

Urbanisation as a process of rural change.
The French Polynesian case : Tahiti and Moorea.
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As a specialist in Economic Anthropology, and in view of the past orientation of my research in a rural environment, I propose to explain how the development of a salaried economy contributes to the urbanization of rural society and how, in the end, this urbanization is a process of rural change.

The site chosen for my study is Moorea, a small island of approximately 5 000 inhabitants (1), situated near Tahiti, about 10 nautical miles to the North West of Papeete and binded to the town by means of constant schooner and aeroplane services. This island, very close to the town, has always been noted for its particular characteristics, and until the beginning of the 1960's, it remained outside the economic and technological evolution which was transforming Papeete and Tahiti in general. For more advanced research I chose Maatea, a village of 300-400 inhabitants (2) in the "district" of Afareaitu which, at the beginning of my survey, offered particularly interesting material as, though situated in a still agricultural area, it already had a considerable number of salaried workers (3).

In the field of Economic Anthropology, the study of precise phenomena, such as the urbanization of rural society, constitutes an approach which may probably enrich results obtained through general and classical research on development and modernization.

The study of urbanization on Moorea, and the changes which it brings about, must be considered against their historical background. In fact, and despite it being a rural society, Moorea has always been very closely linked with Papeete, whose influence is strongly felt by the population of the island and whose market provides a strong economic tie. The eruption of a salaried economy, which was the first vector of urbanization, created a break in the traditional relationship between Tahiti and Moorea.

After this necessary description of the historical background, I shall speak of the signs, vectors and forms of urbanization on Moorea. For to speak of an urbanized rural society seems to demand a serious explanation. Finally, I shall try to show which aspects of rural life are transformed by this process.

The historical background.

Before the arrival of the Europeans, Moorea was tightly imbricated in the network of chiefdoms which covered Tahiti, and it can be deduced from traditions that between the two islands there was an intense exchange of people and ideas (4). On the arrival of the Europeans, the conflicts which opposed the members of the Pomare family to their rivals spread to Moorea.

In the very first conversion of the Society Islands to the Gospel, Moorea was the first area to be more over, and thus became the central base from which preachers went forth to the larger neighbouring island. When the missionaries settled, the first plantations were laid out in the centre of the island which was gradually being deserted (or was already deserted) at this time (5).

The colonial period, properly speaking, began with the establishment of the French Protectorate on the Kingdom of Tahiti, which had included Moorea since the conquest of Pomare I (6), and on the level of economic and social relations between Tahiti and Moorea this had three consequences :

1^o the development of Papeete.

2^o the arrival on Moorea of "colonials" who settled. The fact is related to the social evolution on Tahiti during the 19th century [see surveys made by C. Newbury (7) and Fr. Doumenge (8)]. With the establishment of the Protectorate came a wave of colonization which was notably marked by the installation on Tahiti of minor civil service employees and military contingents who had come to work there. The biographies of R.P. O'Reilly and R. Teissier (9) clearly show their lineage. From these very large families, the younger members went out to the other islands ; thus Moorea became colonised by members of the second generation.

3^o the acquisition of land and the constitution of private estates. M. Panoff (10) has retraced how the population, under the impulsion of French colonization, developed an individualistic conception of property. "Colonials" were thus able to constitute estates either by the acquisition of constituent plots or by obtaining them through marriage in the adopted village. In this way a few large coastal and inland estates, and many smaller coastal properties were established. The underlying motive of this was to "give full value" to the land, or more exactly, to develop the plantations linked with the Europeans markets, i.e. cotton, sugar-cane, copra which triumphed at the end of the last century, in addition to other cash-crops i.e. vanilla, coffee (11).

Now let's resume the situation today.

Before describing the traditional system of economy, valid until the changes which occurred during the 1960's, a word must be said about social and economic evolution.

