
radicals withdrew from the conservative-dominated Welfare and
Southern Cross clubs, to concentrate on the Legion.
There is a further point. The petitions of 1951 and 1959 followed elections in which one or other political tendency had had an overwhelming victory. It is clear that the 1959 Council did not accurately represent the relative strength of the radicals, nor, probably, the 1950 Council that of the conservatives, though the circumstances under which the latter was appointed are not now clear.

Regarded in this way, a Council in which both tendencies are represented is the norm, any deviation from which sets off redressive processes.

But though the qualities and actions of individual politicians may not determine the relative strength of conservatives and radicals it does affect their own fortunes. Our survey of the ten year period indicates that the position of the Miriam councillor is precarious: in the six elections, only Sekmet was able to top the poll more than once, and of the fourteen holding office over the period, only five have served more than one term and only three more than two.

However, when we remember that Sekmet, in the course of his career, has some seventeen years of office to his credit, it begins to seem as though some politicians have the capacity to 'stay the pace', despite periodic setbacks, while others like Tagai and Boro have only momentary success. The three most successful, Sekmet, Harry Niue and Daniel Koit, though men of very different political outlook, are all of outstanding
education and ability, which have received some form of recognition from Europeans. However, Tom, Eski, Tagai and Boro were or are schoolteachers, while Serib is employed in the store and Amoamo and Jack Calico have undergone several years of training in a theological college. Although Abob has no formal qualifications, people said that he had had an excellent scholastic record. Nevertheless, Harry, Daniel and Sekmet impressed me and, I think, most Miriam, as being much more sophisticated than the others. If this quality is a factor in success, we may expect the first two (though not Sekmet, who is now very old) to have many more years of office. Calico is the exception to this rule, being a man of little education. But, through the connection he is supposed to have with the Legion headquarters, he also seems to enjoy some recognition among Europeans — moreover, the 'friendly Europeans' to whom his followers looked for help in their struggle for 'freedom'. The indications are, then, that the Miriam consistently vote for candidates who have some real or apparent qualification for dealing with the outside world, and solving, through one policy or another, their abiding problems.

In their promises to solve the people’s problems, the radical politicians have been far more extravagant than the conservatives; but though utopias may be vote-catchers in the short run they become an embarrassment if the electorate...
expects them to be realized. The radical politician must be highly resourceful if he is to maintain his following - in his day, Sekmet was as adept at this as Calico - but sooner or later they are likely to lose their confidence in him and look for another leader. Harry Niu took care to avoid overreaching himself in this way, limiting his promises to things which were fairly likely to be realized. But in doing so he failed to capture the radical vote, though doing better than Daniel who declined to make promises of any sort.

Any councillor, whatever his political complexion, must take certain decisions in court or some other sphere of local government which arouse resentment. Sekmet, who was often extremely severe in court, may well have led to his displacement by Boro in this way, while the latter made himself equally unpopular for the same reasons. Harry Niu used his position as delegate to evade court duty, probably to escape such resentment, but in taking responsibility for the judgement of his clerk, he made the step which led to his downfall. In this respect, the radical candidates had an advantage over those in office, since none of them had held office at all recently. However, once in office, their decisions were soon arousing adverse comment.

To sum up. Anyone entering Council politics on Murray must align himself with one or other of the two political tendencies. Harry’s attempt to straddle the division was
probably never very successful and the disturbances of 1959-60 left him on the conservative side. Moreover, if a politician is to achieve outstanding success he must appear to have some special qualification for dealing with white people. Anyone living on Murray cannot avoid aligning himself with one or other of the churches, and the choice he makes probably affects his chances of election: up to 1960 and even today, it was probably a drawback to be a Pentecostalist. However, despite the religiosity prevailing in the community, it is not necessary for a councillor to be an active churchman; though Daniel was one, Harry Niue was not and Abob had been dismissed from the position of lay reader for some sexual peccadillo, only a few years before he gained election. Although a politician needs to have a policy in relation to the outside world and on the sectarian issue, he does not need one on other matters of local government: in this sphere, disagreements arise only over specific issues, not on matters of general principle.

I have noted earlier that each of the major politicians had a secondary base in the community: thus Harry had the Welfare Club (like Sekmet before him), Daniel had the Church and the Southern Cross Club, while Calico had the Legion, and each was surrounded by a circle of devoted friends and kin. However, though these groups might provide a core of supporters at elections, none was large enough to determine the outcome
of an election by itself; rather did they provide the three men with more favourable milieux in which to experiment in politics and try out their powers of leadership before venturing on to the larger arena of Council politics.

Conclusions

Murray's response to the external environment has been generally positive; moreover, this response has been largely autonomous. However, its attempts to engage in the marine industry have been largely ineffective, and the long-term tendency has been for them to try to deal with their economic problems either by emigration or through political means, primarily through the Council. The Council is undoubtedly the most important institution in the community, providing an arena for all the major political contests and a focus for the ambitions of its numerous aspiring politicians. In political terms, the churches are of minor importance, though engaging a large part of the people's energies. An indication of the Council's dominant position is that its leaders achieve and hold their positions primarily through the role that they play in Council politics, rather than in the economic or religious spheres. Moreover, alignments in other spheres, such as churches and in spontaneous activities such as recreation, often reflect the dominant cleavage in Council politics.
Since completing this chapter, I have received news of a more recent election on Murray. The present Council is as follows:

Chairman: Daniel Koit
2nd. Cllr: Harry Mue
3rd. Cllr: JACK CALICO
Dauar Cllr: Abi Koit

I have no information as to the specific issues involved nor of the distribution of votes; however, certain conclusions may be drawn. First, as Daniel and Harry predicted, Abob's attempt to align himself with the conservative bloc lost him radical support and did not gain him conservative support. Second, Calico finally lost his grip over the radicals, although his place was taken by his son. Third, Daniel has improved his position substantially, regaining his old position as chairman; whether he surpassed Harry in the election or was granted this position by the latter is not clear. Fourth, Abi Koit has regained the Dauar seat from the Pentecostalist, Gelam, who was elected under somewhat irregular circumstances; Amoamo has not been able to secure re-election. Finally, this election has shown a return to the norm of the 1950s, with conservatives holding the Dauar seat and two of the Murray seats.

My correspondent also claims a decline in Pentecostalism and the Legion; however, since he is a partisan conservative it would be unwise to place too much confidence in this statement.
Footnotes

1. For further explanation of this saying, see page 15.

2. The Miriam adopted their present house form from the Lifuans of the L.M.S. The structure is raised upon piles, its framework being of heavy bamboo, its walls of plaited palm-leaf and its steeply gabled roof of grass thatch. The floors are made of lengths of bamboo which have been split and opened out, and then covered by mats. All these materials are readily available in the bush.

3. Surveying the land of four moderately well-off owners, I found that approximately 17% was currently under cultivation. However, the methods of cultivation employed on Murray require a lengthy period of fallowing after two or three years.

4. Yam, banana, sweet potato and cassava are the principal crops in terms of social importance. However, yam and sweet potato, though constituting the major starch diet from June to October, are not available at other times of the year, whereas bananas and cassava can be used at any time. Yams and bananas require the most work, being planted in areas of newly cleared bush, whereas sweet potato and cassava are planted in old gardens or on patches of open hillside.

5. My calculation of per capita income is approximate. The sources of income were Social Service Benefits and Government wages (of which I had exact figures), remittances from relatives on the mainland (of which I had no exact figures, though the sum was certainly less than £1,000 per annum) and wages on the boats. The approximate earnings of those working on the Master Boats, can be calculated from the basic wage, allowing for a small bonus. The wages of those working on the island boats are not available, but they were certainly small, since gross earnings in 1958 were only about £1,200.

6. After the war, white veterans received a small sum of money from the Government in the form of Rehabilitation Benefits. The Secretary of the Brisbane Legion informed me in 1961 that it was still uncertain whether Torres Straits ex-servicemen were entitled to anything or not.

7. Records of the Murray Island Councils from 1898 to 1940 show that few councillors held office for more than two terms; however, I know nothing of the circumstances attending their replacement.
8. This tendency is most clearly apparent in the enforcement of Government health regulations. The Miriam are profoundly mistrustful of European medicine and often receive it only under duress. The police are supposed to report all cases of sickness, and the Council to send serious cases to Thursday Island; however, there are many instances in which this is not done and on at least one occasion, the chairman himself undertook faith-healing methods in competition with the Government's medical aid post.

9. The form of dancing prevalent throughout Torres Straits was originally derived from Polynesian seamen around the turn of the century. As a rule, each performer executes the same sequence of movements to the accompaniment of a song. Any number may join in these performances, but a spectacular display requires at least thirty of either or both sexes. New songs and dances are continually being invented, and on Murray much time is spent in learning and practising them.

10. 'Hula' dances, which have derived from 'Hawaiian' films, are performed only by girls. The costumes worn are more elaborate than in ordinary 'island dance' and since many complicated figures are involved, many hours of practice are required.

11. In this and later chapters, I shall identify those of part-foreign descent by giving as their second name the island of their ancestry. This style was often adopted by foreign seamen in earlier years.

12. By giving each voter as many votes as there were seats, Harry made it possible for any majority group to capture all the places on the Council, leaving minorities totally unrepresented. I am not certain that he made the change with this in mind, but I am inclined to believe that he did.

13. Previously, dancing teams had been ad hoc groups, which reflected no political alignment, performers either joining with their friends or with the dancing leader whom they considered most skilled.
Chapter VII

COMMUNITY LIFE AND POLITICS ON BADU

Introduction

Badu is a comparatively large community, which had, in 1959, a local population of 488 while a considerable number of its former inhabitants were living elsewhere. Its proximity to, and the existence of regular communications with Thursday Island permit more or less continuous contact with the outside world, and the degree of organized interaction with it is high, particularly in the economic sector. But instead of trying to modify the environment, as the Miriam have done, the Baduans have endeavoured to exploit it as it stands. Far from opposing the Administration, the Council has given it loyal support, and there has been no attempt to break away from the Church of England. Their response to the marine industry has been positive, vigorous and outstandingly successful, largely due to the achievements of a number of remarkably able economic leaders. The large fleet of native and European-owned boats based on Badu provide employment for almost all its able-bodied men and many from other islands as well.

Pearling dominates the life of the community, absorbing a great part of its men's energies and keeping them away from the island for much of the time. When at home they tend to
live quietly among their families, rather than engaging in community activities. Recreational and religious activities are at a low ebb, and such little political competition as occurs rarely involves them, since the determination of community affairs is the concern of a small but dominant clique which, with every sign of permanence, controls all the major public offices.

A generation ago, Badu was a relatively homogeneous community, despite the presence of a number of half-castes in its midst; since then it has undergone radical changes to the point where there are marked social divisions and a very unequal distribution of wealth and power. The development of efficient industrial enterprise provides the key to many of these changes, and most of them can be attributed to the achievements of one man, Finau Samoa, who, by a skilful manipulation of internal and external forces, has dominated the community for thirty years and still remains the pivot of its ruling clique.

Not all Baduans are content with the way in which the community has changed, but they have failed to offer any effective opposition. The dominant ideology is conservative in its attitude towards the social environment, and stresses strong leadership and hard work as the means to progress. As one Baduan said, "We were the last to be civilized /i.e. to accept Christianity/ but now we're the first." To him, as to Finau and most of his supporters, 'civilization' means economic
prosperity rather than the mirages of 'freedom' and 'citizen rights'.

By the time I reached Badu the present regime had been firmly established for a decade and had only to be maintained by those in control of it. My diary records only a monotonous succession of routine events; there were none of the unexpected occurrences, the sudden eruptions and political agitations so characteristic of Murray. I have thus no occasion to present any chronicle of recent events or case studies. But, whereas on Murray the events of pre-war years do not differ radically from those of today and have little bearing on them, the present situation on Badu is clearly the product and culmination of events occurring thirty and more years ago. In the following account, then, I shall begin with a chronicle of these events, so far as they can be rediscovered, before proceeding to a description and analysis of the contemporary situation.

I

Physical Setting, Population and Resources

Badu is one of the Western Group of Torres Straits Islands, lying some thirty miles to the north of Thursday Island (about six to eight hours journey by motor lugger). Moa Island is less than a mile away, though the nearest village on that
island is more distant, while Wabuiag lies some five miles further to the North. Badu is a comparatively large island, irregularly-shaped and about six miles in diameter. In its centre are many hills covered with great granite boulders, but there is a good deal of low-lying land, lightly wooded and well-watered. Around the circumference long sandy beaches alternate with dense mangrove.

Although the rocky hills of the centre are unsuitable for cultivation, there is ample open land where all the crops found on Murray can be raised, as well as swampy patches suitable for taro. Coconut palms also grow well, though not in the same profusion as on Murray, and scarcely sufficient for the people's needs. Game is limited to a few sea birds, but small fish abound around the shores of the island and further out to sea turtle and dugong are plentiful.

The population has increased substantially since 1914, when there were 250. In 1959 the total number of Baduans was 673, but 232 were then living elsewhere, mostly on Thursday Island. The 441 remaining had been supplemented by 47 immigrants from other islands, and, temporarily, during the pearling season, by numbers of seamen from other islands, working on Baduan boats.
Table IX

Distribution of Baduans in 1959

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Badu</th>
<th>Bamaga &amp; Other Is.</th>
<th>Thursday Is.</th>
<th>Mainland</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>441</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>692</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note: 'Baduans' are here defined as persons born and/or bred on Badu or who regard themselves as belonging primarily to this community. This last category covers children of Baduan parents who have grown up on Bamaga or places outside the reserves.

There was a considerable amount of inter-marriage between Baduan women and foreign seamen around the turn of the century, and some between Baduan men and part-Aboriginal women from Mapoon (a settlement on Cape York) during the 1920's. A little over 40% (278) of all Baduans have at least one foreign or two half-caste grandparents. Most of those of part-Asian, Polynesian or Tanna descent are visibly distinct, and this distinctness is maintained in succeeding generations by the tendency of 'mixed-bloods', particularly those of lighter complexion, to intermarry.

The age distribution of the present Badu population is shown in Table X, and that of emigrant Baduans in Table XI. Unlike Murray, emigration has been heaviest in the older age groups (40-59), and it has been more usual for married emigrants.
to be accompanied by their families. Immigration from other islands has partly compensated for this loss to the local community, but the proportion of males in the 40-59 age-group is still substantially below that on Murray - 14.5% as against 20.6%.

Table X
Age Distribution of Population Resident on Badu in 1959

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 - 9</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>27.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 - 19</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>20.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>20 - 29</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>20.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 - 39</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 - 49</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>11.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 - 59</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 - 69</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>488</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table XI
Age Distribution of Baduans Living Away from Badu in 1959

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 - 9</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 - 19</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 - 29</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 - 39</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 - 49</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 - 59</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>249</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Direction of Social and Economic Change

Prior to contact, the Baduans gained their livelihood mainly by hunting turtle and dugong, fishing, and the gathering of wild vegetable foods, although practising a little gardening. In exploiting these natural resources it was more convenient for them to live in small, scattered and fairly impermanent settlements around the circumference of the island. The indigenous social organization was segmentary, the society being divided into moieties, whose functions seem to have been principally religious and ceremonial, into three local groups, called tribes, and into exogamous totemic clans, which were land-owning corporations. Membership of all these groups was determined by descent in the male line.

Badu did not enter into intensive contact with the outside world until the 1880s when one or two small pearling stations were established and a pastor of the L.M.S. took up residence. In 1901, the founders of the Papuan Industries Company (see p. 70) selected the island for their headquarters, erecting a store, offices and a boat slip, and employing a number of natives and foreigners in addition to a small European staff. The Queensland government inherited these assets when it took over the Company in 1929 and continued to use them until 1946, when the Island Industries Board (as it was now called) shifted its headquarters to Thursday Island.
The Mission and Administration had already pressed the native population to leave their scattered and impermanent manner of life and settle in one place. The establishment of the Papuan Industries station, adjacent to the sheltered anchorage provided by the Badu-Moa channel, now determined where the village should be situated.

In the new situation it was the tribal groupings rather than the clans which became important; the three tribes formed distinct wards within the village, elected their own councillors and operated their own cutters. These ventures, like all the 'Company Boats' of the period, were organized along co-operative lines. The men of a tribe elected a skipper for the season and those who had not chosen to work on European-owned boats, took turns to serve as crew, sharing out the profits more or less equally.

Foreigners were not discouraged from settling on Badu; they were encouraged to come by the opportunity for work with the Papuan Industries station. Two Asians and eight Pacific Islanders settled permanently, six marrying Baduan women and four others bringing with them native wives they had married in other parts of the Straits. Their children were absorbed into the tribal system, either by taking membership of their mothers' tribes or, if their mothers came from elsewhere, by adoption. But it seems that the foreigners and their children did not become completely integrated. For example, several of them preferred to live to the south of the main village, then
situated in what is now called Suckleby (see map), and their offspring have chosen to do the same. Although the present village is now more scattered, 'mixed-bloods' still predominate in certain sections. The prevailing tendency for them to marry among themselves, rather than with the native population, also dates from this time.

A half-caste Niuean, called Joe Savage, inherited a cutter from his father before the first World War, and from that time forward worked independently of other local enterprises. But most of the half-castes participated in the 'company boat' system and at least four were elected skippers during the 1920s. One of these, a part-Samoan called Finau, showed outstanding ability in this field and determination to succeed far beyond the ordinary measure. Finding his progress hampered by the tribal division, he overrode it by recruiting the best seamen from any of the three. They, for their part, were drawn to him by the prospect of earning higher wages under his command. Whether Finau's innovation encountered local opposition is not clear, but if it did, there is no doubt that the Administration, which was much impressed with his performance, supported him. Thereafter, until the strike of 1936, the tribal system seems to have continued in a rather inconsistent manner.

Half-castes played an even more dominant role in Church life and local government. Joe Savage (born c. 1885) was appointed a deacon under the L.M.S. and has continued as a churchwarden up to the present time. Combining this position
with that of chairman of the Council, he was the most influential figure throughout the 1920s. But from about 1930, Finau (born c. 1900), increasingly overshadowed him. Finau was elected to the Council in 1929, and within a few years replaced Joe as chairman; about the same time he was elected churchwarden to lead the people in the erection of a new church. This project was successfully completed in the space of two or three years, largely by voluntary labour and at a cost of about £1,300, raised from amongst the people at a time when seamen were earning no more than £4. 10. 0. a month.

Almost all the Baduans supported the strike of 1936, with the exception of Finau and his brothers; Joe was not affected since he ran his own enterprise. The Administration responded by confiscating the tribal boats and subsequently introduced the system whereby small 'family companies' became boat owners and employed others as ordinary wage-labourers. Finau, in recognition of his outstanding abilities and perhaps, also, of his loyalty during the strike, was the first to be allowed to take advantage of this new scheme, and the company he formed with his seven brothers and one half-brother proved remarkably successful. The only other family to form a company before the war were the six Newar brothers (full Torres Straits natives); however, their venture failed after a few months.

Finau's father, Tuna Samoa, came to Torres Straits in the 1890s to work in the pearling industry, later marrying a
Saibai woman while stationed on that island. Around 1902 he came to work at the Papuan Industries station and remained on Badu with his family until his death in 1935. Though having no particular importance in the community, he earned the nickname "Number One" on account of his eagerness to outshine others in whatever he did. According to his sons he was a severe father who early impressed upon them the importance of hard work and wanted them to excel in all that they did.

Tuna had eight sons and three daughters, born between 1900 and 1923. When he died, Finau, being the oldest, succeeded him as head of the family, and was thus qualified in terms of seniority as well as ability to head its company. He took command of its first boat, while his brothers and some other Baduans made up the crew. If their reports are true, he subjected them all to the harshest discipline, maintaining a pace of work that was well nigh intolerable. They were mainly engaged in trochus fishing at this time and Finau kept the boat away from home for months on end. Work began at dawn and continued without a break until dusk, and even then they might stay up half the night, cleaning the shell or sailing on to another reef. Food was kept to a minimum in order to keep down expenses. Not everyone cared to endure such harsh conditions even though the wages were high, but Finau's brothers accepted his authority and stood by him whenever there was trouble. It is worth mentioning that the Samoas are all big,
powerful men who know how to fight. Their reward came as the family fleet expanded and the older among them became skippers in their own right.

Pearling ceased at the outbreak of war but was resumed in 1946. There was now greater opportunity for native enterprise and ten vessels of various types were acquired, three by the Samoas, three by Joe Savage and his sons, one by a group called the Wakaiai company, and the rest by other individuals. But by 1950, only the Samoa and Savage companies remained in existence, the others having failed through wreck or inefficiency.

Joe Savage was too old to resume pearling after the war but his two sons operated luggers and his daughter's husband a cutter. One of the luggers was wrecked within the first year but the remaining boats were successfully worked for some years, the lugger being equipped with an engine and diving apparatus for pearl shell fishing. Joe's three sons and two adopted sons worked together on these boats, harmoniously at first, but subsequently there were disputes over who should have command of the lugger. As antagonism increased efficiency declined, until profits were replaced by debts. Finally, in 1954, the Administration instructed Finau to take over its management. Since that date his second son has commanded the boat with considerable success. It may be some consolation to the Savages that he is the son of Joe's daughter (whom Finau married), but apart from a nominal sum given to the old man they get no
share of the profits. All that remains to them is the cutter, which is old, dilapidated and which, not being equipped with diving apparatus, earns little.

The Samoas, by contrast, have proved extremely successful. During their first years, with only three vessels, they were grossing between £20-£30,000 a year, more than 30% of the total earnings of the D.N.A. fleet. Their consistent success encouraged the Administration to equip them with engines and diving apparatus and to make available to them luggers which had been sequestrated from less successful companies on other islands. By 1958 they owned six luggers and were managing two more, and the earnings of these vessels amounted to more than 50% of the total earned by the D.N.A. fleet. Under these circumstances, the continuance of the Samoa fleet is of considerable importance to the Administration, and of no less to the Samoas themselves, since those of them who are skippers derive from it an income substantially above the average.