On the one hand, the matrimonial implantation of the Europeans in Polynesian society, together with the effects of the succession of generations, resulted in the cross-breeding of the "colonials" and in the splitting up of the original large estates. There was thus at Moorea a class of half-breed or "Demis" planters ta'ata afa popa'a, who were either descendants of the original "colonials" or new-comers from Tahiti. With the irregular, though sometimes very large profits gained from vanilla, some acquired land. And so, throughout this present century, there has been a continual dividing-up of property, which finished either in the splitting up or grouping together of pieces of land. On the other hand, the extension of cash-crops spread beyond the colonial class and its descendants and reached the Tahitian population.

The traditional economic system was therefore mainly based on "Demis" owned plantations. This property was either administered directly, possibly using local labour, or let to tenant farmers. The greater part of the Tahitian population lived mostly on a subsistence economy, but also partly on income earned from copra cultivated by landlords or by tenants, and sometimes on occasional wages earned by working for other landowners. Subsistence activities (fishing, "taro"-growing) constituted a small commercial production for the local market at Papeete. Cash-crops and this limited production for the local market enabled the population to buy essential manufactured goods, i.e. a few vital foodstuffs, clothes, building materials such as wood, etc. The town of Papeete, therefore, played a considerable role, because it was part of the traditional system, but it was not of prime importance. It was valuable as a market, and as a centre for the diffusion of ideas and models from the outside world in an otherwise closed rural economy.

This system fell to pieces when the Tahitian economy underwent great changes in the early 1960's.

It was directed towards tourism, and this created a need for labour on the sites of necessary construction investments even before 1960 (12). With the arrival of the Nuclear Experiments Centre, the policy of extensive public works (13) and the promulgation of a "hotels" policy, this need for labour grew greater, and resulted in a progressive increase in salaries.

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It must therefore be considered that, as from 1960, a growing pressure was exerted on rural populations to accept a wage-earning economy.

In the early 1960's, Moorea suffered an agricultural crisis with regard to vanilla (fewer crops owing to disease, plus a lowering of world tariffs). Cultivated mainly by Chinese and Tahitian workers on contract as tenant-farmers, vanilla quickly disappeared from Moorea, and producers took up either market-gardening or some salaried employment, or else left the island. In a survey of the economy of Moorea (14), I have shown that between 1959 and 1967 vanilla, which had represented three-quarters of its resources, more or less disappeared, and that the major part of these resources had, during this same period, decreased by more than two-thirds (15). There was also a lowering of world copra tariffs which, together with an increase in the cost of living, and at the same time the decaying state of the coconut plantations and attacks by a predatory insect, considerably reduced the resources of producers and, from 1968, copra began to be abandoned. Only market-gardening continued to flourish.

On the other hand, thanks to organized publicity and efforts in the Territory, the tourist industry was to develop gradually on Moorea, and from 1968-1969, the creation of a regular air-service helped to stimulate it.

The abandoning of traditional agriculture and a reconversion to a salaried economy on Tahiti, plus a local tourist trade constitute a complete change in the island's economy, and traces of this may be found in the population growth of this period : with a natural growth-rate of 3.1 % per year, the population increased only by 10 %, because the first two years were marked by fairly large-scale emigration (9 % per year) which was not compensated for by a similar wave of immigration ; on the contrary, after 1964, though there was still a large number of departures (6.3 % per year) there was an even greater number of arrivals (7.2 %). This may be interpreted as follows : the vanilla crisis was at the origin of the first departures, the call for labour in Papeete explains continuing immigration after 1964, and the tourist industry together with its accompanying trades provokes new immigration : hotel staff, labour foremen and specialized workers for building and public works, minor transport agents, artisans and "souvenir" sellers. It is, moreover, this large-scale appearance of new construction activities and public services which raises the question of urbanization.

Urbanization : signs and vectors.

It is easier to speak of urbanization in connection with an agglomeration
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and its surrounding area than to do so in the case of Moorea, which is separated from the capital by a stretch of water, and is without a proper urban centre from which suburban zones may develop. So in the first place I shall define the meaning I intend to give to "urbanization" so that there will be no ambiguity over the propriety of the terms used nor over the facts described.