The Samoas have also extended their influence in the governmental field during the same period, though not without encountering some resistance at first. Finau was not called into the army and continued as chairman throughout the war, losing office, however, when the ex-servicemen returned. The circumstances attending these events are now obscure, and my enquiries produced only a maze of vague and contradictory statements. The incoming council, made up of returned soldiers, was
strongly antagonistic to the Administration, and to the Samoas and Savages, whom they proposed to expel from the island. Their few months of office were fraught with conflicts and the situation was so disturbed that routine tasks of local government were neglected and the Administration eventually dismissed them.

In the new elections, Finau was reappointed chairman along with two half-caste friends. In 1949, at the suggestion of his sister, the people agreed to elect him for life, and as chairman of the largest island in the Western Group he assumed the position of delegate when that office was created. In 1951, one of Finau's younger brothers and his eldest son were elected to the Council and they have been returned unopposed at each succeeding election. With another brother as sergeant of police, the family's control over local government was virtually complete. There has been no organized opposition in the community for more than a decade, and those who opposed Finau in the past have all emigrated to Thursday Island, though not before some of them had been convicted of various offences against local by-laws. The absence of these men, who have been most radical in their attitude towards Church and Administration, has inhibited the establishment of the Ex-servicemen's legion and of any breakaway churches in the home community; while the very fact that they have been associated with such movements has probably stiffened the opposition of Finau and
his family, who have themselves gained by their association with the Administration.

Having gained control of the Council, the Samoas affected one more important change. Since neither of their parents came from Badu, the brothers had inherited no land and were reduced to begging or borrowing land from others. They now freed themselves from this irksome dependence by abolishing private land ownership and instituting a new system whereby anyone might use garden land not currently under cultivation, while residential sites would be allocated by the Council.

By the time I reached Badu, the situation had become more or less stable: the business of pearling, local government and Church activities had been reduced to a routine which varied little. Almost all the men worked on boats, the majority of them under skippers of the Samoa family, though some under skippers of other families, most of whom were employed by European owners. Several of the Samoas were extremely wealthy and most of them more prosperous than the average. The machinery of local government was effectively under their control, and they also exercised a strong influence over Church affairs, even in the women's organizations.

Information concerning the changes which Badu has undergone over the last thirty years is not sufficient to permit a more detailed and integrated analysis of the processes at work. But the knowledge of when and under what circumstances Baduan
BADU VILLAGE.
approx 1\frac{1}{4} miles across.

- Houses built before 1946
- " " " " after 1946
life took on its present form, helps us to understand the people's attitude towards it. This contemporary situation I shall now examine in closer detail.

III

Broad Patterns of Community Life

The present village of Badu is fronted by a sandy beach of about one and a quarter miles in length, from which an area of open, rather swampy land extends back for about half a mile, rising gradually. Approaching the village by sea, one's eye is immediately caught by the large and imposing white cement church which stands a few yards back from the beach amid a grove of coconut palms. Here and there along the foreshore and further back, are small clusters of iron and fibrolite houses some fifty-six in all. Closer inspection reveals a settlement which, while reflecting a relatively high standard of living, is less neat and attractive than most other Torres Straits villages. As the map shows, it is very scattered and the various hamlets are connected only by straggling, ill-kept tracks which are water-logged in wet weather. At the north end of the village the houses are mostly small, old and often dilapidated. But, as one proceeds southwards, their quality improves and new structures become more frequent, until in Giai one finds the large and elegant homes of wealthier
members of the Samoa family. In North Giai, and here and there through other parts of the village, are small, neat weatherboard cottages which have been erected by the Administration over the last few years.

Now that individual land ownership has been abolished, the Council decides where new houses shall be erected and the tendency has been towards a more scattered pattern of residence than was usual in earlier years. However, as can be seen from the map, only a small number of houses have been built since the war, with the result that many still live in the older, more compact wards.

As on Murray, almost everyone marries - girls around the age of twenty-two, boys around twenty-six - and most nuclear families eventually, though not always immediately, become the core of a household group. The average number of permanent occupants per house is 8.7 though the figure is greater if temporary residents, mostly seamen from other islands, are taken into account. The majority of households include one or, occasionally, two nuclear families together with some other unmarried or widowed kin, and the pattern of life within them is similar to that on Murray except that able-bodied men are often away at work. The houses of a few wealthy and influential men are much larger than usual and their occupants more numerous. Senior local government officials accommodate prisoners, and skippers often give shelter to those of their employees coming
from other islands. These households have a more hierarchical pattern, with the owners doing less domestic work and the prisoners or seamen performing most of the menial tasks. However, these large households are also the liveliest and food is plentiful, so that many young people prefer to be attached to them rather than live at home.

Badu is largely dependent upon pearling which provides full-time employment for the great majority of its labour force, as can be seen from Table XII.

Table XII

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Marine Work</th>
<th>Other Work</th>
<th>Not Known</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Native Boats</td>
<td>Master Boats</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is plenty of work for everyone in the marine industry though few alternatives outside it, short of emigration. Government jobs are few (fifteen) and since some years ago, Finau instituted a law requiring able-bodied males to take employment, subsistence economic activities have never been more than a subsidiary source of livelihood. In practice this law does not have to be enforced, for most Baduans have come to
regard a regular cash income as a necessity. The younger men seem to like working on boats and those who do not generally emigrate to Thursday Island where other forms of employment are to be had. The interest in gardening is minimal: most households cultivate no more than a few patches of cassava and sweet potato - crops requiring the minimum of skill and attention. Women go surf-fishing occasionally, but turtle and dugong are the main sources of protein food and these are generally caught from home-coming luggers, being thus a by-product of industrial activity.

The local demand for labour is high since a considerable number of vessels, native and European owned, work out from Badu, thus:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Owners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Samoas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>8 luggers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>&quot; &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>7 &quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Except on the Savages' cutter, the wages to be earned on these boats are probably as good as can be got anywhere in the Straits; moreover, those who are ambitious can hope for advancement. Finau usually, though not invariably, selects skippers from among his own family, but since the war, no fewer
than twelve men of other families have commanded boats for European owners.

Wages are relatively high on the Baduan boats because a regular and disciplined working routine has become established. All Baduans pay at least lip service to the norm, comparing their own industry with the apparent 'laziness' and indiscipline of other people such as the Miriam; however, the credit for establishing it belongs largely to Finau and the responsibility for maintaining it rests with the skippers. The view, cited earlier, that it is the skipper who determines the success of an enterprise is borne out by the present case; Baduans may be more amenable to regular working routines, but Baduan skippers have done equally well with seamen from other islands whose own enterprises have failed, and it seems that they are more effective in establishing their authority over their workers.

The right of the skipper to give orders and to have them obeyed is rarely challenged on Baduan boats. This is at least partly because, unlike the Miriam skipper, he owes his appointment to the owners of the boat, not to the crew, and because he is, in most instances, a skipper of proven ability whose competence cannot readily be impugned. As long as he can get sufficient shell his position is secure; thus the main pressure upon him is to keep his men at work. Not everyone proves able to carry such responsibilities; however, all but
one of the skippers at work during 1958-61 were thoroughly experienced and six had held the position for fifteen years and more. The skipper also has at his disposal certain rewards: he divides up the turtle and dugong caught on his boat and, if one of his men is giving an important feast, he may send out the boat to get meat. Those who are wealthy may give their faithful employees more substantial financial help. A seaman who is ambitious looks to his skipper for a recommendation, whereas on Murray advancement is achieved by currying favour with the rest of the crew and perhaps conspiring to depose the current occupant.

The governmental system also tends to bolster the authority of skippers, directly, through the laws requiring men to take employment and forbidding desertion, and indirectly, through the fact that the three councillors are themselves skippers - the most successful in the native-owned fleet - and have an interest in the success of many of the other ventures. Eight of the nine Baduan vessels are owned or managed by this same family, the Sāmoas; nine of the skippers (including those working for European owners) are members of the family, and three more their close kin. In short, a seaman who antagonizes his skipper will in most cases also be antagonizing those in control of local government.

Under these circumstances, the Baduan seaman has no sanction to direct against his skipper other than transferring
to another boat at the end of the season. Since recruitment is voluntary (except in the case of prisoners who may be directed to work on a particular boat), there is nothing to prevent his doing this. He may annoy the skipper whose service he has left, but he gratifies and obtains the protection of the skipper whom he joins. The rate of crew turnover from one season to another is generally high as can be seen from the following table:

Table XIII

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mobility in Employment of Badu Seamen: 1959 - 1961</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Returning to previous year's skipper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959 1960 1961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43 39 51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transferring to another skipper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34 43 32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not employed in previous year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 13 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not known</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 1 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total in employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>93 96 89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withdrawing from employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 12 9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Those 'not employed in previous year' include boys who have just left school, men who have recovered from illness, and former skippers returning to subordinate positions. Those 'withdrawing from employment' include emigrants and former seamen taking up the position of skipper.
The most successful skippers all retain a core of faithful workers who remain with them year after year, and are rewarded with special favours; however, there is little risk of there being insufficient labour to man the boats. The law requiring everyone to work ensures that disgruntled seamen pass from one crew to another; in any case, recruiting is not confined to Badu but may range throughout the Western Islands and even to the Aboriginal settlements of Cape York. Voluntary recruitment thus provides a means whereby potential conflict among crews or between seamen and skippers can be avoided, without reducing the supply of labour.

The conditions of work on native and European owned boats are not significantly different. In 1960, wages on some Master Boats were higher than those on the Samoa boats, but the difference is not consistent and cannot, in any case, be predicted with any certainty at the beginning of a season when crews sign on. Baduans are also free to work with skippers from other islands, but few do so since this would keep them from home throughout the whole season, depriving their families of supplies of fresh meat. Those who prefer not to work on local boats are more likely to move with their families to Thursday Island, where all vessels call regularly for repairs and to unload shell.

The Badu Council refuses to allow its people to migrate to the mainland, although a few have escaped by illicit means;
but it has not opposed emigration to Thursday Island. A large proportion of the emigrants are men in the older age-groups who, finding life at sea too arduous, prefer to seek work ashore. The lack of shore work at home has encouraged them to move to where carpentering and labouring jobs can be found, sometimes at European rates of pay. However, both accommodation and work are limited, so that the flow of emigrants is unlikely to reach the point where there is insufficient labour for the island's boats. Indeed, many of the sons of families living on Thursday Island return to Badu to obtain work.

The high proportion of Baduans in employment and the comparative success of their ventures ensures an annual per capita income considerably in excess of the Miriam figure. My calculations for 1959, based upon Social Service Benefits, wages of Government employees and estimated earnings in the pearling industry, produce a figure just under £100. This leaves out of account the considerable quantities of store foods consumed on the boats. The differentiation of earnings is also much greater than on Murray: while ordinary seamen might earn no more than £20-£25 per month, skippers - even in this bad year - might be earning twice as much, and the best of them considerably more. The two most able skippers (all members of the Samoa family) also supplemented their incomes by serving as councillors, while the store manager (another member of the
family) also served as police sergeant. Each of these was earning more than £1,000 a year.

The relative prosperity of Badu, as compared with most other islands, is reflected both in the living standards of individual households and the quality of such things as the church building and gifts to distinguished visitors. The wealthiest section enjoy a standard of living substantially above the average, but distribute a part of what they have by direct help to those less fortunate, and by donations for public purposes such as the Church.

All the houses have been built from European materials and the lowliest of them would scarcely cost less than £100 if built today, but, in fact, many were built before the war (see map) and are now dilapidated. It seems that only the wealthier have been able to build houses more recently: of the eleven built since 1946 (excluding those erected by the Administration) eight belong to members of the Samoa family. These are large and substantial, and some might cost as much as £600 if built today. Homes are well furnished, compared to what is usual on Murray: for example, kitchens have iron cooking ranges and most people sleep on beds. In addition to every-day eating utensils, many have 'best' sets for special occasions. However, only the wealthier members of the Samoa family have such items as refrigerators, wireless sets and manufactured furniture.
Only the Samoas have any substantial savings or investments. Most other Baduans habitually spend what they earn, and buy little in the way of non-perishable items. Since traditional crafts have been abandoned and little gardening is done, they are almost entirely dependent upon their cash incomes for basic necessities. What remains goes on small luxuries, or is kept for an occasional holiday in Thursday Island. Even women and children manage to get to 'town' for a week or two each year, where they ride in taxis, eat ice creams and visit cinemas. Men get to 'town' regularly in the course of their work and many of them take advantage of the 'sly grog' trade to obtain considerable quantities of liquor. The wealthy can afford whisky and wine, but the poor may have to content themselves with methylated spirits.

As on other islands, deaths and marriages are the occasion for large-scale expenditure, though this varies according to the wealth and aspirations of those involved. Even the poorest families provide a feast for the whole community and a gift of £10-£20 for the bride's kin; but wealthy families such as the Samoas may entertain neighbouring communities as well and present as much as a £300 marriage payment. Funerals are marked by a feast, but since there is little time for preparation it is not usually very lavish. The more substantial expenditure comes later when the relatives of the deceased have to raise some monument over the grave — whether it be a modest,
home-made cement slab, or a marble slab brought from Brisbane and costing as much as £100. A few other families, the Samoas among them, have commemorated their dead by providing some accoutrement for the Church, such as altar candlesticks or a font.

All the important governmental offices are filled by members of the Samoa family. Finau is both delegate and chairman; his fourth brother and eldest son are councillors, and his seventh brother is senior police sergeant. The three councillors are skippers and, when they are away at sea the island comes under the control of the sergeant, who, being store manager, seldom leaves it. There is also a junior police sergeant and a number of full and part-time constables, some of them Samoas, but they act only on orders and never take important decisions on their own initiative.

Government policy is decided amongst the councillors and the senior sergeant, with little or no reference to the rest of the population. Finau's influence is dominant among them, because he occupies the senior position, is head of the family and has many more years of experience. Consultations are held in private, public meetings are held only under very exceptional circumstances and even court sessions are not attended by the people, as they are on other islands.

The councillors have little need to consult popular
opinion since they are scarcely dependent upon it for continuance in office. Finau has been elected for life and though the other two must present themselves for re-election every three years, they have encountered no opposition for a decade. Continuous and widespread criticism suggests that opposition exists, but only in covert form. It seems that people do not make their opposition public because they have no confidence of success. Finau, as delegate, conducts elections and it is said that he would find some excuse for rejecting rival nominations. It is also said that the Administration would not allow the present incumbents to be removed. Further, people express the fear that any open declaration of opposition would provoke reprisals from Finau, citing the example of the 1946 councillors, several of whom were subsequently placed on various criminal charges\(^2\) – allegedly trumped up, though this may not have been the case – and all of whom now find it safer to live in exile. Moreover, even if the Samoans could be removed from office, they would remain extremely influential and thus constitute a formidable opposition to any Council.

Although antagonism appears to be widespread there is no agreement as to possible alternatives. No one wishes for the return of the 1946 councillors, who have dissipated whatever support they once had by fantastic rumour-mongering and bogus claims;\(^3\) nor has anyone arisen to take their place. Indeed, the Baduans speak no better of their neighbours than they do of
the Samoas. The high rate of emigration among men in the older age-groups has reduced the number from whom councillors are normally drawn in other communities, while those who remain have few of the requisite personal or experiential qualifications. The only two I heard suggested - rather doubtfully - as candidates for office, already enjoyed small privileges under the existing regime and were unwilling to stand. Like so many Baduans, they simultaneously criticized the Samoas and claimed to be on good terms with them.

At the present time, Finau and his colleagues in local government are virtually the only ones with much experience of dealing with Europeans. Indeed, Finau's thirty years experience in governmental, industrial and ecclesiastical affairs, is almost unique in Torres Straits. By keeping decision-making to a small, fixed circle, and by leaving the rest of the community largely uninformed as to what is going on, he has made it much harder for new leaders to emerge.

Under these circumstances, political change is most likely to come from a division among those in power. According to village gossip, rivalry did exist between Finau and the senior sergeant, who had unsuccessfully attempted to discredit his brother with the Administration. But if antagonism persisted - and there were no signs of it during my stay - they made no attempt to seek support among the people. It is significant that such conflict as exists in governmental circles, proceeds
covertly and by attempts to manipulate European authorities.

The rest of the population, deprived of any active part in local government, either keep to themselves, or attempt to ingratiate themselves with those in power by flattery or small gifts. Thus, one old man cleared a garden plot and presented it to the senior sergeant, and also sent his daughter to help in the latter's household.

Council policy reflects the interests of those in office. The by-laws requiring all able-bodied men to work, and forbidding desertion from boats, and the embargo on emigration to the mainland, secure skippers a supply of labour. Male prisoners may be directed to work on the councillors' boats, and female prisoners to serve in their households - a practice unknown in Murray. Finau used his position as delegate to secure the election of his kinsmen to the Council, which has, in turn, appointed other members of the family to many of the other, less important government offices.

During my stays on Badu, governmental activities were confined to routine matters. Although important cases concerning sorcery, incest, mayhem, etc. had come before the court in earlier years, drunkenness and 'immorality' were the only offences tried during 1959-61. These last offences are extremely prevalent, but the punishment of them is far less severe and somewhat erratic. The prevailing attitude is one of cynicism and village gossip asserts that the councillors are unwilling to
act since their own kinsfolk are the worst offenders. Whatever the truth of this, there may be other, less obvious considerations involved. As elsewhere, it is the young men who are most frequently involved in drunken brawls and sexual offences, but whereas on Murray they are the least regarded and influential section of the community, on Badu they are important for the economic role they play. One may perhaps conclude that the councillors are indulging their employees in practices which, though strictly unlawful, are not directly harmful to their interests.

The Administration rarely interferes with the Badu Council but seems, on the whole, to be satisfied with the way local government is conducted. In the matter of economic development, which has been one of its principal concerns, the Samoas have been one of its most effective instruments and they have also provided it with loyal support on all major policy matters. The Samoas are, in fact, strongly conservative: having themselves prospered under the existing administrative regime, they regard the freedom ideology with contempt and permit no radical agitation in the community. Probably their attitude has been strengthened by the fact that the leading radicals have also been their bitterest opponents, but they have, in any case, little to gain from legal or economic reforms. Unrestricted movement might threaten their labour supply, while parliamentary enfranchisement might weaken their political dominance.
Badu's church rivals the Thursday Island cathedral for size and the richness of its accoutrements, but parish activities do not occupy an important place in community life and wherever they conflict with work, take second place. In contrast to Murray, there are only ten men holding Church office, and parish affairs are dominated by the Samoas. Finau has remained a churchwarden since his appointment almost thirty years ago; his brother, the store manager, has been made secretary on account of his facility in money matters, and his sister and the secretary's wife head the Mothers' Union. The junior police sergeant is the only churchwarden subject to election, but although he is an able and shrewd man, his subordinate position in local government prevents him from playing an independent role. The remaining officers follow whatever lead is given them, two being extremely old and almost senile. Parish policy rarely involves issues of major importance for the community, but the attitude towards both diocese and priest is somewhat independent. Although the parish usually gave generously to Diocesan funds, in 1961 there was a dispute over the rating of Church dues, and payments had been suspended. The priest is confined to his sacramental duties and is quite without political influence in the community. During my first stay Finau proposed the removal of the incumbent, and, once again found himself opposed by his brother, the senior sergeant. The intrigue that ensued
involved the other parish officers and higher authority, but at no time other members of the community. Other men take little active part in Church affairs. There are no Church councillors or lay readers, and the priest can draw upon only five preachers, of whom three are generally regarded as incompetent.

Men cannot, of course, attend Church services when they are at sea, but even when they are ashore their attendance is not very regular, and the matter evokes little adverse comment. Few go to confession. Badu boats frequently work on Sundays whereas, although the Bishop permits the practice, most other islands prefer not to do so. Badu boats may go out to work on Sundays without even staying back for early morning service, and they will rarely stay back for any religious festival other than Christmas.

This does not mean that Baduans have no regard for the Church. They contribute generously to its funds. Skippers pay to have their boats blessed at the beginning of each season, lead their crews in prayer each night and provide meat for Church feasts. Those who are sick will call for the priest or a respected churchwarden sooner than for European medicine. But little regard is given to formal observances and there is a tendency to subordinate religious duties wherever they conflict with economic activities. The declining
interest in religion is accepted by the younger generation with complacency, as being closer to European practice. The older generation regard it as part of a general moral decline which is also manifested in increasing drunkenness and immorality. Some even go so far as to explain the general disinclination to accept Church office as the result of a prevailing sense of guilt and unworthiness.

The parish would be a wan and lifeless body, did not the women make up for the apathy of their menfolk. Even when the boats are in, they make up the majority of any congregation. They cannot assume the more important offices, which are reserved for men, but the Mothers' Union and Girls' Friendly Society diligently keep the Church and its grounds in order, and prepare feasts whenever a religious or secular festival is to be celebrated - even though the boats are out. The Mothers' Union is of greater importance and has a large committee, in which the dominant positions are held by Samoan or their close relatives. These appointments are by election, but a woman told me that the wives of skippers and wealthy men were chosen because they were best placed to persuade their husbands to provide meat and financial assistance for Church feasts.

Women are also largely responsible for such recreational activities as occur. There are no dancing clubs such as exist on Murray and the Council makes little attempt to encourage
this activity, as on Saibai. But whenever there is a happy occasion to be celebrated, one is likely to see women, old as well as young, dancing with much hilarity and evident enjoyment. Men have less time for such things, but their attitude seems, in any case, half-hearted. Married men are rarely to be seen on the dancing ground, and though the younger ones can be persuaded to perform on important occasions, they practise only perfunctorily and their execution is likely to be sloppy and poorly co-ordinated. When in need of diversion they ordinarily express a preference for European-style dancing which requires no rehearsal and little physical exertion. Here again, there seems to be a rejection of traditional styles in favour of the European. Even in this activity, the Samoas were dominant, by making their more spacious houses available for dancing.

The Badu community is less closely integrated than either Murray or Saibai. Economic activity is highly organized, but in such a way as to divide the men up into crews of about fifteen, and to separate them both from their families at home, and from each other. The boats come home for at least a few days each month, usually during 'dirty water time', but the men often prefer to spend this brief holiday at home with their families. They are not, in any case, required to take part in local or church government; recreational activities are infrequent and, since the pressure to attend these and Church
services is weak, many often stay away. In contrast to Murray, a large part of domestic life goes on behind closed doors; moreover, many houses are quite isolated, and while there is a certain amount of visiting among neighbour and kin, some members of the community see very little of one another, although the 'village wireless' keeps them informed of one another's doings. Under these circumstances, it is the women who, meeting regularly at the store and in Church activities, do most to maintain the cohesion of the community.

IV

Group Recruitment and Principles of Association

The Baduan is presented with a variety of associational choices in the course of his life. He must decide whom he will marry, whom to make his friends, whom to help or ask for help at weddings, funerals and similar occasions. Now that emigration has become possible, his continued membership of the home community is also a matter of choice. He must find a means of getting a living and if, like most, he becomes a seaman, he must select a skipper with whom he wishes to serve. Certain types of choice are limited to certain sections of the community. Only a few have ever had the opportunity of joining a boat-owning company and no new enterprise has been established for fifteen years. The appointment of skippers is
decided either by European employers or by Finau, as manager of his family's fleet; his influence has also been decisive in appointments to governmental office.

Prior to contact and for about a generation after, the major functional groupings coincide with agnatic descent groups of varying span. Between the wars, as we have seen, this coincidence became less regular and then ceased. Today, cognatic rather than agnatic ties are stressed, and provide a basis for optative rather than obligatory association. The actual choice of associates rests on economic or, more rarely, political considerations, or upon personal attitudes or like ethnic origin.

Baduans of part-foreign descent share with other Torres Straits 'mixed-bloods' a belief in their superior ability and intelligence over 'Torres Straits natives'. Their belief is given some substance by the prominent roles 'mixed-bloods' have played in the community over the last generation, including nine of the twelve councillors, five of the eight churchwardens and twenty-six of the thirty-six skippers. Other Baduans are inclined to recognize this claim to superiority, though some counter it with the notion that all Baduans originated in Polynesia and certain families claim descent from the legendary "Wild White Man of Badu".5

Badu's 'mixed-bloods' are not an organized group but their sense of distinctness is given social expression in a
number of ways. More than 70% of them marry among themselves and they have shown an increasing tendency to settle near one another and away from the rest of the community. It can be seen from the following tabulation that they are largely concentrated at the southern end of the village, while Badu natives predominate at the northern end.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ward</th>
<th>Badu Native</th>
<th>Immigrant</th>
<th>Mixed Blood</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North Giai</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suckleby</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yallawa</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Ghost Town'</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surum</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matanumber</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giai</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North End</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is no formal ward organization except in women's activities, but neighbours do tend to see more of one another than households more widely separated.

The segmentary groupings of the indigenous system of social organization are now without significance: the moieties, whose functions were largely ritual, have not defined behaviour within living memory and most people do not know to which they
belong; tribal groupings, though remembered, are inoperative, while the clans are virtually forgotten. From an examination of Rivers's genealogies it is apparent that some have married members of their own clans, though it is still considered wrong to marry anyone with whom there is known genealogical connection.

The nuclear family is mainly important in providing the stable core of domestic units, and the relations amongst its members are much the same as on Murray except that, with private land ownership abolished, most Baduans can expect to inherit little more than an ageing house and a few personal possessions. Among adult brothers and their children there are generally no enduring joint interests. The Samoas form a partial exception in this respect, the brothers having joint rights in a number of boats which will, at least in theory, pass to their sons; however, their case requires separate consideration.

The Baduans speak as though kinship ties are an important factor in social organization and retain a laterally extensive knowledge of genealogical connection. But the distinction between kin and non-kin has been somewhat blurred by the long-standing practice of establishing fictive ties with immigrants. This was particularly the case with the Samoas who initially had no cognatic kin in the community. Now that they have married - all but one of them, Baduans - they
have numerous affinal kin who are, of course, for their
children cognates; while a number of their matrilateral kins­
folk from Saibai and Dauan have recently settled on Badu.
Nevertheless, they continue to recognize many of the fictive
ties established in earlier years.

The norms of kinship behaviour outside the family are
only vaguely defined, much as on Murray, in terms of general
friendship and helpfulness. But there is no clearly defined
precedence between different categories of kin and no means by
which rights and obligations may be enforced. Nevertheless,
Baduans often show a preference for kinsfolk, for example in
residence patterns. This is less apparent in the case of poorer
families who cannot afford to build new houses and have there­
fore to buy or borrow old houses vacated by others, and thus
live wherever these happen to be. However, seven of the Giai
houses belong to Samoas while the eighth belongs to a matrilat­
eral kinsman from Dauan and they are closely related to all
those living in neighbouring Matanabar. Again, four of the
fifteen houses in Yallawa belong to the descendants of an
immigrant from Tanna. But neither this family nor the Samoas
have all their members living in the same or even adjacent wards.

Ordinary Baduans only require large-scale assistance on
rare occasions such as weddings and funerals, when they expect
and probably receive at least nominal help from even quite
distant kinsmen, perhaps some fictive kin and friendly non-kin.
A few among these will make more substantial contributions, in the form of financial assistance, but it is not possible to predict in terms of the kinship system who these persons will be. At two weddings, which were probably fairly typical, the following kinsfolk of the groom contributed to the marriage payment:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1.</th>
<th>2.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>z</td>
<td>FFS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>z</td>
<td>FZS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>z</td>
<td>FZS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>FZD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZS</td>
<td>MB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NZS</td>
<td>MB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m fictive z</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Even some of the more distant kinsfolk listed above gave quite generously, but in each case there were other kin within the same degrees of relatedness who, through poverty, because of a quarrel or some other reason, gave nothing. Acceptance of help implies a readiness to reciprocate at some future date, but occasions of this sort occur so rarely that circumstances often intervene to prevent it.

Skippers, unlike other members of the community, require regular and sustained support in working the boats. As noted earlier, recruitment is voluntary but it seems that those who are related to a skipper tend to work with him. The tendency is apparent not only among Baduans but among other Western Islanders: thus, in 1959, two skippers who originated from
Dauan and Mabuiag respectively, obtained most of their crew from these islands. The Samoas, having kin in Saibai and Dauan as well as in Badu, were also able to get crews from these islands. An analysis of eight crews commanded by members of the Samoa family in 1959, shows that, on the average, 52.9% were either within four degrees of relatedness to the skipper or his wife, or were his fictive kin.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skipper</th>
<th>Cognates</th>
<th>Wife's Kin</th>
<th>Fictive Kin</th>
<th>Total Kin</th>
<th>Total Crew</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although there is no great shortage of labour, reliable workers and particularly skilled divers are fairly scarce and in competing for these skippers sometimes use relatedness as a bidding point. For seamen, the principal advantage of working with a kinsman seems to be that he may, thereby, be more ready to recognize his kinship obligations to them in other spheres; moreover, being wealthy, his help is likely to be more substantial than that of other kinsmen. In fact,
many skippers and particularly the Samoas often give generous help to their employees at weddings and funerals. It may also be that seamen find it preferable to contribute to the success of a kinsman rather than a non-kinsman. Thus, four brothers who consistently worked for their sister's husband stated that they did so because they felt an obligation to help her.

But we have seen that the annual turn-over of crews is high, and it seems that men do not always cleave to a skipper even though he is a kinsman. In any case, some are related to more than one skipper while others are not related to any. Low remuneration on one boat or the expectation of higher remuneration on another is probably an important factor in recruitment, and the consideration which I most frequently heard cited. During the 1960 season earnings were low except on two boats working 'live shell' for pearl culture, and when the 1961 season began there was intense competition for places on them. Had not the number of places been limited, other skippers would have been left short-handed. Even so, a number of long-standing associations were severed.

Kinship is also a factor, though probably not the principal one, in emigration. Although men may emigrate first, their families will certainly join them if the move is intended to be permanent. The initial problem facing emigrants, particularly to Thursday Island, is to find accommodation;
however, kinsfolk can generally be induced to provide hospitality and, because of the housing shortage, many such arrangements become permanent and composite households are far more common on Thursday Island than on Badu. Hosts are also often ready to maintain their incoming relatives until they can become self-supporting. But although emigration is easier if there are kinsfolk already established at the other end, this consideration is not likely to be a determining factor unless the tie between the two families is unusually close. Families move individually and are not necessarily influenced by the decisions of other relatives. Thus, of a sample of thirty sets of adult brothers, originating from Badu, sixteen were dispersed among the home island, Thursday Island and other places. Only three sets were all located on Badu and only four in some other places.

Emigrants usually cited economic considerations as the main factor in their decision to leave Badu, and it is remarkable that most of them are either too old or otherwise unfit to work on boats, or have special skills which enable them to earn higher wages away from home. However, some said that they found life on Badu uncongenial because of the dominance of the Samoas. One observed, "Finau won't allow anyone to come up, only his own family", while another explained, "All good people run away from Badu this time; they don't like Finau. There's too much drinking and immorality, and the
Council sets the others wrong". Enemies of the Samoas often try to present all emigration as a demonstration of protest against the home regime, but it is impossible to tell - except in one or two instances - how far such considerations actually influence the rate of emigration.

Kinship is clearly a factor in the recruitment of boat companies, although only a small proportion of the community have ever been engaged in groups of this sort. Three of the companies, the Samoas, the Savages and - before the war - the Newars, have all consisted of close patrikin. This may reveal a patrilineal bias, but none of these families had any other close cognates living in the community; the Wakaid company, by contrast, included thirteen out of the twenty grandsons of a brother and sister.

The working of these companies, in particular the appointment of managers and skippers, raises complex problems. On the one hand is the notion that all members have the right to be skipper, with perhaps some bias in favour of those who are senior; on the other are the demands, imposed by the external system, for efficiency, which may or may not be compatible with the first. The Newar company before the war, and the Wakaid company afterwards, are both said to have suffered from dissen­sion over authority, summed up in the phrase "everyone boss". While Joe Savage remained vigorous his sons were prepared to accept the authority of whoever he appointed skipper, but once
he retired from active life, bitter quarrels followed over leadership. The Samoa company has been largely free of such conflicts, but its working must be understood in the context of the many and various relations which bind the members of this family as of no other.

It will be recalled that Finau succeeded his father as head of the family in 1935, but it was not only in this capacity that he took over the leadership of the family company two years later. His authority as eldest of the brothers was reinforced from without by his election as chairman of the Council and by the Administration's recognition of him as the most able skipper on the island. His brothers assisted him during these years, but the three most senior were soon able to become skippers themselves, as new boats were acquired, while the others, being still in their teens or early twenties, were still too young to expect immediate advancement. When work was resumed after the war, all but the youngest of the brothers were old enough to become skippers, but since the fleet expanded only gradually, several "made room for the others" by commanding boats for European employers or going into other occupations. Even so, Finau's appointments no longer followed in strict order of seniority. This is apparent in the following tabulation:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Vessel</th>
<th>When Acquired</th>
<th>Skipper</th>
<th>Age When Appointed</th>
<th>Kinship to Finau</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. lugger</td>
<td>1946</td>
<td>Finau Samoa</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>5th brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. &quot;</td>
<td>1946</td>
<td>Mathew &quot;</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>½-brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. cutter</td>
<td>1946</td>
<td>Saulo &quot;</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>eldest son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. lugger</td>
<td>1951</td>
<td>Isaac &quot;</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>son of deceased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. &quot;</td>
<td>1952</td>
<td>Wasi Toa</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>friend - replaced 1958 by -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jimmy Samoa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>son of deceased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. &quot;</td>
<td>1954</td>
<td>Charlie &quot;</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>2nd son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. &quot;</td>
<td>1955</td>
<td>Galo &quot;</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>6th brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. &quot;</td>
<td>1956</td>
<td>Paul &quot;</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>son of Saulo (v.s.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. &quot;</td>
<td>1958</td>
<td>William Kassim</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>affine of 7th brother replaced 1960 by -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Henry Samoa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3rd brother</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** Vessel no. 6 is being managed on behalf of the Savage family; no. 9 is rented from the Administration.

From 1946, the second brother (until his death in 1957), and the third and fourth, all commanded boats for European employers. The seventh, Sam, did so too until he became store manager and police sergeant. The sixth brother, Galo, worked for Finau until his appointment in 1955, and the eighth brother likewise until his appointment as a school-teacher in 1958.

It is apparent that among those who were available to command the Samoas' boats, Finau has not made appointments in strict order of seniority. His son Isaac and his friend Wasi
(a part-Samoan 'brother' and life-long collaborator) were both promoted over his brother Galo. But in terms of economic expediency, the decision has been justified inasmuch as Galo has proved less efficient. Again, both Paul and Jimmy Samoa were preferred over their elder brothers. More recently an outsider, William Kassim, has been made skipper in preference to other, less tried and mature members of the family.

In 1960 all the Samoa brothers were in remunerative employment. Only their half-brother, Saulo, who had lost his boat through theft in 1951, was without work. Three of the brothers were commanding boats under the Administration and two European owners; one was dead and two were working for the Administration: Sam, the seventh brother, as store manager (a job which he coupled with that of police sergeant), and the eighth as schoolteacher. In the younger generation, there were eight men over the age of twenty-five, of whom four were commanding boats under Finau's management and two working as ordinary seamen; the remaining two had left the island. At the moment, then, the Samoas were almost all relatively prosperous - Finau, Mathew and Sam, particularly so. However, there are sixteen more males in the younger generation, still young, whose prospects are less certain.

In theory, each of the Samoa brothers (including Saulo) or his sons, are to have a boat. Thus Paul is said to carry the share of Saulo, and Jimmy that of his deceased father. But
it is unlikely that this plan will be fulfilled. For example, Jimmy failed to work his boat efficiently and lost it in 1960: his future prospects and those of his brothers are thus uncertain. Again, both Finau and his eldest son have boats, but there is no indication of what boats are to be given to branches of the family which have none at present. The structure of the Samoa Company is not, in fact, clearly defined. Mathew now owns and manages his own boat, but the rest are under Finau's management, which means that the allocation of earnings to skipper and crew is decided by him in consultation with the Administration. The Reserve Fund, a sum accumulated by setting aside a part of the profits during good years, is said to be the property of the Company; but, essentially, it is intended to tide over lean years or cover extraordinary expenses, although it has been drawn upon occasionally for family purposes such as gifts to relatives in Samoa.

In terms of economically-based power, Finau is superior to only one brother, Galo, though to two of his sons (Isaac and Charlie), and to two of his brothers' sons (Paul and Jimmy). His other brothers work independently of him, and nothing short of a major failure in their work or - in the case of the skippers - a collapse of the pearling industry, will deprive them of their positions.

Finau shares governmental power with his fifth brother, Mathew (second councillor), his seventh brother, Sam (senior
police sergeant), and his eldest son, Isaac (third councillor). As chairman-delegate he wields more power than the other two councillors and, having been elected for life, he enjoys more security; but they are not, strictly, dependent upon him for continuance in office. Sam owes his appointment to Finau, but once in office he cannot be dismissed without having committed some major misdemeanor. He is formally subject to the Council's orders, but since they are so often away at sea his power is fairly substantial. These four men have more or less independent, though interlocking, positions in the governmental system. It should be noted that all of them are relatively wealthy and, except for Isaac, have independent economic bases also. Finau and Sam also occupy important positions within the Church organization. Since the power of these individuals is more or less independently based, there is room for conflict; but although disagreements may occur in private, we have seen that clashes over important issues are rare.

Although all important government positions are occupied by Samoans, it cannot strictly be said that the Samoa family, as such, controls the government: those in office can charge and convict those who are not, although they rarely do so. However, the kinship ideology, the supposition that those in office are shielding their kin from justice - encouraged by the erratic way in which law and order is enforced - and the failure of other members of the family to align themselves with other sections of the community, all serve to create the impres-
sion of a Samoa oligarchy.

Strictly speaking, the Samoas act as a unit only in occasional and relatively unimportant matters; however, they do constitute a clique within the community. Most of them live in Giai, where they visit one another frequently; they entertain one another at small parties which are not open to the rest of the community; they adopt one another's children while rarely allowing other families to adopt theirs; they raise handsome memorials to their dead and, when one of their number is to be married, they all contribute to a lavish marriage feast and a substantial bride price. They take great pride in their Samoan origin and, alone among Torres Straits 'mixed-bloods', have re-established contacts with their father's kin, to whom they send occasional gifts of money. Their Polynesian ancestry is especially important to them because they believe that it has given them intelligence and ability superior to that of "Torres Straits natives", and that these have enabled them to provide the Badu community with a forceful and vigorous leadership that it would otherwise have lacked. The church and their fleet of luggers stand as visible proofs of this. Not only have they made Badu "first" among all the islands, but they provide the "backbone" of the Government in Torres Straits. The counter-view, expressed by their enemies, which presents them as usurpers, bullies and lackeys of the Administration, serves only to strengthen
this sense of identity and to maintain their social distance from the rest of the community, which is one aspect of their collectively dominant position in it.

It is clear that the solidarity existing among the Samoas has been a factor in the economic and political success of certain of their members. But no amount of solidarity could have brought this about had such men as Finau, Mathew and Sam not been outstandingly capable, both as community leaders and in satisfying the demands of the external environment — as skippers, local government officers and parish organizers. Their wealth and their political and economic dominance has both enabled them and obliged them to activate kin ties within and without the family to a far greater extent than other Baduans either can or need to do.

v

Conclusions

The Baduans, unlike the Miriama, have made no attempt to modify their social environment; rather have they responded vigorously to it, particularly in the economic sector, drastically modifying the life of their community in the process. This adaptation has been essentially autonomous, having been determined from within the community though mainly by one
section of it. Both a factor in and a product of this change, has been the progressive interlocking, duplication and overlapping of leadership roles, leading to the increasing dominance of a small clique, who have thus been able to co-ordinate an increasingly wide range of community activities in their own interests.

Today, pearling dominates the life of the community, not only by absorbing a great part of the men's time and energies, but also by affecting almost every other sphere of activity and modifying those which are in conflict with it. Circumstances have been favourable to the development of local enterprises and there have been a number of men ready and capable of taking up these opportunities. As a result, a class of more or less permanent economic leaders has emerged, which controls the people's main source of livelihood and which, through the wealth and resources at its disposal, can extend its influence into other spheres.

The Council is dominated by three of the most important economic leaders who, being largely immune to pressure from the rest of the community, are free to direct its policies in such a way as to further their economic interests and to consolidate their control of local government. Being ultimately dependent upon the Administration for the survival of their economic enterprises and their continuance in office, they give full support to all its policies. But these policies closely
coincide with their own interests, since the Administration is also committed to the promotion of native enterprises, while any reduction of Administration control is likely to reduce their control also.

Although the Church does not occupy an important place in community life it has, to some extent, served to sanction pearling and reinforce the authority of economic and local government leaders, particularly Finau Samoa. His appointment to direct the building of the Badu church, came at a crucial point in his career, sanctioning him as a community leader and as a skipper, since it was from pearling that the enterprise was financed. Today, the Church gives a blessing to pearling luggers and provides wealthy skippers with opportunities to display their wealth, but its activities are not allowed to interfere with the working of the boats or of local government. On the contrary, parish government is dominated by representatives of these interests. The issues which concern them are rarely important but, if nothing else, they are filling a minor power vacuum which might otherwise be occupied by other aspiring community leaders.

The differential distribution of economic power and wealth in the community also provides the dominant social cleavage in the community. There is some distinction between 'mixed-bloods' and others, but this is relatively unimportant except in marriage and residence patterns, unless the 'mixed-
bloods' are also wealthy and influential. Those who control local government have certain powers over all other members of the community but, in practice, their policies preserve and promote the existing system and thus reinforce the dominant cleavage.

The same cleavage is apparent in kinship behaviour. Among kinsfolk who are without power or wealth there is no sustained co-operation above the level of the household, and such occasional co-operation as occurs at weddings and funerals is petty and without any firm differentiation of authority. Co-operation among kin of differing power and wealth may be more sustained, as in boat crews, and more important, but the roles then become merged with those of employer and employee or patron and client, and may not differ significantly from similar relations between non-kin. Co-operation among kin who are all more or less powerful and wealthy, may be only occasional, for example at weddings, but the sums of money and resources involved are likely to be substantial. The support of a poor kinsman is of far less consequence to a wealthy man than it is to a poor one. Kin who are organized into boat-owning companies may be regarded as standing on one side of the cleavage, vis-a-vis those others who have to sell their labour. All hope to share in the success of the joint venture and to gain eventual advancement, though among themselves they are differentiated according to wealth and economic power.
The Samoa family has, as yet, been only lightly affected by the dominant cleavage. Some of its members are neither skippers nor hold any other remunerative position, but they identify themselves with these more fortunate persons and hope that their membership of the family will one day entitle them to some form of advancement. But as the Samoas increase and the prospects of economic advancement for the majority diminish, the dominant cleavage will assert itself among them too.