In my opinion, urbanization is a gradual process. I shall therefore start from the former notion of the urban fact. Towns are characterised by their specific space and functions. Urban space is characterised by a great density of population, a concentration of activities and heavy traffic. These characteristics gradually disappear as the distance from the urban centre becomes greater and the pressure of rural surroundings becomes stronger. Urban functions are of an industrial, commercial, financial, administrative and even political nature. Urban activities concern secondary and tertiary sectors (16). They support the urban population but are also responsible for the economic life of the surrounding rural area : the town buys to produce and provides it with services and manufactured goods, even when the economy is of the colonial type where cash-crops and manufactured goods do no more than pass through the town. Urban space and urban functions have one certain effect : they create an urban way of life characterised by specific forms of employment and consumption.

What does urbanization really mean ? The development of the urban fact is related to two things, depending on the point of view taken, that of space or that of population. Urbanization may be - and is - conceived as the extension into the surrounding rural area of urban characteristics or urban functions. In the urban zone there is a centre (the town) and the outskirts through which the urban gradually gives way to the rural. Urbanization may - and is - also conceived to be the extension of the urban way of life into the surrounding rural area.

What is the nature of the case of Papeete ? There is an urban centre represented roughly by the "Commune" where essential functions are concentrated : market, banks, large commercial enterprises, industries, high-schools, and all administrative services. There are also suburban neighbourhoods occupied mainly by working-class population and where handicrafts or industrial activities may be found ; i.e. outlying areas, valleys penetrating into the mountains or suburban "communes". Thirdly, there are purely residential areas, situated beyond the suburban "communes" ; the agglomeration stops there. Beyond this is the rural area where the influence of Papeete is felt only through the animation it provides, and even this decreases as the distance from the town gets greater. If I may be allowed to use French geographical terms, I should say that the rest of Tahiti

Nui is the "small suburb", that the Taiarapu (Tahiti Iti) peninsula and Moorea are the "medium suburb", and that the Leeward Islands are the "great suburb", all this considering the ease, frequency and cost of communications. As for urban functions, it must be emphasised that with the almost entire disappearance of cash-crops comes the extension of urban employment, increased redistribution of produce and money, and the role of acclimatization and diffusion of new manners of consumption and living.

What therefore can be said about Moorea on the subject of urbanization ? The criterium of population density is not decisive (17). On the other hand, the trend of activities towards secondary and tertiary sectors is evident, but, in 1968, this way only so in certain "districts" - those in the North (Paopao and Papetoai) and one in the East (Afareaitu). There were two strongholds of the rural world, the remains of the traditional economic system in existence up to 1960 - in the North-east (Teavaro) and in the South-west (Haapiti) (see fig. 1). Why these two strongholds ? For Haapiti, this seems to be a result of its distance from Papeete on account of badly organised transport. For Teavaro, it was not a question of distance but there were no salaried workers and the tourist industry had not yet reached the area (18). By contrast, there were two strongholds of urbanization : one was Afareaitu, centred on salaried employment in the town, and the other was the northern coast, based on tourism. If other objective signs of urbanization are considered, the following statements may be made :

- there developed a greater frequency in relations between these "districts" and Papeete (since the establishment of an air-service, the phenomenon is very plain all along the northern coast) ;
- there developed also a greater intensity of commerce, of handicrafts, building concerns and transport agents along the northern coast ;
- certain essential services have become concentrated along this coast : car repairs, a secondary school ; since 1968, these services have increased and may be found almost anywhere around the island (hospital, gas distribution service, drinks etc... small modern boat repairs).

The tourist industry, a salaried economy in the town, and a certain "delocalisation"(19) of enterprises from Papeete to Moorea seem to constitute the vectors of this progressive urbanization. In order to measure its effects, I shall speak of the wage-labour in the town, and in the village (20) I particularly studied (21).

An urban way of life.