The cleavage is reinforced by some antagonism but not by political conflict. The dominant section are in a position to get what they want, while the rest lack the means to oppose them, seeming, in fact, content to accept their leadership. However, the system has its 'safety valves': those who find themselves at odds with a particular skipper can readily transfer their service to another, while those who cannot endure the island regime are usually able to emigrate. The little political competition that occurs, arises among those few who occupy the dominant positions; however, since the policies prevailing are broadly satisfactory to all those empowered to influence them, disagreements arise only over minor issues.

The Badu of today differs substantially from that of thirty years ago, principally in the more unequal distribution of wealth and power, and the extent to which community leadership is unified and concentrated with every sign of permanence in the hands of a small clique. In particular, Finau has
occupied the dominant positions in industry, government and parish for so long and modified them to such a degree that they have lost much of their former distinctness and have become merged with his own forceful and dynamic personality to form a single composite role. This role is largely of his own making and it is uncertain whether anyone can succeed to it. Until he dies or withdraws from public life, the system will probably continue in its present form; however, it is so closely geared to the external economy that a collapse of the pearl shell market or the opening of alternative avenues of employment to the people would effect profound social changes and possibly a reversal of earlier trends.

Footnotes

1. This figure is derived from an estimate of the community's income from governmental sources and participation in the pearling industry. Government wages and Social Service Benefits amounted to some £16,000 for the year. Ordinary seamen's wages did not exceed and sometimes failed to reach £300 per annum. The two most successful skippers, who owned the boats they worked, made approximately £1,500 each, while the other eight earned between £400 and £300.

2. Two of the offences in question were political, being slanderous attacks on members of the Administration; the others consisted of sorcery (on which there was no conviction), incest, and entering the island without a permit.

3. Most of these claims were related to the 'freedom' agitation and consisted of announcements that citizen rights and Rehabilitation Benefits were on the way. However, one man who is probably mentally unbalanced, rivalled in
fantasy the wealth of the Samoas, with his claim to have
discovered a 'kerosene mine' and to have received a
Government grant of £30,000 to exploit it.

4. Some idea of the incidence of sexual 'immorality' can be
gained from the illegitimacy rate, which was 45.9% over
the period 1947 to 1956, almost twice the rates on Murray
and Saibai.

5. The "Wild White Man of Bedu" is thought to have been an
escaped convict who lived on the island in the early part
of the nineteenth century (Haddon 1935: 62). What
present-day Baduans know of him seems to have been der-
ived from Ian Idriess's novel of the same name, rather
than from their own traditions, for which reason I am
inclined to be sceptical of those who claim to be descended
from him.
Introduction

Saibai, though once among the largest of the Torres Straits native communities, has since the war been drastically reduced by emigration and in 1960 its population was only 236. Its distance from Thursday Island and the infrequency of communications permit only occasional direct contact with the outside world, and the degree of organized interaction with it is less than on either Badu or Murray. The Saibaians have made little attempt to modify their social environment: they neither oppose the Administration nor do they actively support it, and they have shown no interest in schismatic churches. In earlier years they actively participated in the marine industry, but declining earnings and the failure of their own enterprises have led them to withdraw and turn their attention to subsistence activities. In short, the Saibai of today is more parochial in outlook than either of the other two communities.

Saibai, as I knew it, was given over to small-scale subsistence economic activities, regular and frequent religious observances and a full programme of recreation which often involves everyone. It is, perhaps, because the population
has been so drastically reduced in a short space of time, and
because economic activity is necessarily organized on a small
scale, that maximal participation in religious and recreational
activities is stressed, as a means of demonstrating to them-
selves and others the community's continued unity and vigour.
However, factionalism is endemic, frequently disrupting public
activities and impairing interpersonal relations an element
of uncertainty. Nevertheless, the community is extremely
homogeneous, lacking any permanent divisions based upon either
ideology, wealth, economic function or politics. The disputes
which lead to the formation of factions are almost always petty
and ephemeral; when passions die down they dissolve, and when
new issues arise the groupings may be quite different.

The account will follow much the same sequence as in
Chapter VI: after a preliminary survey of population and
resources, I shall discuss what appear to be the typical features
of community life and organization, and then proceed to a
detailed description and analysis of local politics.

I

Physical Setting, Population and Resources

Saibai lies about two miles off the Papuan coast, some
forty miles to the west of the Papuan administrative and trading
post at Daru, and about ninety miles north of Thursday Island. The only other inhabited islands in the vicinity are Dauan, about two miles from Saibai village, and Boigu, twenty miles westward. The Papuan coast is sparsely inhabited: there is one large village, Mabudaua with a population of about 600, situated at the mouth of the Pahoture River, and several much smaller settlements further up river and at intervals along the coast.

Saibai, which is about fourteen miles in length and about five at its widest part, owes its origin to the alluvial soil brought down by the great rivers of the adjacent mainland. It is almost completely flat and in most parts only a few feet above sea level. During the wet season (January-May) large areas are inundated and movement is only possible in 'half-canoes'. Mosquitoes abound at this time, though fever is not prevalent. Houses and gardens are situated on patches of high ground above flood level, but the 'King Tides' of the Nor'west season (January-March) sometimes break through into the village and, entering the swamps, spoil the adjacent gardens. During the dry season (from August to December), the swamps dry out and the sources of fresh water turn brackish, obliging the people to sail to Dauan for supplies. Dense groves of mangrove, haunted by crocodiles, fringe the muddy shores, but the interior is only sparsely vegetated with cabbage and small ti trees. Higher patches of ground can be used for cultivation,
but the soil is not very fertile. Although taro, cassava and sweet potato grow quite well, banana and yams are only moderately successful and suffer from the lack of shade. Fish is never very plentiful but the swamps teem with duck and geese during the wet season. Turtle may be caught at certain times of the year and dugong also, though mostly at the south-western end of the island, which is a days' journey from the village.

The native population declined heavily during the early years of contact, from an estimated 600 in 1873 (Moresby 1876: 133) to some 200 in 1898 (Haddon 1935: 43). Since that time there has been a steady increase to approximately 605 in 1959, but more than half the population is now living away from the island largely owing to the Administration's resettlement scheme.

Table XIV

Distribution of Saibaians in October 1959

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Saibai</th>
<th>Bamaga</th>
<th>Other Is.</th>
<th>Thursday Is.</th>
<th>Mainland</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>m.</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f.</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>603</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Informants were not always aware of the most recent additions to Bamaga families; thus it is possible that the actual number resident there was in excess of the figure given. 'Saibaians' are here defined as persons born and/or bred on Saibai, or who regard themselves as belonging primarily to this community. The last category covers children of Saibaian parents who have grown up on Bamaga or other places outside the reserves.
Only 236 were living on Saibai in 1960, of whom two were immigrants. There has never been much inter-marriage with foreigners and the community included only one half-caste, although a few others are living elsewhere. The age-distribution of this population is set out in Table XV.

**Table XV**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 - 9</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>33.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 - 19</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>18.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 - 29</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 - 39</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 - 49</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 - 59</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 - 69</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70 -</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

II

**Historical Notes**

Prior to contact, the Saibaians were a fairly numerous community who lived by gardening and by hunting turtle and dugong. Their houses were more substantial than in any other
part of the Straits and they occupied large settled villages, two in number. The smaller, called Ait, was situated a short distance inland, on the south-eastern side of the island; the larger, called Saibai, on the beach on the north-western side, where the present village now stands.

There is no indication that Saibai was visited by the explorers of the first half of the nineteenth century; but it probably suffered some depredations from pearling vessels working in the area before the first recorded encounter with Europeans, which occurred in 1871 with the arrival of the L.M.S. Pastors were stationed on neighbouring Dauan in the same year, and on Saibai soon after. Despite initial resistance, the people had all accepted conversion by the mid-1880s and had agreed to come together to live in the village of Saibai. Representatives of the Queensland government had already appointed 'mamooses' and, as on other islands, later replaced them by elected councils.

The island has never been an important centre for the marine industry but its inhabitants took readily to marine work, earning a name for being "among the most enterprising and industrious of the Torres Strait people" (Douglas 1899: 38). Before the establishment of the Papuan Industries Board they had acquired vessels of their own and in subsequent years they worked under the 'Company Boat' system.
Dissatisfaction with the fruits of their participation in industrial activity may have been one contributing factor in the emergence of the German Wislin Cargo cult in 1913 (Haddon 1945: 46-8). The later history of the movement is unclear, but if activities were continued European clergy and administrators were not aware of it. Some of its ideas and practices have lingered on to the present time, but it scarcely constitutes a force in the community's life. Saibai participated in the strike of 1936, but otherwise its more recent dealings with Europeans have been without incident.

The island's recent history has been uneventful save for two occurrences, the first being the war, which took away a number of its menfolk into the armed forces, and the second being the great inundation of 1948. The distress resulting from this last, and the possibility of its recurrence induced the Administration to launch its Bemaga resettlement scheme, which drew away approximately half the population. The present community is a remnant which has rejected this and all other opportunities for emigration.

III

Broad Patterns of Community Life

The present village occupies a narrow stretch of fairly
high ground, half a mile in length but rarely more than fifty yards in width, between the sea and the swamp. There are thirty houses, all built of European materials, grouped in clusters which are separated by patches of swampy ground, public buildings or the vacant sites where emigrant families once lived. The church, school and store occupy a midway point. The village is neatly kept and planted with occasional coconut palms, native almond and flowering trees; nevertheless, the setting is rather bleak and, to the stranger, unattractive.

The location of houses is governed by the system of land tenure. Most families have a choice of more than one site, but since the houses are of European materials they cannot easily be moved. They are similar to the poorer type of Baduan dwellings and most are old, although two, built by former boat skippers, are new and quite elegant.

Most people get married usually around the mid-twenties for both sexes. As on the other islands, most nuclear families eventually, though not always immediately, form the core of a domestic unit. In five instances married sons were living with their parents, in two, married siblings shared the same house and in most households there were one or two other unmarried or widowed persons. The average number of members per household in 1960 was 7.9. The pattern of domestic life is very similar to that on Murray and I shall not describe it further.
In getting a livelihood, the Saibaians have always been able to choose between pearling and subsistence activities, and since 1946 emigration has also been possible. Since the last century they have been engaged in the marine industry, but they have never been so successful as the Baduans and after a succession of failures in recent years they have increasingly fallen back on the subsistence economy.

Since the war, no fewer than nine vessels have been purchased, each by an independent company, and together costing more than £8,000. Some eighty persons, including four women, have been shareholders in these concerns. But after 1953 only two vessels remained in Saibaian hands, both of them working out from Bamaga under the control of Saibaians who had settled there. The other boats had been lost through misadventure, dissenion in the owning company or sheer incompetence, thus -

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Vessel</th>
<th>Period of Use</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Cutter</td>
<td>1946-7</td>
<td>Wrecked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Cutter</td>
<td>1946-8</td>
<td>Sold after quarrel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Lugger</td>
<td>1947-50</td>
<td>Wrecked - replaced by:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Cutter</td>
<td>1951-</td>
<td>Still at work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Lugger</td>
<td>1946-50</td>
<td>Sequestrated by Admin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Launch</td>
<td>1946-8</td>
<td>Sold after quarrel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Lugger</td>
<td>1946-53</td>
<td>Sequestrated by Admin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Lugger</td>
<td>1946-52</td>
<td>Wrecked</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Despite the size of the Saibai fleet, it never earned as much as that of Badu, only twice exceeding £10,000 gross earnings. Only vessels 8 and 9 earned more than £3,000 in any season.

It was hardly possible for me to obtain an exact account of the reasons for the failure or dissolution of the various companies, since the events in question had occurred almost a decade before, and many of the persons involved were either dead or had left Saibai. But piecing together the fragments of information that I could gather, it would seem that internal conflict was endemic. Skippers were elected by the company, who would also form the bulk of the crew, and who often proved disinclined to accept authority. As on some of the unsuccessful Baduan ventures, there were "too many bosses". Factions formed around rival candidates for command and as the fortunes of the company deteriorated recriminations grew more bitter, until those in opposition withdrew their support. Alternative employment was always available and if their own boat was doing badly or working off a debt from earlier years, this alternative might well prove more remunerative. After several years of fruitless and irksome co-operation, many preferred to abandon their share in a company rather than continue to carry the burden of someone else's incompetence or dishonesty.

As the island boats failed or ceased to provide adequate earnings, men turned their energies to the boats of other islands or European owners. Four Saibaians commanded boats
for European employers during the 1950s with moderate success. They drew largely upon their compatriots for labour but, as among the native-owned ventures, encountered a steadily rising tide of resentment and suspicion. Seamen complained of low pay and working conditions and, if the skipper earned a substantial sum, accused him of stealing what was theirs. They did not challenge his authority while at sea, but refused to work for him in subsequent years. The following comment is typical:

"They [i.e. skippers] are too greedy! They leave nothing for the crew; that's why the boys won't work for them. They fix the money up with the D.N.A. and the owner, but they should think for next year. Skipper doesn't do the real work, it's the crew."

The most able skipper on Saibai, Basana, had retired some years before my arrival because, it was said, no one would work with him. Another, Isaiah, who succeeded him, gained more support at first but by 1959 was encountering similar antagonism. The collapse of the trochus market in that year prevented his re-engagement, but there was reason to doubt whether he would have been able to get men for another season. In 1958 only ten of the thirty-nine in marine employment (see Table XVI) were working with skippers from other islands; in 1959 the number increased to twenty out of thirty-six. In 1960 and 1961, those still at work had no choice but to work with outsiders. As Saibaians became increasingly disillusioned with their own skippers they tried the Samoa's fleet, which
was always in need of labour. In 1958, two were working on Badu boats; in the following year there were six and in 1960 twelve. However, the familiar process of disillusionment asserted itself and in 1961 only five returned while the rest tried their luck with Yorke Island boats. Over the years 1958–61 the proportion of the Saibai labour force employed in the marine industry declined, indicating a progressive disillusionment with this sort of economic activity.

**Table XVI**

*Distribution of Saibai labour force, 1958–1961*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Marine Empl.</th>
<th>Other Empl.</th>
<th>Unempl.</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Saibaians have been far more ready to work on vessels working out from other islands than have the Baduans; however, the choice has not been exactly the same. The boats working out from Badu were all fishing for pearl shell on grounds sufficiently close to home for them to return for at least a few days each month and bring meat to their families. All the Saibai boats in recent years have been engaged in trochus
fishing which most usually took them to the Australian mainland, sometimes as far south as Mackay. Working so far away, they might not see their homes throughout a whole season. These prolonged absences may have been an additional factor in the declining interest in marine work, particularly when coupled with a decline in earnings.

Emigration first became a possibility after the end of the war. The Western Island delegate has been effective in preventing more than a few illicit emigrants from reaching the mainland, but Thursday Island offers employment for a limited number, mostly those having special skills, and since 1948 Bamaga has been open to anyone who chose to settle there. Other islands have also been ready to accept small numbers of Saibaian immigrants. As Table I shows, emigration has been substantial, but it has slowed down in recent years and most of those now resident on Saibai seem content to work on the boats of other islands or live by subsistence activities.

For those remaining on Saibai there are only nine government jobs available, of which only four are full-time. Moreover, since the store manager and school teacher also serve as councillors, they are taken up by seven persons. The rest can gain a very modest living by gardening, hunting and trading with adjacent Papuan villages, supplemented by Social Service Benefits and hand-outs from those still in employment.
There is ample garden land on Saibai but some of it lies inconveniently far from the village. It is said that there was some shortage of adjacent land prior to the Bamaga resettlement but today there is enough for everyone although the system of tenure results in an unequal distribution. The traditional system of tenure is retained, blocks of land being owned predominantly by clans, but with certain smaller patches owned by segments or individuals who have acquired them through a female ancestor, as dowry or as a marriage payment. Clans who originated in Ait, on the other side of the island, still have little land near Saibai village, but their members have no difficulty in obtaining loans of land from affines and non-agnates. Saibaians do not take so much interest or pride in gardening as the Miriam and devote less time to it; there is less display of garden produce and whatever garden lore once existed seems to have been forgotten. Discouraged, perhaps, by the rather poor return for their labour in the exposed and not very fertile soil of their island, many prefer to obtain 'bush tucker' from Papua by trading.

Yam, taro and bananas grow extremely well a few miles inland from the Papuan coast, and since the local population is poorer and less sophisticated, Saibaians can obtain considerable quantities of garden produce in return for flour, rice, kerosene and steel tools, all of which can be bought at the island store, or for old clothes. Pigs, canoe hulls, drums
and other types of dancing gear can be obtained in the same way. Saibaians can also travel to the trading post at Daru where cloth and other goods are to be bought at lower prices than in the island or Thursday Island stores. Some of these items are then resold at home or elsewhere in Torres Straits for a small profit. The Saibaians show much zest and some ingenuity in their trading activities, and the more hardy among them have travelled as far as forty miles, eastward and westward along the coast, in search of more remote and unsophisticated villages where even tobacco tins and rags have an exchange value. Trading would probably assume greater importance if the Saibaians had more money to deploy and if the island store had more cash to distribute, rather than dealing through 'pass books'.

The Saibaians need water transport for trading, fetching water from Bauan during the dry season, and hunting. A few have made small sailing dinghies, but in recent years there has been an increasing interest in the building of traditional-style outrigger canoes. During my first stay, there were six sailing canoes, ranging from twenty-five to forty feet in length; by 1961 there were eleven and yet others in preparation. Though mainly intended for utilitarian purposes, Saibaians take great delight in decorating their canoes and design them for racing, with masts far taller than their more prosaic Papuan neighbours consider safe. Canoe builders are
extremely competitive: each of the older men has his own secrets which he transmits only to a few favoured kinsfolk.

Canoes are faster and perhaps more seaworthy than dinghies, and they carry more passengers — as many as a dozen — but they cost as much if not more to build. The hollowed hull and roughly dressed boards can be bought from river Papuans for a few pounds; however, the sails, rigging and paint must be got from the store and cost as much as £50. The expense involved and the need for at least six hands to sail the canoe, has led to the setting up of small companies whose members are entitled to a share of whatever meat is caught, even if they are not on the hunting expedition, and also to use the canoe on trading expeditions. Those such as pensioners and former skippers who have the cash to spare sometimes invest in several canoe-owning companies in order to ensure a more regular supply of meat. Such arrangements generally work to everyone's satisfaction, but, as in the case considered later, quarrels over the use of the canoe or originating in some other matter may disrupt the company. It was perhaps in anticipation of such difficulties, as well as out of a love for display, that so many Saibaians have built their own canoes. By 1961 there were more than was strictly necessary and owners often found difficulty in obtaining sufficient crew to put to sea.

While the majority of able-bodied Saibain men were still working in the pearling industry, ordinary seamen and their
families probably enjoyed an income only slightly less than
that enjoyed by Baduans. Those who commanded boats for
European owners may not have earned as much as the Samoas,
but Basana was able to retire with several thousand pounds in
the bank and both he and Isaiah were able to erect spacious
fibrolite houses and equip them with manufactured furniture.
Apart from the two skippers, families live in a very modest
style and seem to have spent most of what they earned on day-
to-day necessities. Although generous gifts are made to the
church from time to time, its furnishings are very modest and
there is little evidence of economic display. Marriage pay-
ments are always nominal and imported tombstones are rare.
The envious comment which Basana's and Isaiah's new houses drew
suggests that display arouses envy and resentment rather than
admiration.

By 1959, with pearling already in decline, the average
annual per capita income was approximately £170. About 40%
of the community's income came from government sources in the
form of wages and Social Service Benefits; the rest from the
wages of seamen. In subsequent years, with fewer in employ-
ment, the figure was certainly lower. However, by investing
in boats and by their trading activities, the Saibaians have
been using their money more profitably than the Wiriam.

Although poorer than in earlier years, the Saibaians have
not been reduced to serious hardship. They can still afford
petty luxuries such as dancing gear, tobacco and soft drinks, but they are falling behind on their Church dues, and find it less easy to acquire more expensive items such as pressure lamps, sewing machines, and European building materials. Those building canoes are more likely to need financial assistance from persons receiving pensions or the few relatively wealthy members of the community.

The declining cash income is, in some measure, the result of a choice. More could go into marine work than do, even though wages may not be as high as during boom years. Like the Miriam, Saibaisians have evidently decided that the loss in cash is sufficiently compensated by the material reward of gardening, hunting and trading, and by the non-material satisfactions of life ashore. Those who have no job lead a fairly leisurely life. Following the activities of six able-bodied and fairly typical men during 68 days of my first stay (1959-60) I found that they spent, on the average, less than half their time in gardening, hunting, trading and tending their canoes; the rest was given over to amusements, church and civic affairs or simply loafing. But since they had ample meat and 'bush tucker' and lacked the cash to engage in more ambitious trading ventures, there was little more that they could do.
Table XVII
Activities of six Saibai men over 68 days during
October 1959 - January 1960

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>II</th>
<th>III</th>
<th>IV</th>
<th>V</th>
<th>VI</th>
<th>Average</th>
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<td>Work</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>19.7</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9.0</td>
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<td>Feasting</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sundays &amp; Christmas</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14.0</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14.0</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 This category affects only one man who served occasionally as a temporary policeman.

Like the Miriam, the Saibaians spend much time in recreational, religious and civic activities. Recreation includes races of real and toy canoes, kite flying, 'treasure hunts', 'hoop-las' and numerous feasts to celebrate occasions, great and small. But dancing is their abiding passion and their displays are more elaborate, more lavishly equipped and more ingeniously contrived than on any other island in the Straits. In addition to the usual dances, each of which lasts a few minutes, I saw two hour-long ballets depicting old-time warfare. Since the community is so small every able-bodied
man must be recruited if there is to be an impressive display and when a ballet was in preparation everyone from schoolboys to men in their fifties was engaged in long hours of exhausting practice and, in addition, long periods devoted to making gear and body ornaments. I shall show later that not everyone was content to sacrifice so much time and energy.

Feasts are occasionally organized by groups of private individuals to celebrate such events as a child's birthday or the unveiling of a tombstone, but recreation is usually organized at the instance of the Church or the Council. Most of those who like to organize such activities are office-holders in one or other body, and there are no rival clubs or associations such as one finds in Murray.

All Saibians are members of the Church of England and church activities occupy a central place in community life, not only for their religious significance but as a milieu for status competition and an arena for political conflict. Under normal circumstances there is maximum participation in church work, religious ceremonies and celebrations. Not only are Sunday services well attended but weekday services also, while some older people devote much time to private prayer in the church. Of sixty-eight days between October 1959 and January 1960, eight were given over to religious
festivals and celebrations, in addition to the normal Sabbath and Christmas observances. Preparations for feasts and dances to celebrate these occasions took up further time.

This high level of interest is maintained regardless of who is priest or whether he is away or in residence. Almost all the non-sacramental parts of church life are directed by lay officers, of whom there are fifteen. Almost any man who has not recently been convicted of immorality or drunkenness, and who has the desire and ability to speak in public, can achieve office. However, the number of churchwardens, whose influence is dominant in most matters, is limited to four. Three of these are elected at three-yearly intervals, though the same men have been in office for many years, but the senior and most influential, Apaga, was confirmed in office by the Bishop after many years of service.

The high importance given to church activities carries with it certain dangers, for it provides the main field in which men compete for attention, by speech-making at church gatherings, and for public esteem, by gifts of money and by expenditure of time and effort. Moreover, the desire to be thought to conform to Christian practice induces the more competitive to try to make their rivals appear in the wrong. Wherever competitors are outpaced or out-manoeuvred, they are apt to complain that the dignity of church office is being abused to advance the ambitions and vanity of some unworthy
person. They may go further and draw attention to this abuse by temporarily withdrawing from church activities, and several times during my stay celebrations were marred by demonstrations of this sort. But there are limits to the use of such sanctions. Everyone, including the dissidents, concedes that the church must be respected. It is a serious matter which induces anyone to absent himself from church services and people fear even to absent themselves from feasts and celebrations for more than a short time in case their devotion is impugned. Thus they will seize upon some pretext, such as an occasion of unusual importance, to forgive and forget, even claiming some credit for this 'Christian' gesture.

No challenge is offered to the Church or any of its doctrines. But a few people supplement these with beliefs concerning the acquisition of faith-healing and prophetic powers through communion with the dead, which is achieved by praying in the cemetery. These notions are probably indigenous in origin but were refurbished by the German Wislin cultists. Even today there are a few who still believe that the 'Cargo', now renamed 'Freedom', may be achieved by the same methods. However, there is no cult, in the sense of an organized group; a number visit the cemetery for prayer, but individually and in secret; none of them is influential and there has been no attempt to turn their beliefs into
political policies. They all regard themselves as good Anglicans and though unbelievers are inclined to sneer at them no attempt is made to treat them as heretics.

The Saibai Council consisted of four members prior to the Bamaga resettlement, since when it has had only two. All positions have been elective, and from 1947 to 1959 the sitting councillors were replaced at each election, often by men who had not previously held office. It is not altogether clear why substitutions were made so regularly, but the issues on which elections were fought seem always to have been petty and ephemeral. Since no one could carry on the work of local government without offending some section of the electorate, sitting councillors were at some disadvantage to rivals who had not yet held office, and since none of the councillors was particularly outstanding and no major policy matters were involved, the people did not need much inducement to try someone new. Moreover, Saibaians state explicitly that it is better for office to circulate. The regular substitution of councillors has the long-term effect of distributing widely the privileges, experience and opprobrium associated with office; however, it also results in the appointment of men without prior experience of the work, whose capabilities are untested.

It was largely because Saibai Councils were so often inefficient that the Western Island delegate, Finau Samoa, intervened in
the 1959 election.

In the 1956 elections, the people had chosen the brothers Wasaku and Tautali to hold office. These two, then in their early thirties, were the only Saibaians to have an education beyond the usual: Wasaku, the older, was store manager and Tautali the school teacher. As usual, they incurred some unpopularity during their term of office and plans were laid to replace them at the next election. However, the delegate considered them more competent than either their predecessors or any who were likely to succeed them, and in conducting the elections he exerted his influence to secure their reappointment. When the senior churchwarden, Apaga, supported his proposal, the people complied. But it remained uncertain whether the two were to hold office permanently: Wasaku and Tautali seemed to think that this was the case; however, their enemies thought otherwise.

Wasaku is chairman and he has dominated local government since his first appointment, encountering no opposition from his brother or the police. However, the scope of his influence is limited. Apart from his office he has no particular importance in the community: although he earns an income above the average, he is not the wealthiest man on the island and he has little money to spare for helping others. Nor has he any other favours to dispense. In his official activities he is largely confined to the domestic sphere, for the delegate
undertakes all important negotiations with the D.N.A. Even in domestic matters, his actions are subject to supervision since, although white officials visit the island only rarely, the delegate keeps himself informed of local events. In this respect Saibai differs from Murray and Badu, where the delegates are members of the Councils and are deeply involved in local politics. Wasaku is, then, under pressure to carry out his duties faithfully; but he is also obliged to consider the people, for he fears that any popular demonstration against his authority will discredit him with his superiors.

Wasaku has, in fact, little scope for autonomous action and, being, it would seem, unadventurous by nature, he takes his cue from his superiors whenever possible. Thus his role in local government is more administrative than political. In his dealings with the D.N.A. he seeks no special favours or improvements for the island and, whatever his private views about the 'citizen rights' issue, he follows the delegate's conservative line at councillors' conferences. However, the people do not press him to take a more radical line, for they have little interest in politics outside their own community. Popular passions are roused by local issues and, left to itself, the Saibai Council might prefer to avoid taking contentious decisions, which, however, it is obliged to do because of pressure from above.

The domestic regime is stricter than on Badu or Murray.
Police patrol the village by day and late into the night, and in the narrow span between the sea and the snake-infested swamp it is hard for offenders to escape detection. As on other islands, fornication and the drinking of methylated spirits are the commonest offences, and are usually committed by young people who are the least influential section of the community. However, since the present councillors took office, older people have more often been charged with offences such as "spreading false rumours" and "disobeying a reasonable order of the Council".

Wasaku performs his magisterial duties punctiliously and he is anxious that everyone should attend court hearings so that justice may be seen to be done. He deals only with offences that are covered in the official code of by-laws and, unlike other island courts, scrupulously imposes the punishments set out there. I never heard him accused of partiality and he himself boasted that his wife and father were among the first he convicted. He has also tried to give extra sanction to his decisions by calling in a churchwarden to admonish "from the Church side" offenders who have been convicted. On the whole, court decisions are accepted and there are no attempts to appeal to higher authority; however, the people do not always use the court as a means of settling disputes.

Wasaku feels it incumbent upon him to maintain communal harmony and he urges people to bring their disputes before the
court so that these can be settled according to the law which, he once said, "is the schoolmaster which bringeth us to Christ". However, as I shall show in a later section, there have been a number of disputes which the protagonists preferred not to put before him, and in which he did not feel empowered to intervene. These, which involved a large part of the community and aroused strong passions, were fought out by means of boycotts of parish and other voluntary activities, and were finally patched up by agreements in the making of which neither government nor parish officials had any part.

The only activity in which the Council engages outside the strict run of duty, is the organization of feasts and dancing on the occasion of secular holidays. These are run on exactly the same lines as religious celebrations and involve much the same set of leaders. Wasaku and Tautali are Sai-bai's dancing experts and they organize displays for both sorts of occasion. It is, indeed, their declared policy to coordinate the activities of Council and parish, as a means of unifying the community in all matters, but because the same people are involved in all communal activities, disputes spread readily from one context to another.

It is, perhaps, because Sai-bai is a small community and an isolated remnant, whose existence is threatened by emigration, that so much stress is placed upon maximal participation in joint activities, particularly those of a convivial character.
The relatively low level of economic and other forms of activity leaves people with plenty of time for such things, and perhaps the monotony of life and the absence of outside diversion creates a need for them. But the Saibaians evidently find it difficult to get on with one another. I witnessed more demonstrations of overt hostility on Saibai than on either of the other two islands. The continual attempt to bring together people who may be antagonistic, in a context where competition for prestige can cause further irritation, probably aggravates pre-existing quarrels. In such a small community anyone's absence from a celebration is immediately apparent: the non-participation of even a handful threatens the success of any important occasion and hangs like a cloud over the festivities. Those who are disgruntled are thus provided with a potent means of airing their grievances without invoking the formal processes of law.

III

Group Recruitment and the Principles of Association

As described in Chapter I, the indigenous society of Saibai was segmented according to patrilineal descent into moieties, whose functions are now obscure, and seven exogamous clans. Each clan owned residential and gardening land and was associated with a totemic species. Two were associated
with the Crocodile totem but distinguished by the residence of one in Ait village and the other in Saibai village. The Shark and Snake clans were represented in both places. When the missionaries persuaded the Ait people to settle in Saibai, the people belonging to these two clans were able to settle alongside their clansmen already living there. The people of the Ait Crocodile clan had no such rights to take up, but were granted land in perpetuity by the Snake clan, with whom they had a traditional alliance. During the early years of this century the village was divided into clan wards, and clans or alliances of clans elected councillors and operated 'Company Boats'.

Today, clans function as corporate groups only in relation to certain tracts of land, the allocation of which is, at least nominally, under the control of the most senior member. It was to these elders that I was directed for genealogical information and for mythology - since each myth is associated with a particular clan - rather than, as on other islands, to any particular expert. Clan membership is also important in the regulation of marriage, in the selection of trading partners in Papua, where the same totemic clans are found, and often, though irregularly, in the selection of associates in the local community. However, this preference for fellow-clansmen seems to be maintained by sentiment rather than by sanctions or any self-regulatory mechanisms.
This mode of organization is visible in residential patterns. As population grew during the present century the village expanded and members of some clans moved to other plots of land they owned nearby, so that clan segments became separated. Congestion was reduced as a result of emigration, but there has been no tendency towards regroupment among the remnants; the village has simply become more scattered. Today, except for the Shark and Dog clans, which are each represented by only one man, no clan is concentrated in one place. Most men live on clan land, but four of the thirty households occupy land belonging to the senior male member’s affines or non-agnates. Much the same rule applies to garden land. Most use that belonging to their clan, but some obtain loans from non-agnates or affines, either because — as in the case of the Ait Crocodile clan — their own holdings are inconveniently far from the village, or because they have quarreled with their clansmen and do not wish to be beholden to them. Thus, it is only in the use of clan land that a man is necessarily dependent upon his fellow-clansmen, and even this relationship is not inescapable.

Preference for association with clansmen was particularly apparent in the formation of the eight boat-owning companies after the war. Moreover, when factions formed within these companies members aligned themselves with those to whom they were most closely related, in opposition to more distant kin.
It would be tedious and repetitive to describe each of the companies in turn: instead I shall confine myself to the associations of which the Ait Crocodile clan formed the core. This clan happens to be the largest and more associations have been centred upon it, although they have not differed substantially from those centred upon other clans. Also, most of those involved are still on Saibai, so that it is possible to follow the sequences of oppositions and alliances in which they were involved from the late 1940s up to the time of my field study. To facilitate description and render it more precise, I have located the main actors on three short genealogies. These genealogies are segments of the clan; a number of other segments have been omitted since their members do not figure in the account. The founders of these three lines are said to have been related, but the connection between their living descendants is remote and I find it more convenient to separate them for present purposes.

Before pearling was resumed, after the war, six men of Genealogy I, (B2, 3, 5, 6, 7, and C1 and 2) who were the sons of two deceased brothers, A1 and 2, formed a company for the manufacturing of furniture. It was short lived, because wood was hard to get and, it is said, someone misappropriated the funds. In the quarrel that ensued, the offspring of A1 and A2 stood opposed and in the next phase went their separate ways.
The former segment - the offspring of A1 - next joined forces with four brothers of Genealogy II (B3, 4, 5 and 6) to work a small cutter. The venture met with little success and, after a quarrel which divided the members from the two lineages against one another, the boat was sold and the company dissolved.

Meanwhile, the offspring of I.A2 formed a company to work a lugger, with the husbands of their two sisters (B8 and 9), and four men of Genealogy III (B1, 2, 4 and 5). The last two men (Wasaku and Tautali) had been adopted from II.A2 and, still recognizing ties with their true kin, persuaded their brother II.B9 to join also. The members of Genealogy I secured the appointment of their affine, Basana, as skipper, but when he had to retire III.B7 took his place. The latter did not prove very efficient and presently the members of Genealogy I and their affines demanded that he be replaced by their candidate, Isaiah (I.B5): the members of Genealogies II and III resisted and a quarrel erupted, culminating in a brawl, whereupon Isaiah's faction (including his affines) withdrew their labour and that of their sons, and after another unsuccessful season the company dissolved.

The preference for fellow clansmen in these associations is clear, as well as the tendency for close patriline to support one another in disputes - with outsiders cleaving to their
close affines. Nevertheless, for some reason, the two branches of Genealogy II chose to join different boat companies.

After the dissolution of the lugger-owning company, Basana obtained command of a European-owned trochus fishing vessel. I do not know all those who worked with him during these years, but his affines (I.B5 and 6) and the husband and sons of his wife's sister (I.B3) were often among them. When he retired he persuaded his employer to appoint his wife's brother, Isaiah (I.B5) in his place. In 1958 Isaiah's crew included his son, his brother Daku and seven of the grandsons of his father's brother, 04, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10 and 11, as well as the husband of 07. Also included were the sons of Isaiah's two sisters, and three of their close patriline.

Evidently by 1958 the old enmity between the segments A1 and A2 of Genealogy I had been forgotten, but it soon reappeared around new issues. Isaiah and Daku quarrelled with their FBS Sepal (I.B2) over the use of a vacant house, whereupon both the latter and his brother (I.B3) withdrew the labour of their sons, further alleging that Isaiah had defrauded his crew. Late in 1959, soon after my arrival, Isaiah returned from the season's work and went to considerable lengths to end the quarrel. There was no further renewal of antagonism throughout my stay; indeed the two segments supported one another in the disputes of 1961 (see below), but the collapse of the trochus market meant that Isaiah did not again seek for crew.
The old enmity between the sons of I.A2 and the men of Genealogy III had been kept alive by a series of petty quarrels and there was no further co-operation between them. However, the more aggressive members among the latter group had left Saibai by the time I arrived, and both Wasaku and Tautali were on friendly terms with all members of Genealogy I, though in 1961, the old enmity revived.

The same patterns of recruitment and internal division were repeated in the other boat companies. Each consisted of a core of clan members, though not all clan members, to which were added a few affines or maternal kin. These outsiders were included either because their own clan had not formed a company, as in the case of the Snake clan, or because they were on bad terms with those who had. Membership of these associations was always voluntary, and withdrawal from active co-operation possible at any time. When disputes arose, a man could usually expect support from his close kin and affines against those more distant: very often factions consisted of a group of brothers with perhaps one or two sister's husbands.

Much the same pattern of adhesion and division is apparent in the analysis of emigration. Of thirty sets of adult brothers, averaging 3.4 members, thirteen are all resident in one place, while a further fourteen are all resident either in Bamaga and other places, or in Saibai and other places.
Thus, only three sets are represented in both Saibai and Bamaga. One gets the impression that brothers (I exclude females here, since it has generally been the men who decided where their families would live) reached an agreement as to whether or not to leave Saibai for Bamaga, although individuals later emigrated to other places to follow some particularly advantageous opportunity. The same degree of unanimity is not evident among groups of patrilateral first cousins: of eight sets, averaging 9.5 members, only two are all resident in one place while four are represented both in Saibai and Bamaga. The dispersal of clans is even more complete: only one of the seven has more than 75% of its members all in one place, while four are represented more or less equally in Saibai and Bamaga.

After the collapse of trochus fishing in 1959, the only regularly co-operating groups have been those owning canoes or dinghies. Almost every household is represented in one or more such groups, both because of a desire to obtain meat and transport, and because anyone building a boat welcomes financial assistance. There are never more than six to a company. Some consist of a man and his grown-up sons, or of a group of brothers; but more often various non-agnatic kin or affines are associated. For example, the canoe built by Kebisu, senior member of the Saibai Crocodile clan, was shared by three of his FBSs, his FMZS and two sons of his mother's
adoptive brother. As with the pearling companies, members of the same clan may belong to different canoe companies along with non-agnates.

The same patterns were apparent in the formation of factions during the period of my stay. Close patrikin, such as brothers or fathers and sons, usually - though not invariably - supported one another, in alliance with other more distant kin who might be kin or non-agnates as often as fellow-clansmen. Moreover, these more distant alliances were impermanent. The issues at stake were usually ephemeral and allies in one situation might be neutral or antagonistic in another. Those in alliance might be kinsfolk, but factions often consisted of several groups, each with their own grudge, who together exploited some situation to attack a common enemy.

On Saibai, as on the other islands, organization is phrased in terms of kinship. Despite some patrilineal bias, ties with non-agnates are also stressed and the system is essentially optative. At bottom, the bond between kin is one of sentiment, strongest between father and son, slightly less so between brothers, and somewhat uncertain between more distant kin and affines. I never heard of a son opposing his father; brothers may quarrel, even are expected to do so, especially when drunk, but they are equally expected to make up their quarrel soon after. Among more distant kin,
association is largely a matter of individual preference: an initial sympathy may bring two men together, they exchange small gifts, perhaps adopt one another's children and then engage in some joint enterprise. But a subsequent breach is possible; quarrels may cause children who have been adopted, suddenly to be returned to their true parents, and a boat or canoe company to break up in disension. Many and diverse issues make and break such alliances, some private, some relating to public affairs. The large factions emerging in communal activities are based less upon pre-existing bonds than upon a momentary and often fortuitous convergence of interests, and they must consequently be understood in terms of the particular issues involved rather than any more enduring principle of social organization. This point will become clearer when, in the next section, I consider the various factional struggles which disturbed the community during my stay on the island.

IV

Community Politics: October 1959 - January 1960

When I first arrived on Saibai, in October 1959, I found that the leaders of the community were preparing for a number of celebrations, leading up to those for Christmas and the New Year. Meat was not likely to be short, for the time when
turtle were plentiful had already begun, and there would be
countless wildfowl on the swamps as soon as the rains arrived.
Wasaku and Tautali had devised a spectacular new ballet, and
all but the oldest men had already spent many hours in
learning the movements and making colourful and elaborate
dancing gear.

I had already seen this ballet at a minor religious
festival, but when, at the end of October, a highly respected
priest arrived for a week's visit, new sequences were added,
and there were five nights of dancing and feasting, ending
with a bumper entertainment, to which the people of the neigh-
bours Papuan village were invited, and which continued till
daylight. After breakfast the visitor was loaded with gifts
of money, mats and food, and a gay flotilla of canoes accompa-
nied him on the first mile of his homeward journey.

Within a few hours I received the first indications of
dissension among the churchwardens. The senior among them
was Apaga, who owed his position to the bishop. He was a
vigorous and shrewd old man, though over seventy, and senior
member of the Wild Yam clan. Next in seniority was Sepal,
elder of the Ait Crocodile clan (I.B2), aged about sixty,
quieter and less vigorous than Apaga but nonetheless strong-
minded. Mataio was aged about forty-five and a member of the
Cassowary clan; he seemed less highly regarded than the other
two but was credited in some quarters with faith-healing powers.
All three had served as councillors in earlier years, though only Mataio at all recently. The fourth, Bia, a member of the Saibai Crocodile clan, was about the same age; he was a quiet, rather solitary and thoroughly peaceable man, of whom everyone spoke well and who seemed to avoid implication in any disputes.

On the day of the visitor's departure, Apaga came to me in the company of his two sons and confided to me his acute dissatisfaction at the way the proceedings had been conducted. His principal complaint was that he and two other old men had paid for all the store food consumed at the feasts, while the rest had kept back their money to give to the priest, so as to make an impression. Apaga singled out Sepal and Mataio for his sharpest strictures, complaining that they did not carry their fair share of expenses or work and had not paid their Church dues for several years. These remarks were not altogether just: both men had provided turtle for the feasting, and if they did not give such substantial financial support as he, it was because they were almost penniless. Unlike Apaga, neither had a pension nor any sons in employment. Bia could have been criticized for the same faults, indeed he was slightly wealthier than the other two, but Apaga did not mention him and it became apparent that he had further reasons for attacking the other two. He insisted that Sepal was "not a proper Christian" having disobeyed the bishop's order and bitterly opposed his daughter's marriage to Apaga's son. As for
Mataio, why should he claim to heal the sick when Apaga, who had served the Church all his life, did not?

Apaga ended by threatening to report all these matters to the Bishop presently, but for the moment he kept his indignation within the confines of his family, and when, the following week, Sepal's granddaughter died, he attended the mourning feast along with the rest. The death had been sudden and Sepal's family suspected sorcery, but emanating from Boigu, not from within the community. Apaga's family linked the event with the rumour that Sepal had committed incest with his brother's daughter - but they did not make the allegation publicly.

Three weeks later the people were told to make preparations for another religious holiday, but this time the response was half-hearted. The coconuts which a party of workers were sent to get from a distant grove ended up in private homes; no-one donated turtle and eventually Apaga spent £10 of parish funds on the purchase of a pig from Papua. People then complained that he had been careless and that the pig was not worth the price. Wasaku and Tautili called the people together for dancing practice but no-one came. It seemed that the people had had enough of festivities for a while and wanted to be left to their own devices.