From 1960 to 1967 the population of the village of Maatea increased considerably : 26 %. The active population grew by 28 %. A change occurred in the redistribution of activities : the number of farmers and fishermen decreased by 40 % while the number of salaried workers became more than five times as great. On this point I should like to give the following detail : the agricultural workers who also cultivate a piece of ground for their own benefit and fish for their own needs have been counted among the farmers/fishermen. The workers qualified as salaried workers are therefore either employees of the Public Works service at Moorea, or workers employed at Papeete itself, or civil service employees working at Moorea. Salaried workers are therefore employees carrying out urban-type work which may be distinguished from rural-type employment by a certain number of characteristics.

Unlike the rural worker, the salaried worker earns a wage which is neither directly nor immediately the result of his work. More exactly, this wage automatically follows his presence at work. Moreover, it is personally linked to the worker, and not to the family group nor to the landowner holding the means of production. In the case of salaried rural employment, the family group or the landowner may have an influence on the autonomy of the worker. In the case of urban employment, the break with rural life is clear, and the economic autonomy of the worker more real.

This wage is received regularly in small fractions over short periods of time and is consequently adapted to regular consumption.

This implies that the worker is not free to do as he pleases, but is obliged to respect rigorous working-hours, and ensure his arrival at the place of employment. For half the salaried workers in Maatea in 1967 this implied leading two separate lives : in the town during the week, and at home during the week-end.

It also implies that domestic equipment cannot be obtained so easily as in the case of rural employment, since urban employment does not bring in large incomes at certain moments. But that is rather theoretical, since saving is sometimes possible, and, even if it is not, articles may be bought on hire-purchase.

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The facts reveal that there is no doubt that workers who abandon the traditional system to become salaried employees immediately benefit from an economic promotion, bringing greater financial resources to nuclear families and consequently improving their living conditions. Concerning the first point, competition in the increasing of salaries in the town provoked similar increases in agricultural wages which more than doubled between 1964 and 1968, while the cost of living increased to a lesser extent (22). Moreover, young people tended to start work very early, sometimes before the age of fifteen, and so certain households received several simultaneous salaries ; on the other hand, the employment of many youths as unskilled labourers was only temporary, so that the effect of these multiple salaries was not fully realised. However, the salaries brought into these households made possible the purchase of domestic equipment, be it houses, means of transport, fishing equipment domestic appliances, or equipment for pastimes and leisure activities (23). It must be emphasised that this effort to obtain equipment was possible only because daily consumption remained frugal because the inhabitants benefited from bank loans (24) and because the Nuclear Experiments Centre had created a situation in which salaries increased considerably.

How did the village reach to this new economic system, based on a salaried economy, in which it was caught up ? First of all, it led to the valley being almost completely deserted, after it having assured the villages' subsistence for years. Only a few of the poorest inhabitants continued cultivating the soil or picking fruit and leaves (25). The only animation reigning in the village came from the women going to do their shopping at the village stores or from to the school-children. Apart from that there was the truck which passed on its way to and from the hospital at Afareaitu, and also, periodically, a delivery of drinks or butane gas. The men who worked on Moorea left home early in the morning, about five or six o'clock and came back in the evening also about five or six. Those who worked in town left by boat about midnight each Sunday evening, and came back the following Friday night or Saturday morning. In this way, the village only lived - and then it really came to life again - from Friday night to Sunday afternoon. And then it was only a week-end organised in the modern Tahitian way : chatter drinking, billiards, or singing and guitar-playing on the Friday evening ; odd-jobs, fishing, fruit and vegetable picking for the Tahitian-style Sunday lunch on Saturday morning ; football training for youths' teams in the afternoon ; cinema or dancing in the evening ; religious service on Sunday morning ; football matches in one of the island's villages on Sunday afternoon.

The striking thing about this typical week-end is its really urban character ; first the break with the week following a strictly urban rhythm, and then the urban character of the occupations and pastimes enjoyed by the population at the week-end ; within the framework of life which has become urban because the obligations and rhythm of salaried employment have imposed themselves, the population tends to adopt an urban way of living.

Maatea is the example of a village which, within a few years, has adopted an urban way of living. This way of living seems on the one hand to have been imposed by the salaried system of employment, and on the other hand to have been instigated by the workers, particularly of the younger generation, who, in daily contact with city-dwellers, have carried back to Moorea the features of urban life they appreciated and which could be easily transported. As to knowing whether this may be called progress, only time will enable us to judge.