Despite some grumblings the feast was held, and the men inced for a short time. A small diversion was created by the
arrival of a cutter from Bamaga and some of the younger men
deserted the village team to join that of the visitors. The
'finishing up' feast on the following evening was even less
successful. People came so late that the food was not ready
until nine o'clock, and no sooner had we sat down than Apaga
rose and delivered a long diatribe against persons un-named
who did not help the church, and against the young men who
preferred the inferior dances of Bamaga to those of their own
island. His eldest son, Jim, who was endeavouring to become
a leader in parish affairs, followed in a similar vein. The
young men and the cutter crew, who had been preparing to dance,
took umbrage at this, and went home.

Apaga, in his speech, had also instructed the people to
prepare themselves for another big festival to be held on
neighbouring Dauan the following week, and at which the Bishop
would be present. But the following morning many were declaring
that they would not go. They were offended by Apaga's
diatribe and once again complained that "too many holidays"
were keeping them from their gardens. "By and by we'll have
a famine, then I will speak out". This remark by Sepal's
brother typified the reaction, and although nothing was said
in public, everyone was aware of the situation which was made
further apparent by the men's absence from dancing practices.
The Council's order that young men must either attend or stay
at home simply resulted in their staying at home. Apaga was
aware of the effect his speech had had, but remained unrepen­tant: he declared to me that it was his right and duty to speak out - "I must give myself for the island, like Christ on the cross!"

Eventually, the churchwardens called a meeting at which Mataio and Apaga berated the people for their disharmony, with Christmas and the Bishop's visit so close. The dissidents made no reply but went away unconvinced and continued to grumble in private.

At this stage there appeared to be three factions. Apaga was supported by his sons and his wife's sister's three sons, Wasaku, Tautali and another brother. Opposed to him, though without direct confrontation, stood Sepal with his brother and the latter's wife's brothers of the Snake clan, together with Kebisu and two other men of the Seibai Crocodile clan to whom he was more distantly related. More or less neutral, stood a third group, headed by Mataio and Basana, the former skipper, who also took a leading part in parish affairs. These, while critical of Apaga, urged the malcontents to "respect the church" and make the time "happy", leaving God to decide who was right. Virtually outside the quarrel were eight men, including Bia, who took up no position at all.

Eventually, the arguments of the neutrals prevailed and everyone left for Dauan. The celebrations proved something of a disappointment: visitors from Badu and Boigu failed to appear
and the Bamaga cutter did not return from work because, it was said, the crew were offended by Apaga's remarks on their dancing. The festivities were intended to last for five days, but on the morning of the third day the dissidents suddenly went home. Torrential rains, the first of the Nor-west season, finally broke up the party.

Feeling remained as bitter after the return. At a public meeting called to discuss Christmas arrangements, Apaga launched into another attack on those who had left Dauan early. Sepal and his faction made no reply because, as his brother later explained -

"We can't speak out against those headmen when they talk. We only sit quiet and talk inside. We can't put the councillors out now: let them have their run. Next time change. But anyway they're our people [I.e. clan], only Apaga and Jim spoil them."

It appeared that the dissident faction was afraid to make open demonstration of their resentment in case Wasaku should call in the support of the delegate or Apaga the Bishop. The same speaker also expressed a fear that Apaga might be a sorcerer, like some of his forbears.

On Christmas Eve a lugger arrived from Cairns bearing a cargo of liquor which, distributed around the community, resulted in almost everyone being drunk until late on Christmas Day. Alcohol did not have the effect of inflaming pre-existing antagonisms, indeed a general if somewhat tipsy euphoria prevailed, but when sobriety returned it became apparent that no
one except Apaga and one or two other families would come to
the church grounds for the customary feast. The rest were
staying at home or assembling at various spots for 'family
feasts'. The largest party, which included all the dissi-
dents together with some neutrals, gathered at the house of
Kebisu, senior member of the Saibai Crocodile clan. Various
kinship ties, which it would be tedious to detail, linked the
families and provided a justification for their presence. The
skipper, Isaiah, just returned and with money to spend,
entertained another large party, including his brother, the
husbands and sons of his two sisters and his fellow-clansman,
Wasaku. Other smaller parties gathered in various places.
Everyone agreed that this was not the proper way to celebrate
Christmas and that such a thing had never occurred before.
Apaga attributed it to the un-Christian ways of Sepal and his
faction: the latter blamed him for spoiling the people's
happiness. To a degree the 'family feasts' were a demonstra-
tion of resentment against Apaga, but once it became apparent
that a communal feast was unlikely to occur, many simply
accepted the alternative arrangement without any political end
in view.

Throughout the holiday no one went near the church grounds
except to attend services. However, the young people were
eager to dance and eventually two teams were formed, the larger
from Kebisu's feasting party and the smaller from among the
rest, which visited various houses in the village. The priest, who had been absent during Christmas, arrived to conduct a midnight service on New Year's Eve, after which the Chairman, Wasaku, and Apaga called upon the people to prepare a feast in the church grounds. But it soon became clear that the dissidents would not attend and the plan was abandoned.

Not until Twelfth Night could the people be persuaded to come to the church ground for dancing. But after the first round of dances, Apaga again arose and berated the people for not keeping Christmas in the proper way. "Saibai has only one Bethlehem" [i.e. the church ground] he declared, and asked whether they kept sorcery things in their feasting shelters, meaning that their behaviour was more pagan than Christian. He publicly threatened to report everything to the Bishop. Passing to other matters, he ordered the people to prepare a feast at which the priest would bless the new Councillors' badges, which had just arrived from Thursday Island. Sepal and his faction heard out the speech in silence and then removed their dancing gear and went home in high indignation, declaring that they would not attend any feast.

The battle had shifted from religious to secular activities, and Wasaku now felt that his authority was directly challenged. He called the people together and advised them to forget their enmities and "look for the silver lining", but despite this the feast did not take place.
Not until the delegate arrived to invest the councillors with their new badges did the community finally come together, attending the ceremony and providing a single team of dancers to entertain the visitors. In the few days that remained before my departure, harmony seemed to be returning. No further large-scale activities were organized but rival factions were represented at a number of private feasts and treasure hunts, held up and down the village.

The issues involved in this squabble seem to have been as follows. Apaga may have been annoyed at being left to bear the full expense of the feasting, but in his speech he exploited the incident so as to proclaim his own devotion to Church and community, and to discredit rival churchwardens, against one of whom he already had a private grudge. Since the issue was concerned with the Church and he was senior churchwarden by the Bishop's appointment, he was well placed to exploit the situation with every appearance of legitimacy.

Many Saibaians had already become sated with feasting and dancing when Apaga made his speech. They were now provided with a pretext for non-participation, while those who disliked Apaga were able to make the non-participation appear to be solely a demonstration against him. But, in a sense, Sepal and his supporters were answering Apaga's reproaches by showing
how much communal activities really depended upon their efforts: and they were, by implication, challenging his right to exploit public office and public occasions for self-aggrandisement at their expense. They never explained their actions publicly, thus avoiding a direct confrontation, but the 'village wireless' transmitted all they said in private, while leaving them free to deny it as garbled hearsay at a later date.

The refusal of Sepal's faction to attend public feasts and dances was a gesture rather than a move designed to achieve some direct result. Apaga could not be removed from office nor forced to retract his statements. Moreover, by absenting themselves from public gatherings for more than a short time, they were laying themselves open to the very reproach of civic and religious impiety that Apaga eventually raised against them. How were they to resume without appearing to capitulate? The opportunity was provided by the neutral faction who urged them to forget their bitterness in the interest of communal harmony, and by the occurrence of unusually important occasions, such as the Dauan festival (which, however, proved less important than expected) and the visit of the delegate. In both instances, outside dignitaries were involved and the dissidents could perhaps gain some credit by appearing to put the honour of their island before their private feelings, although they may, in fact, have been somewhat intimidated by the presence of these personages.
The factions formed in the course of the squabble were loose conglomerations of persons, related in various ways, but primarily allied in their opposition to Apaga. The ephemeral nature of many of these alliances and oppositions was demonstrated during my second stay, when the alignments were substantially different.

**Community Politics : April - June, 1961**

I returned to Torres Straits to begin the second phase of my field work in November, 1960, just in time to witness the enthronement of the new Bishop of Carpentaria. Teams of dancers came into Thursday Island from various parts, but none performed so brilliantly as the Saibai contingent. Almost every able-bodied man participated and I was told that the community was now at peace. This was not the case, however, when I arrived there in April of the following year.

The composition of the community had changed a little in the interim. A new priest had arrived and, unlike his predecessor, was permanently resident on the island. He was a Boiguan with only one actual kinsman in the community, but being a member of the Boigu Crocodile clan he established a close friendship with its Saibai branch. Sepal’s brother’s son, Zugub (Ait Crocodile I.C1), had also returned, having recently been dismissed from the managership of a store on
another island; despite this, he was somewhat more sophisticated and better educated than most. Finally, Isaiah and Daku, also members of the Ait Crocodile clan, had been forced to retire from trochus fishing and were now permanently in residence.

A few weeks before my arrival, plans had been laid for a 'Moonlight Fete' at which small luxuries, purchased from Thursday Island and Daru, would be sold to raise funds for the diocese. To stimulate activity, it was decided that the community should divide into three competing teams, following the recognized, though normally unimportant division, between the eastern, middle and western sections of the village. East Village constituted a somewhat more unified group in that it included all the men of the Ait Crocodile clan except the second councillor, Tautali, who lived in West Village, all the Snake clan, with whom they had numerous affinal ties, and their affine Basana. For some reason, however, the chairman, Wasaku, chose to desert his clansmen and join forces with the Middle Village team, which included his wife's brother, Kebisu, of the Saibai Crocodile clan, and the churchwarden Mataio. Wasaku had a particular importance in this project in that, being store manager, he had control of whatever cash was available. Later, when Mataio publicly boasted that the Middle Village team was outstripping the others, East Village countered -
though only in private — that Wasaku had allowed his team all
the cash, leaving none for the others.

Another dispute arose when the churchwardens' elections
were announced. The Bishop had proposed that, in accordance
with normal Anglican practice, the number should be reduced
from four to two: but when the priest announced this he
encountered immediate opposition from Sepal and his brother,
backed by their father's brother's sons, Isaiah and Daku.
This party went on to oppose any election at all, insisting
that matters should be left as they were. Nothing that the
priest said would sway them and he finally decided to leave
the matter over until the European Visiting Priest came.
The dissidents, it was said, were afraid that their kinsman,
Sepal, would not be returned if an election were held. For
the moment, at any rate, they had gained their point.

Further dissension arose over the Easter celebrations.
Sepal's brother (I.B3) and a Snake clan family who were his
wife's kin, found that they had been omitted from the roster
for the Good Friday vigil, and made a scene outside the
church. The Easter Monday canoe races also ended in bickering
when they, together with Sepal and Daku, complained that the
course placed their canoe at a disadvantage. These matters
were trivial enough in themselves and might soon have been
forgotten had not a more serious matter arisen. As it turned
out, they provided the beginning of a series of supposed
slights and conspiracies which eventually resulted in open conflict.

A few weeks before my arrival, the son of the delegate, who was visiting Saihai, approached the priest and chairman with the announcement that he wished to marry Sepal's daughter. When summoned, the girl declared herself agreeable, but a few days later she retracted. It was generally understood that Sepal had dissuaded her, for reasons best known to himself, but the priest, Apaga and the chairman declared themselves dissatisfied with the decision and spoke of referring the matter to the Bishop and the delegate. They had justification for doing so inasmuch as the Bishop had specifically instructed parents not to oppose their children's marriage without good reason; however, they might be suspected of having concealed motives. Apaga was a longstanding rival to Sepal and thus ready to score off him; he had himself had similar trouble over the marriage of his son with Sepal's daughter; moreover, he was related to the delegate. Similarly, the chairman was largely dependent upon the delegate for his continuance in office and thus likely to consider his interests.

A few days later, Sepal announced that his daughter would marry Peter, a young school teacher of the Snake clan. This came as a surprise to everyone, since there had been no earlier connection between the two, and it was interpreted as a device to block the other marriage finally. There is no doubt
that the couple were under considerable pressure from their kinsfolk to agree. All the members of Genealogy I of the Ait Crocodile clan supported the marriage, together with their affine, Basana, who was also Peter's mother's brother. The boy's family were also in agreement. There had already been several instances of inter-marriages between the two kin groups: this one would serve the purpose of strengthening the link between them and, in traditional style, 'pay back' for the number of women Line I had received from the Snake clan.

An engagement ceremony was held, attended only by these two groups, but instead of inviting the priest to officiate, as is usual, Sepal spoke the appropriate prayers himself. The priest took this to be an affront to his office, and, since he was also a distant kinsman of Peter, resented not being consulted in a private capacity. Another who thought he should be consulted was Kebisu, senior member of the Saibai Crocodile clan, whose illegitimate son Peter was. It is unusual for a man to declare an interest in his illegitimate children, but Kebisu had no sons of his own and hoped to persuade the boy to live with him, if for no other reason than to gain a share of his wages. He now opposed the marriage on the ground that the couple were related. His mother (I.a3) had been the adoptive sister of the fathers of Sepal and Isaiah, and he had activated this tie to the extent of lending Sepal garden land and undertaking to build a house for Daku (Isaiah's brother)
free of charge. He had also taken Isaiah, Daku and their sister's brother, Basana into his canoe company. Kebisu now argued that for his son to marry Sepal's daughter would either mean that Sepal and his kin were undertaking a breach of exogamy or that they were setting aside an admittedly tenuous kinship tie of which they had recently taken advantage. In this dispute, the chairman, Wasaku, opposed his clansmen and supported the priest and his wife's brother, Kebisu.

Peter was now in a position of having to go against one of the opposing parties, both of which included persons of whom he was fond. He told me that he was inclined to break off the engagement, not because he did not "love" the girl—he scarcely referred to this aspect of the matter—but because there was "too much talk going on" and he feared that the "law" might intervene. Eventually, after some days of indecision, he informed the priest that he wanted to break off the engagement. When this was announced Sepal expressed great indignation and turned the tables on his opponents by accusing them of obstructing marriages.

Sepal's faction were angry with Peter, but they were far angrier with Kebisu, the priest and the chairman, whom they accused of turning the boy against them. They stopped attending church and skulked up at the east end of the village, where they all lived, visited only by those who were not involved in the dispute. Apaga, who had not been implicated
in this latest phase of the quarrel, now tried to restore harmony. On two nights he led a singing party, including both neutrals and the opposing faction, to their end of the village, but only one neutral resident emerged to receive them. A Middle Village family who, having close affinal ties with both Kebisu and Sepal, were particularly embarrassed by the quarrel, then offered to donate a turtle as a peace-offering. After some deliberation, Sepal accepted it, appearing in church the following Sunday and at a small feast at which Kebisu was also a guest. But if his anger was at an end, that of the others was not, and very soon a new incident provoked further antagonism.

As mentioned earlier, Kebisu was the head of a canoe company which also included two members of his own clan, together with Isaiah, Daku and Basana. Even before the marriage dispute, Isaiah and Daku had quarrelled with Kebisu over the use of the vessel and threatened to remove the sails which had been bought with their money. However, they did not do so since their sister's husband, Basana, had been using the canoe since that time. The latter now announced his intention of going to Daru for shopping, whereupon Kebisu asked him to make some purchases. Basana, still incensed over the wedding incident, refused, much to the annoyance of Kebisu, who insisted on reclaiming the canoe as soon as it returned. Both Daku and Basana were enraged at this move and
were reported by witnesses to have made insulting remarks against him.

Tension now increased and many who had hitherto held aloof from the squabbles now expressed disapproval of the 'trouble makers' of East Village. It was feared that Basana and Kebisu, who were both "bad tempered" men, would fight, others would join them - "then there will be civil war". The chairman expressed support for Kebisu, recalling old quarrels between his family and that of Issiah and Daku, and was further incensed by the report that Zugub (Sepal's brother's son) had boasted that he would push Wasaku out of the Council and store. The priest still nursed his resentment against the dissidents, and the churchwarden Mataio also supported Kebisu; however the people of West Village including Apaga and some habitual neutrals held aloof.

The Council now called upon the people to celebrate Labour Day, and Middle and West Villages exchanged hospitality and dancing teams. No one from East Village participated. A week later, Rogation Day was celebrated. This being a religious festival, East Village attended - "because otherwise people will talk behind our backs" - but sat apart until the food was cooked, and ate only at the tables prepared by their own womenfolk or those of neutrals. There were several noisy arguments, arising from trivial incidents, between members of the rival factions and the atmosphere remained tense.
Apaga and the chairman finally persuaded Kebisu to lay his quarrel with Basana and Daku before the island court. Knowing Wasaku's views of the matter, he was assured of a sympathetic hearing, but the latter proceeded scrupulously. Daku escaped conviction because Sepal, who was the only other witness present when the alleged insults had been uttered, shielded him. Basana was found guilty, having spoken his insults before a large crowd, but the court, upon Apaga's advice, imposed no punishment, pleading instead for an end to the quarrel. The dispute within the canoe company was not considered and Kebisu now took the matter into his own hands by dismantling the canoe, preparatory to building a new one.

Saibai's church is dedicated to the Holy Trinity, for which reason Trinity Sunday is one of the most important days in the island calendar. This holiday was now approaching and, as usual, the days following it were to be given over to feasting and dancing, for which the people of Dauan had been invited. With this in mind, the priest called together the Mothers' Union and persuaded them to put away their enmities. Two dancing teams began to practise - one made up from men of Middle Village; the other, initially formed by West Village, who were not closely involved in the squabble, was presently joined by men from East Village. The order was also given for the people to bring taro and sugar cane with which to decorate the church.
This last provided a new, though more harmless occasion for rivalry. Towards sundown of the preceding Saturday we heard the sound of drums and singing, and then the people of East Village appeared bearing a formidable display of garden produce, which they deposited in the church yard. As they passed, one of their number offered a provocative challenge to Kebisu who happened to be sitting nearby.

At Sunday Evensong the priest devoted his sermon to the theme of Christian love and forgiveness, but no sooner had we emerged than the Middle Village people appeared, loaded with an even bigger display of garden produce. The churchwarden Mataio came at their head, and having reached the church yard flung his sugar cane into the air and dashed his taro on to the ground, uttering boastful challenges which incensed both East and West Villages. A few moments later, the people of East Village formed a procession and marched, drums beating, up to the West Village, where Apaga's family were hastily gathering together their own display of food. An angry conference ensued at which the East Villagers unburdened themselves of their resentment to the now sympathetic ears of Apaga. Mataio was universally condemned, not only for his recent behaviour but for his provocative remarks concerning the Moonlight Fete, and they agreed that the trouble had started when the village had been divided into three teams for this purpose. They also agreed that the chairman and priest
had done wrong to identify themselves with the Middle Village. But Apaga urged them to put away their resentment, reminding them that "God knew who was right", and both he and Basana implied that the councillors would have to be replaced at the next elections.

This brought enmity to an end. The garden produce was put into a single pile and when, on the morrow, Apaga asked the assembled company to agree to forget their quarrels there was a murmur of assent. The Dauan visitors arrived and the Saibaians danced out the last of their antagonisms in a series of brilliant dances.

The issues involved in this second series of quarrels were more numerous and complex than in the first. The affair of the Moonlight Fete, the churchwardens' elections, the wedding, Kebisu's canoe, and so on, could all have arisen independently of one another. But, if in no more direct a way, the earlier disputes laid a foundation of tension and ill-feeling for those that followed: people became progressively more ready to perceive injury and less ready to suffer in silence. The opposition of Sepal's faction to the churchwardens' election antagonized the priest, Apaga and the chairman; the wedding dispute antagonized them still further. This antagonism, in turn, induced the East Village faction to absent themselves from church and so increase it still further. The canoe dispute certainly arose out of the marriage dispute
and was generally understood to have done so. The chairman, Wasaku, had abandoned his clansmen in East Village, when the Moonlight Pete was first planned and, whatever his motivation, the action was interpreted by them in the light of his subsequent support for Kebisu and the priest. Mataio's boasting at the very beginning and end of the series was likewise connected and almost brought the squabble full circle.

Until the final phase of the quarrel, the factions remained fairly stable. Alignments were, however, very different from those of the first series. As before, Sepal, his brother and the Snake clan family with whom they were linked by marriage, supported one another; but now they were joined by Zugub, who had previously been absent, by Isaiah and Daku, with whom they had previously been on bad terms, and by the latter's sister's husband, Basana, who had previously played a neutral role. Kebisu and his clansmen, who had been their allies, now became their principal opponents. Apaga, who had been their principal opponent, now opposed them only over the marriage, becoming neutral during the later phases of the quarrel, and finally backing them against Mataio. He also seemed to have deserted his one-time protege, Wasaku.

There is no clear connection between the two sets of quarrels described here, and those occurring in earlier years. When Wasaku clashed with Isaiah and Daku, people recalled earlier quarrels over the lugger; but during my first stay
they were on good terms. These two had alternatively allied themselves, and quarrelled, with Sepal and his close kin. During my first stay, Wasaku seemed to be on excellent terms with Apaga and his family; it was only towards the end of my second stay, when the alliance was weakening, that people recalled a bitter quarrel between the two families in earlier years.

The most sustained opposition lay between the three churchwardens Apaga, Mataio and Sepal, who were evidently competing for status. But this opposition was not continuously in evidence and its emphases shifted according to circumstances. During 1959-60, Apaga was principally concerned to attack Sepal; in 1961 he was more concerned with Mataio, finally joining with Sepal in order to attack the other more effectively.

A wider range of tactics was in use during the second series of quarrels, and the balance of advantage and disadvantage is harder to calculate. Sepal's faction succeeded in fending off the churchwardens' elections, and in preventing his daughter's marriage with the delegate's son. When it seemed likely that the matter might be referred to higher authority, they attempted to block this move by marrying the girl off to someone else. In this they failed, and they were reduced to demonstrating their indignation by absenting themselves from church. But this was a dangerous expedient,
particularly for a churchwarden, and Sepal presently declared himself mollified although continuing to identify himself with his still-angry kinsmen. On several occasions they contrived to attend communal gatherings in such a way as to make their continued alienation apparent. Basana and Daku were able to attack Kebiasu by disrupting the co-operation they had hitherto maintained, but when both lost their tempers and publicly abused him they laid themselves open to a court action. When garden produce was called for to decorate the church, East Village gathered a display that was intended to shame their rivals; Middle Village surpassed it, but through Mataio's boasting overstepped the mark. Sepal's faction immediately exploited the situation to seek the sympathy of Apaga and other neutrals and, having won it, to air their earlier grievance against Mataio and Waskau. But if they were not to alienate the neutrals, they must end their demonstration, particularly since the Trinity holiday was at hand and visitors from outside arriving.

V

Conclusions

The Government's resettlement policy opened a profound and permanent division in the Saibai community; however, it also resulted in the withdrawal of one of two segments and perhaps strengthened the unity of that remaining on the island.
The manner of the latter's response to the social environment has not led to the emergence of any firm cleavage. They have not tried to use their councillors to bring pressure on the Administration, so that there has been no opportunity for the emergence of a radical-conservative cleavage such as exists on Murray. Those who hold radical views have rather been drawn to the German Wisin cult and seek a supernatural solution to their problems; however, their somewhat heterodox beliefs have not led to their separation from or isolation within the Church of England. Nor have the Saibains shown any interest in rival churches. There have been no important divisions arising from their somewhat unsuccessful attempts to engage in the external economy. Even when their own enterprises were active there was no significant concentration of economic power: a large proportion of the community were shareholders and the companies were organized on co-operative lines, so that everyone had a say in management. Only four members of the community have ever commanded Master Boats, never more than two of them at any one time and none for more than a few years. Two former skippers are still substantially wealthier than the rest of the community, but this has few social consequences since they do not use their money to gain prestige or to obligate others. Neither have the governmental and ecclesiastical systems facilitated any concentration of power. Although the authority of the Council has never been challenged, councillors were regularly replaced until 1959, and
even since then the possibility of replacing the present incumbents has not been entirely excluded. The existence of this sanction and the close watch which the delegate keeps on local affairs prevents the Council from acting ultra vires. Indeed, it only steps outside the strict path of duty in the organization of recreation which has, in principle, the approval of everyone. The churchwardens have been allowed to hold office for a much longer period and their political role is more important than that of the councillors, but three of the four hold their positions subject to election and none has any real sanction at his disposal. Moreover, since the three who are most assertive are also in competition, they tend to counteract one another's influence. Parish officials are not subject to close supervision from above, but they are subject to considerable pressure from below and though they do sometimes act ultra vires their right to do so is immediately and effectively challenged.

In Saibai, political life centres around the parish pump. The issues which engage the interest and passions of any large section of the community, generally relate to the actions of persons holding public office, particularly within the church. The dispute which raged during my first stay on the island was primarily concerned with the way in which Apaga had misused his office to carry on his private feud with Sepal and to raise his own prestige at the expense of others. The marriage dispute,
occurring during my second stay, was a private affair until it became involved with the question of whether certain officials had the right to intervene. The squabble over the Moonlight Fete arose over the way in which parish leaders had divided up the community, the behaviour of the churchwarden Mataio, and the alleged favouritism of the store manager towards his own team. Wasaku was centrally involved only in the second series of quarrels, but even then not in his capacity as chairman, though what he did persuaded many that he should be removed from this office at the next election.

The delegate's intervention in the 1959 election deprived the people of one important means of political action; since then, pressure has been brought to bear most effectively through the boycotting of community activities. But boycotts rarely extend to activities in which outsiders have an interest. The legitimate decisions of Council and parish are not challenged, and people never, except very briefly, absent themselves from church services as a means of protest. Similarly, feasts and dances which involve outsiders, though voluntary, are never subject to boycott. Thus, the Saibaians avoid confrontation of the established authorities, which might provoke punitive actions from Government or Diocese, and avoid disrupting activities in which the status of the community vis-à-vis the outside world is at stake.

A further limit is placed on political action by the fact
that it involves the disruption of activities which everyone agrees in principle, are desirable. Thus, having made their protest, dissidents seek some face-saving device whereby they may resume co-operation, before they can be accused of putting sectional interests before those of the community. Moreover, the issues in dispute are always ephemeral and, since the factions which emerge in each new situation are different, there is a positive advantage in burying old quarrels in case the enemies of today prove to be the allies of tomorrow.

Saibai, as it is today, is a more homogeneous community than either Badu or Murray, lacking any dominant cleavage either externally or internally based. Factionalism is endemic, but because the contentious issues are ephemeral and because of the form which political action takes, the emergence of permanent, large-scale political alliances and oppositions is inhibited. Insofar as kinship ties provide a basis for, or a legitimation of alliances, it is politically more expedient to give equal value to all cognatic ties, since this permits the widest choice of associates. In the years immediately after the war, the Saibaians showed preference for clansmen, but the boat companies were always small while the clans were large, compared with those on Murray, thus permitting a choice of associates. Since then, the clans have been drastically reduced by emigration and with political action as the most important form of large-scale co-operation, the tendency has
been to seek allies among non-agnates.

Saibai now lacks any dominant cleavage and it is, in many ways, more unified than either Badu or Murray. Factions­
ism tends, in one sense, to reinforce this unity since in the long run the factional groupings cut across one another and new alliances and oppositions cancel out old ones. Moreover, being threatened with extinction by the prospect of further emigration, the community makes strenuous efforts to keep up activities which stress and renew solidarity.

Footnotes

1. A 'half-canoe' is made by longitudinally splitting the hull of an ordinary canoe. Being extremely shallow it can be easily punt ed over the swamps.

2. The community received about £A6,600 from government sources in the form of Social Service Benefits and wages. A generous estimate of ordinary seamen's wages is £A300; one who was skipper for part of the year received £A400 and another who was skipper throughout the year earned £A600.

3. Wasaku was quoting - or, rather, misquoting - from the Epistle to the Galatians III 24.

4. There was some justification in this complaint, for the dry season, which was drawing to an end, is the main planting time for yams and bananas. Once the rains started, many of the gardens would become inaccessible through flooding.
Throughout this study I have called Murray, Badu and Saibai 'communities' without defining the term, except by implication. In this concluding chapter I shall re-examine my findings so as to indicate how and how far these island populations may be regarded as isolates for analysis. Redfield has defined the 'little community' in terms of four qualities, "distinctiveness, smallness, homogeneity and all-providing self-sufficiency" (1955: 4). Except for smallness, the three islands fail to realize these qualities in full, yet retain them to a significant degree. They provide an example, one of a large and increasing number, of little communities which have become involved with and partially dependent upon a large-scale, complex industrial society. Redfield writes:

"With the growth and the spread of civilization social relations extend themselves out from the local community, lose much of their congruence ... and develop many kinds of impersonal and formal varieties of connection."

(1956: 38)

In this respect, the situations of once primitive peoples brought into contact with civilization, and of rural-type communities which have long existed within civilized nation-states, are very similar and pose for the anthropologist much
the same problems of description and analysis. Thus it is useful to approach the Torres Straits Islands along much the same lines as Barnes has adopted in his study of Bremnes, a Norwegian island parish (1954). The people of Bremnes are, like the Islanders, a partly seafaring, partly agricultural and partly rural community, placed within the bounds of a modern state. However, these detailed similarities are less important than the fact that Barnes's concepts are, as Redfield has noted (1956 : 34), of wider application.

I

Barnes groups the sets of relations in which his Norwegians are involved into three 'social fields'. The first of these is "the territorially-based social field, with a large number of enduring administrative units, arranged hierarchically, one within another." (1954 : 42). In Torres Straits there are two such administrative hierarchies, one governmental and the other ecclesiastical. The Islanders, like other inhabitants of Queensland, are subject to the Federal and State Governments, but in a distinctive way. They are excluded from parliamentary constituencies and municipalities, being placed under the control and protection of a special State Government agency which in most situations mediates between them and other Government bodies. The Department of
Native Affairs embraces them all in a single, uniform administrative system, but subdivides them along territorial lines. Each island constitutes a basic administrative unit, because its population is sharply demarcated from others and concentrated into a single residential area, and it is grouped with other, adjacent islands into one of the three Island Groups. Both units, though essentially administrative, are formally recognized as having certain political functions.

At most times, each unit deals with the Government independently of the others, and it is the D.N.A. which coordinates their activities. Only rarely, at conferences convened by the D.N.A., do island representatives come together as a single policy-making body. The strike of 1936, in which the Islanders co-ordinated their activity independently of the Administration, was unprecedented and has never been repeated. The structure of each island's relations with the Government is formally identical though in practice it varies according to whether the delegate is a member of the community or not. Moreover, the content of these relations is variable, so that while Miriam representatives endeavour to modify Government policy, Baduan representatives support it and Saibaian representatives play a largely passive role.

In its formal structure, the ecclesiastical hierarchy does not distinguish between Europeans and Islanders. The island parish is part of a diocese which extends outside Torres
Straits and which is itself part of a wider archdiocese. Each parish usually deals with the Church independently of the others and it is the Diocese which co-ordinates their activities. Only at occasional synods do parish representatives come together for joint consultation. The structure of each parish's relations with the Diocese are formally and, to a large extent, in practice identical, and the content of these relations differs very little in kind, although its importance in the context of community life varies.

The ecclesiastical unit differs from the governmental in that residence within its physical bounds does not necessarily imply membership of it, though in practice the two coincide except on Murray where a section have defected to the Assemblies of God. Formally, these Pentecostalists constitute a unit within a parallel ecclesiastical hierarchy, though their connections with the parent body are extremely tenuous.

The population of each island is concentrated into a single village, within which distinct wards are recognized. However these have no place in any administrative system and they are rarely definitive of what people do. Even the most distant house can be reached after a few minutes walk, with the result that groupings within the village can be formed, without inconvenience, on non-territorial lines.

Barnes's second social field is "generated by the industrial system" (1954 : 42). In Bremnes the principal industry
is commercial herring fishing; in Torres Straits it is
trochus and pearl shell fishing, though emigrants can find
other kinds of work. Redfield writes:

"It is the market, in one form or another, that
pulls out from the compact social relations of self-
contained primitive communities some parts of men's
doings and puts people into fields of economic
activity that are increasingly independent of the
rest of what goes on in the local life."

(1956: 28)

All who engage in pearling conform to certain essential
technical requirements and traditions of the industry, though
the position of the Islanders is rendered somewhat peculiar
by the intervention of the Government to regulate the running
of their own enterprises and their dealings with European
employers and businessmen. Nevertheless, subject to these
restrictions, they remain free to determine how and how far
they will participate. In seeking a livelihood, the Islander
may be presented with a choice of pearling, subsistence activ-
ities and emigration to European settlements; however, his
membership of a particular community is generally in some
degree definitive of the selection he makes. Thus, the Badu
Council has ruled out subsistence activities as a principal
means of livelihood and forbids emigration to the mainland,
while the Murray Council does neither. Opportunities for
participation in pearling also vary from one community to
another, according to the availability and variety of employ-
ment. Thus in 1960, the Miriam had no opportunities for
employment, with the collapse of their own enterprises and the cessation of outside recruitment; the Saibaians could find work only on the boats of other islands, but Baduans had a choice of local and European-owned boats.

The extent to which pearling draws the Islander out of his own community varies from one island to another. Native companies never include members from more than one community though crews sometimes do. However, each vessel is based upon one island, usually that of the skipper, so that those of its crew who come from other islands may not see their homes for a year. Most Islanders find this uncongenial and the men of economically dependent communities, such as Saibai, tend to work only in some years or, alternatively, to emigrate to where the work is. Badu has acquired a substantial immigrant population in this way, since its labour force is insufficient to man all locally based vessels. Baduans, having ample opportunities for work, rarely sign on with boats based on other islands.

Even when a seaman is employed on a locally based boat, the nature of his work obliges him to be absent from the island for much of the time, and the more diligently he devotes himself to pearling the less opportunity he has to participate in community affairs. The Miriam and Saibaians have been somewhat unwilling to make this sacrifice, and increasingly so as the financial rewards have declined. The
Baduans have been more ready to do so, with a consequent reduction in religious and recreational activities; however, Finau's heavy commitments as a skipper have not prevented him from exerting a dominant influence in local government and parish affairs.

In marine work, the ordinary seaman has direct dealings only with men from his own and perhaps one or two neighbouring islands. Skippers may have direct dealings with white officials and master pearlers, but even they may never meet the entrepreneurs who, in distant parts of the world, buy and sell their produce. Nevertheless, from afar and through numerous intermediaries comes the reward of their labours in the form of cash, which can be converted into manufactured goods. It is through the medium of money, derived from wages and Government sources, that the Islanders have become integrated into a wider economic system without having direct contact with more than a few Europeans.

As the supply of cash makes European goods available, the island communities become less self-sufficient: traditional handicrafts and subsistence economic activities fall into abeyance. But although all cash eventually finds its way back into the general economy, it may circulate for a while within a community, not in exchange for goods - the division of labour is scarcely sufficient for that - but in recognition of social obligations. Contributions which were
once made in the form of local produce and labour are now, at least in the more industrialized communities, made in cash. Thus the Baduans who did not have the time, nor perhaps the interest, to participate actively in parish affairs, nevertheless recognize their obligations to the Church by donating money.

It is only when wage labour involves emigration that the wider economy draws Islanders out of their home communities to any extent. Even then, the separation may not be complete. The majority of Baduan emigrants, those who live in Thursday Island, are able to keep in regular contact with the home community and often continue to recognize their obligations towards people living there. The separation is more complete in the case of Saibaians living in Bamaga, though there is some inter-visiting. In the case of Miriam living on the mainland, connections are tenuous; nevertheless, letters are exchanged with those at home and these may have had some influence on the outcome of the 1956 election.

Barnes's third field is the 'social network' which is "that part of the total network [of social relations] that is left behind when we remove the groupings and chains of interaction which belong strictly to the territorial and industrial systems." (1954:43) In Bremnes this consists largely of the ties of "kinship, friendship, and neighbourhood" (ibid.).
From the network more formal groupings may emerge, but the network itself is boundless. However, the size of the mesh—that is, the likelihood of any two persons who are linked with a third also being linked with one another—varies in different kinds of society (1954: 44).

In Torres Straits this type of relationship is usually phrased in the idiom of kinship. There is, in effect, a kinship ideology which implies that help and affection may be expected from kinsfolk and which places the stamp of legitimacy upon alliances between kin. However, most Islanders recognize more kinship ties than they can readily activate and the 'kinship system', as it exists today, provides no firm criteria on which choice may be based. Conversely, some Islanders, for example candidates for public office and skippers, require more supporters than they have kin. Thus, outside the nuclear family, the network and the groups emerging from it are more readily understood in terms of friendship and converging interest. The kinship ideology may incline Islanders towards association with kin rather than non-kin, but alignments cannot usually be predicted on the basis of relatedness, and in some instances it has been discovered or invented after association has occurred. It seems, then, that the kinship system amounts to little more than a means of legitimizing a wide range of alternative alliances in a system of social relations which is essentially optative.
The mesh of the network is finest within the island community, largely because there people live in close proximity, while contacts with other communities are infrequent, becoming more so as the distance between them widens. Inter-marriage between neighbouring communities is unusual; between those widely separated it is extremely rare. When it does occur, the offspring are recognized as having valid kinship ties in both communities but, except in the case of skippers seeking extra crew, few have the opportunity of activating more than one set of ties. For those Islanders living in Thursday Island, the physical barriers have broken down but social barriers still remain and there is still relatively little co-operation between members of different communities.

Given increased physical contact and a gradual wearing down of insularity, there is a wide cultural basis for increased interaction among the different island communities: they share a common history, a similar status in the wider society, and a substantial body of distinctive beliefs and practices which they themselves call "Island custom". The majority speak the same language (Mabuiag) and those who do not, can communicate freely in the Torres Straits version of English.

The social network penetrates the European sector at only a few points and there have been very few cases of inter-marriage, all of them recent. European visitors to the islands are rare and transient, while in Thursday Island most
Europeans limit their dealings with Islanders to business or administrative matters. A basis for friendly intercourse between the races is generally lacking. The practices and beliefs which give Islanders common interests and understandings, often separate them from Europeans, especially since the latter tend to associate these with 'backwardness' and even racial inferiority. During the war the conditions for interracial friendship were more favourable and, although the ties were severed by demobilization, the Ex-Servicemen's Legion exists, in part, to perpetuate it by other means. More recently, Islanders on the mainland have found it possible to establish friendships with white Pentecostalists and it is largely on this basis that bi-racial congregations have been established there. However, native Pentecostalists have gone to some lengths to suppress their cultural distinctiveness, and even those living on Murray have self-consciously abandoned much "Island custom". This points the difference between integration in terms of the territorially based field, in which Islanders may honour European dignitaries and officials in their own distinctive way, with feasts and dancing, and integration in terms of the network, with which such cultural peculiarities are inconsistent.

The mesh of the network is always finest within the island community, but the extent to which ties go outside it varies. Saibai, owing to its isolation and parochialism, is
the most confined. The Baduans have more intense and
more frequent contact with outsiders because their crews are
often mixed and because their work often takes them to
Thursday Island. The Miriam who remain on Murray are more
cut off than the Baduans, but their emigrants have established
contacts with white people on the mainland, which are reflected
in the home community by the existence of a Pentecostalist
church. In the same way, ties are maintained with white ex-
servicemen through the existence of a branch of the Legion
which is banned in Badu.

Barnes speaks of the network having a 'gradient' when
those located upon it differ in status (1954 : 44–6). In
Torres Straits such differences are hard to detect. Among
the Islanders, as in Bremnes, it is considered presumptuous
and impolite to treat others as inferiors. On the one hand,
censorious gossip brings down those who affect superiority,
while on the other hand there is a remarkable tolerance
towards those who have failed. The kinship ideology is also
levelling by implication, since it stresses solidarity among
related persons, regardless of differences of wealth, inte-
ligence or moral standing.

Relationships of superordination and subordination are
found in the administrative and industrial systems but not
often in the social network; moreover, it is only through the
industrial system that substantial differences in wealth can
emerge. However, within the community some persons may be simultaneously involved with one another in all three social fields, and where differences in wealth and power are permanent the network is likely to acquire a gradient. This is most clearly apparent in Badu, where the Samoas are in a position to give far more substantial help to their friends and kin than the latter can reciprocate, and where reciprocation therefore takes the form of accepting a subordinate position on their boats. I shall return to this point later.

It is evident that the distinctiveness, homogeneity and self-sufficiency of the Torres Straits Island community is modified by outside contacts, but less by those with other communities than by those with Europeans. In industry and in the governmental and ecclesiastical hierarchies, the most important ties are those linking members of a community with white employers and entrepreneurs, with Government officials and Diocesan authorities. That all the islands are in some measure unified within these systems is due less to their own efforts than to the co-ordinating role which these authorities play. The social network penetrates the European sector at only a few points, due to the communities' physical isolation and the 'colour bar', but its extension from one community to another is also inhibited by physical separation and a measure of prejudice. Nevertheless, such tenuous ties as Islanders have with Europeans transcend physical separation,
because of their political and ideological significance, in a way that interrupted ties between communities do not, and they have a far greater importance for the community as the example of Murray clearly shows.

The same pattern of relations is apparent in political action: contests and alliances rarely involve several island communities; either these are confined within a single community or extend into the European sector.

Although the three social fields may be regarded as analytically separable from one another, they are interrelated at certain points, most closely within the community which provides at least a part of the audience for most of the roles which its members play. Thus, while those—mostly Europeans—who hold office in the governmental, ecclesiastical and industrial hierarchies but stand outside the community, can maintain the social distance which, as Homans notes, is necessary for effective leadership (1951: 431-3), those who stand within it cannot, since they are involved in a multiplicity of other roles. For this reason, action, and more particularly political action, has a distinctive quality within the community.

II

Many of the policy decisions affecting the Islanders are taken by authorities located in the European sector, beyond
their reach. Some communities have tried to influence Government policy, but the channels open to them for political action are few and the pressure which they can bring to bear is small; often their efforts have been of far greater consequence in their communities than in any wider political process. Indeed, the community may be regarded as the main locus of political action since, although the referent may lie outside it, action is most sustained and intense, and most often successful within it.

Although the island community is not discrete, it is possible and useful to speak of it as having a political system, distinct and largely independent of that of other communities, because political action is so closely bound up with the multiplicity of other forms of activity engaging its members, and political roles cannot readily be segregated from other roles. Thus, antagonism arising in one set of relations spreads quickly to others in which the same persons are involved; at the same time, interdependence in one set of relations serves to inhibit conflict in others. Understood in terms of politics, dependence is the converse of power, limiting men's freedom to act as much as any direct sanction. In this connection, Gluckman writes:

"... conflicting loyalties and divisions of allegiance tend to inhibit the development of open quarrelling, and,... the greater the division in one area of society, the greater is likely to be the cohesion in a wider range of relationships - provided that there is a general
need for peace, and recognition of a moral order in which this peace can flourish." (1956: 25)

We shall see in a moment how far this view is applicable to Torres Straits communities.

The political systems of Murray, Saibai and Badu can be compared in terms of three crucial features: first, the type and social importance of the issues to be determined; second, the proportion of the community actively participating in political contests; and, third, the forms which political competition takes. We may expect political action to be minor and unimportant to the extent that policies satisfactory to those in a position to determine them have been devised.

People engage in political action insofar as they are concerned and able to do so, their ability to act being determined by the distribution of power.

Politics is an important part of life on Murray and is characterized by contests over a number of enduring issues: attempts to modify Government policy, the Pentecostalist 'problem' and the suitability of particular individuals to hold office. One of the reasons why these issues persist is that no resolution of them can be found which is satisfactory to everyone: moreover, policies which seem to be effective when first proposed, often prove not to be. The Council is the community's principal policy-making body and for this reason, and because the field is open to everyone, political
action most usually takes the form of electioneering. The Administration determines the manner and occasion of elections and thus places limits upon this type of conflict, but in practice the limits are wide.

The 'quiet man' on Murray may confine his political actions to voting which, since the ballot is secret, need not jeopardize any of the relations in which he is involved. However, leaders must and many lesser figures do declare openly where they stand. For them, a shift in political alignments may also mean a shift in other areas of association, but this need not involve heavy social costs. The community is large enough to maintain two churches, several recreational clubs and numerous cliques. Each of these groups has an enduring core of members, but on its fringes are others who come and go as expediency dictates. In short, while it is scarcely possible to be at odds with everyone simultaneously, there is no great inconvenience in being enemies with a number, provided only that a mask of politeness is assumed in company.

The candidate who has been defeated in an electoral contest has no other means of revenging himself against his successful rivals than by defeating them in a subsequent contest. To do so, he must woo the very voters who have rejected him. However, electoral support is built up less by cultivating friends and dependents, who can never be more than a small section of the community, than by agitation, the
exploiting of contentious issues so as to draw support away from rivals. This form of electioneering ensures that public passions are aroused whenever the Council commits a tactical error, and does much to give Murray politics its excited character.

Church politics are more tranquil: dissidents tend to defect to the Pentecostalists (and *vice versa*) and there are no major policy issues to divide those who remain. Parish activities are of a largely routine character, involving little innovation, and parish officials have no important sanctions to wield. Competition for office is intense and churchwardens are replaced with fair frequency; however, it seems that candidates are judged in personal terms rather than by their identification with any political tendency.

In Saibai political contests rage around the parish pump and the issues, though bitterly contested at the time, are ephemeral. The people make no attempt to influence Government policy; there is no thought of an overall economic policy for the community, no religious or ideological difference. What concerns the people most deeply is that those who are entrusted with public office should not misuse it or exceed the proper scope of their authority. Thus political action consists principally in putting pressure upon office-holders, though not always through elections.

Until 1959 councillors were appointed at open elections
and were replaced each time; however, in that year the delegate intervened to effect the return of the sitting members for another term. But they, being uncertain of his continued support and even more uncertain of their popular support in the events of another open election, have kept close to the letter of the law, and during my stay nothing that they did in their official capacity gave rise to any serious dispute.

Parish officials do not encounter opposition as long as they confine themselves to their recognized, routine duties; however, not being subject to close supervision from above, they sometimes stray from this safe path. The three churchwardens who are in close competition with one another for influence and prestige, are generally involved in and often the instigators of public dissension. Three of the four churchwardens hold their positions subject to election and are thus ultimately dependent upon public support, but elections are held infrequently and, since contentious issues are generally ephemeral, more immediate forms of action are required and are available in the form of boycotts of recreational activities organized by the parish. Similar activities organized by the Council can be boycotted in the same way.

Day-to-day co-operation is on a small scale and, as on Murray, Saibaians have a wide choice of associates from which to choose; however, they are united in their religious and
recreational activities. Greater importance is given to the latter than in either of the other two communities. What Frankenberg says of his Welsh villagers seems also to apply here:

"Combining in recreational activities has social value to the villagers because it emphasizes their relationships one to another in a community. This is true of all communities. But it is especially important when the men no longer work together."

(1957: 153)

These activities are the only means whereby this small, impoverished and unimportant community can demonstrate its unity and worth to itself and to outsiders (c.f. Frankenberg 1957: 154). But because Saibai is so small a community it is imperative that everyone should participate in them. By refusing to do so even a small minority can compel the rest to attend to their complaints. No one can compel them to resume co-operation, but their own recognition that these activities are of value ensures that they will do so voluntarily in the long run.

Limits are placed upon conflict both by the medium of political action employed and by the nature of the issues which provoke conflict. It is issues which create factions and since they are ephemeral, the factions which emerge are somewhat different in each series of quarrels. Thus Saibaians are disposed to terminate their quarrels lest the enemies of today prove to be the allies of tomorrow. Old feuds are not forgotten, nor perhaps entirely forgiven, but it
is politically expedient to set them aside.

There has been intense political activity on Badu over the last generation, resulting in drastic changes in many areas of its community life. However, these had all been effected and consolidated some time before my arrival, and since satisfactory policies have been worked out to meet all major contingencies, only minor matters remain to be decided.

There are more leadership positions in Badu than in the other two communities, because so many pearling boats are based there, but leadership in the various areas of activity is also more closely co-ordinated. One man, Finau, dominates the parish, local government and local industry, and the other positions of influence are occupied by his close kin who are, in most matters, his loyal supporters. Leadership also remains fairly consistent over time, since office-holders are not often replaced; Finau, in particular, has retained his positions for almost thirty years.

In making decisions, office holders are little influenced by pressure from below, for the great majority of Baduans neither compete for office nor engage actively in politics; perhaps they lack the desire to do so, but in any case the opportunities open to them are few. Since Finau holds his offices for life, the people cannot depose him and are thus inescapably dependent upon him for the help and justice which he is in a position to dispense; and since he wields considerable
power, they hesitate to oppose him. Similarly Baduan skippers are largely immune to pressure from their men who depend upon them - though not upon any particular one of them - for a livelihood, and may also look to them for additional help which only they can provide. The Baduans, unlike the Saibaians, are not closely interdependent in religious and recreational activities, since these are given little importance; consequently, boycotts would not be an effective form of protest.

Among those in office, the degree of interdependence varies. Many owe their preferment to Finau, but some of these are now independent of him and are thus in a position to oppose him, though few do so. Competition among the community's leaders consists of attempts to discredit one another with the European authorities who alone have the power to dismiss them. Here, as in Murray, the final limits on conflict are imposed from without. Ordinary Baduans are not involved in these intrigues, since they have no access to the authorities. In such a system there is no place for the agitator, and the contentious actions of those in office provoke no more than gossip among the rest of the population.

Barnes has described how the people of Bremnes go to some lengths to conceal political differences behind a facade of unanimity. Although they recognize that voting is the proper, democratic procedure for reaching decisions, they
avoid such open trials of strength wherever possible and when they cannot, employ 'tricks' to obscure the existence of any dissentient minority. He suggests that we are here dealing with a principle of fairly wide application:

"People living and working together inevitably have conflicting interests but in general they have also a common interest in the maintenance of existing social relations. Individual goals must be attained through socially approved processes, and as far as possible the illusion must be maintained that each individual is acting only in the best interests of the community. As far as possible, that is, the group must appear united, not only vis-a-vis other similar groups, but also to itself. Voting is a method of reaching decisions in which divergence of interest is openly recognized, and in which the multiplicities of divergence are forced into the Procrustean categories of Yes and No. Significantly, voting is rare in simple societies and in small groups of modern society."

One can find much comparative data to bear out the general tenor of Barnes's argument (e.g. Force 1961: 142-4; Kluckhohn and Leighton 1946: 103), and Fischer has presented some additional explanation. Discussing the introduction of Western political forms into Ponape (Eastern Carolines), he writes:

"Voting and unrestrained debate tend to leave a more embittered minority than the traditional leisurely process of arriving at a formal unanimity. It is one thing for a minority to cautiously venture objections and finally lapse into silence when it realizes the weakness of its position. It is another thing for the members of the minority to be encouraged to let loose with extreme statements they would normally make only to each other in private and then find themselves publicly shamed and defeated in the ensuing vote."

But Fischer goes on to describe how, under the increased pressures of modern life, the Ponapeans have nevertheless adopted
open debate, voting and elections, despite disruptive consequences. In Torres Straits too, most islands hold open electoral contests and some are riven by prolonged and un concealed differences.

This is most clearly the case with Murray, which is, indeed, notorious for its acrimonious and excited politics. Almost all public offices are elective and no attempt is made to achieve a prior consensus. Personal, ideological, sectarian and political differences are openly declared. Factional leaders can threaten "civil war" and demand the deportation of their rivals. The public humiliation of the losers at open contests no doubt aggravates their bitterness, but this only strengthens their resolve to return to the fray. Few of the issues which concern the Miriam are ever finally settled, so that there is always the possibility of a 'return match'. But although the Miriam periodically jeopardize "existing social relations", they normally conceal their enmities behind a mask of courtesy, if only because life in such a compact community would otherwise be impossible; in practice, the periodic conflicts do little to change the basic pattern of social relations. Nevertheless, it is an outside body, the Administration, which places a limit on conflict and holds the community together as a governmental unit; other groups which were once co-extensive with the community have split.

Saibai is also disturbed by periodic squabbles and there
are open electoral contests for parish and, until recently, Council office. But the community is without any enduring cleavage, all the divisive issues being ephemeral. Moreover, the squabbles generally concern what has been done rather than what is to be done, so that once a protest has been made, further action is superfluous and harmony can be restored without either side suffering the humiliation of a clear defeat. The Saibaians recognize the need for their community to appear united, particularly in the face of outsiders, and though the activities intended to demonstrate this unity provide a field for divisive action, they also set a limit upon it. When a dissident group resumes co-operation after a protest demonstration, it can claim some credit for putting the community's interest before its own. At the same time, its protest will have been directed against a real or alleged disturbance of existing social relations. The regular substitution of councillors was justified in much the same way, less in terms of factional conflict than of giving everyone a chance and, by implication, avoiding concentrations of power.

Badu, unlike the other two, maintains an almost unbroken facade of unanimity. Once offices have been filled, their occupants remain and such elections as occur are reduced to mere formalities. However, this is less the product of community-wide consensus than of an unequal distribution of power, and it is widely recognized both inside and outside Badu
that covert opposition exists. The Samoas have the strongest stake in the maintenance of existing social relations (though they were innovators until recently), but they argue—in effect—that what is good for them is also good for Badu, and many of their critics grudgingly agree with them.

Following a line of analysis similar to that of Barnes, Frankenberg has shown how the people of a North Wales village deliberately appoint 'strangers' to head their voluntary organizations. By doing so they can avoid assuming direct responsibility for critical decisions which "reveal their personal divided loyalties and may also reveal social divisions in the village" (1957: 152). These 'strangers' do not necessarily live outside the village but are "remote from those groupings whose immediate interests are affected or whose feelings are hurt" (ibid.: 65). But, perhaps because of this remoteness, their decisions are often prompted by individuals or groups working behind the scenes. Approaching a similar phenomenon from the point of view of the individual politician, Vidich and Bensman have shown how the most influential member of a small American town avoids open identification with various sectional interests by working through agents whose actions he can control (1960: 278-83).

Such devices as Frankenberg describes are quite lacking in Murray and Saibai, because there is no one who might be regarded as a 'stranger' and because, in any case, social
divisions are not otherwise concealed. Nor do leaders avoid taking public office, since the more senior positions constitute the principal bases of power. Although collective pressure may be exerted on office holders, no individual who does not occupy one of these positions is powerful enough to manipulate those who do. Competition for all public offices is intense and widespread, and the major positions generally go to those who are, in other respects, the most able and influential. Minor offices generally go to lesser figures, some of them failed politicians who content themselves with empty titles rather than be complete nonentities, while others are younger men taking their first steps in a political career.

In Badu, the Samoas, who have a virtual monopoly of public office, may be regarded as 'strangers', for although they have lived all their lives within the community they regard themselves and are regarded in this way, and they are not deeply affected by the interests or feelings of other Baduans. But they have achieved office rather than having it thrust upon them, and the reasons why the rest of the community does not compete for office are quite different from those motivating the Welsh villagers.

From the preceding discussion, it seems that the extent and intensity of open quarrelling in the three communities is
closely geared to the degree of interdependence existing among their respective members. In Murray a "need for peace" is least in evidence; in Saibai it exists in the long run but is not so great as to preclude periodic disturbance. In Badu, however, where those most likely to clash are also closely and inescapably interdependent, the need for peace is greatest and the incidence of open quarrelling least.

III

The political systems of Murray and Saibai may be broadly characterized as democratic - a rule of the many - with wide participation in decision-making and the appointment of office-holders, subject always to the limits imposed from without. In Badu, by contrast, we have something approaching oligarchy - a rule of the few. These differences are reflected in the functioning of relations within the three social fields.

Democracy tends to disrupt the administrative functions of local government, particularly when supervision from above is lax. Thus, in Murray, government personnel may neglect or modify those of their duties which might endanger their electoral support, and for several months popular pressure paralyzed government altogether. In Saibai, the regular
substitution of councillors at each election resulted in the appointment of those who were inexperienced and, in the event, often incompetent. A curtailment of the elective process and a closer supervision of local government from above increased efficiency, but the continuance of pressure from below has served to render the Council a somewhat lifeless and unenterprising body. The Badu Council, not being vulnerable to popular pressure, is well placed to carry out its administrative duties, and though it may err in minor matters it does on the whole serve as an effective instrument for D.N.A. policies. However, the Council is also intended to play a political role and it is more likely to serve the interests of the majority if democratic checks and safeguards are maintained.

The situation in Church government is somewhat different since the administrative duties of parish officers are rarely contentious. In Murray and Saibai where most positions are elective, people compete for them by displaying their zeal in Church activities, which are consequently lively. In Badu, where there is no competition for office and where the present leadership is partially moribund, participation in Church activities is at a low level.

In pearling, democratic organization has proved inefficient and the view expressed by the Director of Native Affairs, that traditional forms of co-operation could be adapted for
industrial purposes (O'Leary 1952: 2), has not been borne out. The large-scale companies of Saibai and Murray, with their elected skippers and managers, have failed, while the small and strongly centralized Samoa company, which employs its workers like any European concern, has prospered. The evidence suggests that skippers are best able to maintain regular and disciplined work when they are immune to pressure from their men; and conditions are most favourable for the development of technical and managerial expertise when their efficiency is the only factor in their appointment.

Where relations along the social network are strongly egalitarian, a democratic political system is, at least from one point of view, more appropriate. The essentially interim authority of the office holder is qualified by his ultimate dependence upon the support of friends and kin, and the ever-present possibility of his return to the ranks. This was regularly demonstrated in Saibai by the substitution of councillors at each election, which also ensured that the dignity and experience of office was widely distributed. In Murray the people recognize that certain persons are best qualified for office, but none of these is allowed to hold it without periodic defeats and humiliations. In Badu the system is not democratic, but the permanent differentiations of wealth and power in the industrial and governmental systems have had the effect of raising the gradient of the social
network. Thus, it seems that, whereas in democratic systems relations within the network are in some sense dominant over those in the other two fields, in non-democratic systems the reverse is true.

However, in another respect a democratic system is incompatible with the maintenance of relations within the network, since those who are dependent upon majority support for their offices cannot favour their closest kin and friends without alienating the rest, although their obligations to the former may induce them to do so. Those whose positions are secure are better placed to acknowledge particularistic ties, subject to the limitations imposed from without. The governmental and ecclesiastical administrative systems are loose enough to permit some favouritism, but although preference may be given to kinsfolk in the appointment of skippers, they can only retain their commands if they can perform their duties efficiently.

IV

The social environment, which is the modern world, presses hard upon the three Torres Straits Island communities described in this study. It has wrought drastic changes in their indigenous cultures and social structures, and brought them into a state of dependence. Externally based institu-
tions now occupy a central place in the lives of these communities, and crucial elements in their structures are firmly maintained from without. The senior offices in these institutions constitute the main bases of power, and political contests are largely concerned with gaining control of them. However, it is evident that the environment is not all-determining since, despite its general uniformity, each community differs from the others in certain important respects. Many of these differences can be derived from a few key variations in responses to the environment; in particular, many of the features which distinguish Badu from Saibai and Murray derive from its deeper engagement in, and more successful exploitation of the external economy.

Why, then, has Badu responded to the economy differently from the other communities? The greater fertility of the Eastern Islands and the higher value traditionally placed on gardening, compared with the Central and Western groups, may have rendered their inhabitants less inclined to marine work. Reports from around the turn of the century indicate that the Central and Western Islanders were already more deeply involved in industrial activity than the Eastern Islanders. But the same reports indicate that Saibai and Mabuiag were the most industrious, while the Baduans are described as "rather lazy" (Douglas 1899:35). Badu's rise to dominance in pearling coincides, and is clearly linked with the emergence of the
the Samoa family, many of whose members have shown themselves outstandingly able as skippers, and whose company has had remarkable success. But is it simply fortuitous that the Samoas are so capable, or are there social factors which contribute to their success? The predominance of 'mixed-bloods' (particularly part-Polynesians and Europeans) among skippers throughout Torres Straits, and their prominence in many other walks of life, suggests that foreign ancestry carries with it certain advantages. The inheritance of a lighter skin in a world which is apparently dominated by white people, and the fact that the Polynesian seamen who came to Torres Straits in past years were more sophisticated than the indigenous population, both provide a basis for the claim to superiority which the present generation of 'mixed-bloods' makes. This sense of superiority and, thus, of isolation in a community from which, in any case, they did not originate, may have served to unify the eight Samoa brothers during the years when they were establishing their company. There are three other 'mixed-blood' families in the Central Islands who have established similar though less impressive enterprises. By contrast, it is remarkable that on Darnley Island, where almost everyone is of mixed descent, no such companies have emerged and local enterprises have been no more successful than on Murray. It is also fairly clear why 'mixed-bloods' on Saibai and Murray have not imitated the Samoas, for in these communities they have been too few to form a distinctive group.
However, the example of the Savage family on Badu shows that other 'mixed-bloods', starting with rather more favourable opportunities than the Samoas, nevertheless failed to prosper.

But if the industrialization of Badu, and all its concomitant changes, have been the work of the Samoas, would they have done equally well on Saibai and Murray? Such a question takes us into the realms of speculation; however, I am inclined to believe that in Saibai they would. The Saibaians' own enterprises failed less through lack of a will to work than an inability to organize efficiently. The case of Murray is more doubtful. Here there has been a traditional predisposition to shirk work, and a long history of active opposition to the European authorities, which has rendered them suspicious of Government-sponsored economic projects. However, this antagonism existed on all the islands at the time of the 1936 strike, and Finau had to contend with radicals in his own community after the war. Murray's radicals have probably been encouraged to seek a political solution to their economic problems by the failure of their own enterprises, but the Saibaians, whose enterprises have also failed, show few signs of following their example although radical views are widely held. This in turn may be because unlike the Mriami, they are subordinated to a strongly conservative delegate, or because they have never had radical leaders of the calibre of Sekmet and Calico. Moreover, whereas most emigrants from Saibai
have gone to Bamaga, those from Murray have gone to the mainland, where they experience a standard of living far in excess of what is possible in Torres Straits, and thus become disinclined to accept less favourable conditions at home.

Whatever the factors which have brought about these differences, it is apparent that they lie within the community rather than in the social environment. Thus each island community retains a degree of autonomy vis-a-vis the environment, which enables it to develop in its own way. This autonomy has not usually been employed to resist the encroachments of the modern world; on the contrary, Miriam, Baduans and Sai-baians have all reached out towards it, to obtain a larger share of the white man's knowledge and material wealth, though the various means they have employed have not all been equally successful.

But despite the deep involvement in the wider society, each island population retains in varying but always significant degree the qualities of community. Each remains physically isolated and retains a clear sense of identity. Its members are linked with the outside world by important formal and indirect ties, but they continue to find most of their enduring personal relationships among their own people. Moreover, the governmental and ecclesiastical administrative systems and, to some degree, the industrial system, have
served to perpetuate and reinforce the distinctness of each island community vis-a-vis the others.

The other Torres Straits Islands which were not included in this study, are set in the same environment as Murray, Badu and Saibai, and since we know that they share many cultural features with these communities, we may expect them to be somewhat similar. But since they retain a measure of autonomy, we may also expect them to differ in certain respects, if only to produce variations on the themes recurring in the present study.
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POPULATION TRENDS SINCE 1913

Torres Straits Islanders are not included in the censuses carried out by the Commonwealth Government and until 1913 no official figures were published. Since that date, the Queensland Aboriginals - later, Native Affairs - Department has issued periodic estimates in its Annual Reports. Prior to the war, each island population was listed separately and the total in 1913 (including the inhabitants of the St. Paul's Mission) was 2,368; in 1938 the total (including the inhabitants of the St. Paul's Mission and the Hammond Island Mission, which had been established in the interim) was 3,765.

Since the war, the population of particular islands has not been specified; the St. Paul's Islanders (who number less than 200) are apparently not included, and until 1952 the Hammond Islanders were listed separately. Since 1952 the totals (given below) have been derived from three categories, "Torres Strait Islands", "Cape York Settlement" and "Hammond Island". Interpreted literally, these make no allowance for the Islanders living on Thursday Island and the mainland (except Cape York Settlement), who according to my own very approximate estimate number some 800. However, my own estimates of the populations actually resident on the reserves
suggests that allowance has been made for emigrants, though I have been unable to obtain any clarification of this point. Assuming that this is the case, the rise between 1948 and 1960 could have been achieved by an annual increase of a little less than 3%, which is substantial but not unparalleled in other, more civilized parts of the Pacific (Cumberland 1962: 388). However, the reported increase in certain years has been much higher: thus, between 1958 and 1959 the population is reported to have risen by 16.3%, which is improbable. This leads one to doubt the reliability of the censuses on which the totals are based.

In the most recent report, 1962, Torres Straits Islanders are no longer listed as a separate category, being grouped with Aborigines resident on Country Reserves.

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details, see 'Periodical Reports and Documentary Sources'
below.

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<td>S.M.B.</td>
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