Papeete ORSTOM Centre

June 1971

F I G U R E 1Distribution of active population according to sector of activity

DISTRICTS	Primary sector	Secondary and Tertiary sectors	Active Population Total
HAAPITI	64	36	100
TEAVARO	72	28	100
AFAREAITU	44	56	100
PACPAO	49	51	100
PAPETOAI	26	74	100
The whole of MOOREA	49	51	100

F I G U R E 2Socio-economic evolution in Maatea

	1960	1967
Total population	321	406
Active population	90	115
A total population	28	28
Farmers/fishermen	77	46
Salaried workers (on Moorea	8	34
(elsewhere	5	35

N O T E S

- (1). 4 385 inhabitants in 1967, i.e. at least 5 000 today.
- (2). About 400 inhabitants in 1967.
- (3). From 1967, the agriculture was rapidly abandoned in the "district" of Afareaitu.
- (4). In particular the traditions reported by Arii Taimai (ADAMS Henry, 1901, Memoirs of Arii Taimai) show the intensity of the relations between Tahiti and Moorea. The same thing is emphasised by E.S.C. Handy (1950, History and Culture in the Society Islands, Bernice P. Bishop Museum, Bulletin 77).
- (5). GREEN Roger et alii, 1967, Archaeology in the Island of Moorea, French Polynesia, New-York, The Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History, volume 51, part. 2.
- (6). Towards 1770 and in 1777 at the time of Cook's third voyage ; then in 1790 after Bligh's first visit.
- (7). NEWBURY Colin, 1967, Aspects of cultural change in French Polynesia : The decline of the Arii, Journal of the Polynesian Society, Wellington, vol. 67, March, p. 7-26.
- (8). DOUMENGE, Fr., 1966, L'Homme dans le Pacifique Sud, Paris, Société des Océanistes, N° 19.
- (9). O'REILLY (R.P.), TEISSIER R., 1962, Tahitiens, Paris, Société des Océanistes, N° 10.
- (10). PANOFF M., 1966, Un demi-siècle de contorsions juridiques en Polynésie française, The Journal of Pacific History, Canberra, Australian National University, volume 2.
- (11). I resume all this very succinctly. For more details, see my article :1970, Surplus ou dynamique de groupe. Un exemple polynésien, Cahiers Internationaux de Sociologie, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, p. 111-152.

- (12). Construction of the first large hotels at Tahiti, modern coast road, airport for jet-planes.
- (13). Papeete harbour, sea front, government buildings, technical college, general hospital, extensive tourist offices.
- (14). Moorea 1968 : du Coprah au Tourisme in FAGES J. et alii, 1970, Tahiti et Moorea, Paris, ORSTOM.
- (15). In 1959 vanilla represented the sum of 57 million Pacific out of 52 million for all the cash-crops together. Production, which at this time was at 135 tons, decreased to 6 tons in 1967. Besides, between 1959 and 1967, incomes earned on cash-crops went down from 52 to 16.5 millions, not taking into account the decrease in spending power between these two dates.
- (16). See terminology in Colin Clark, The Conditions of the Economic Progress.
- (17). As it is essentially the coastal region which is densely populated, approximate population density can be calculated using the coastal plain. By estimating this plain to be 18 square kilometers, a density of 245 inhabitants per square kilometer is obtained, therefore very inferior to that of a moderately condensed urban habitat.
- (18). All this is now changing rapidly (June 1971).
- (19). Term used by certain economists to express the spread of industry to a rural area from an urban centre.
- (20). Logically, the effects of urbanization should be less than in an area where the tourist industry is the basis of all activity (no local salaried economy, no spectacular development of public services, no models of behaviour and life of foreign origin).
- (21). Maatea, in the South-eastern region of Moorea.
- (22). On Moorea, average agricultural wages have increased by more than 50 %, while the cost of living in French Polynesia has increased by 38 %. It must be added that agricultural wages were inferior to industrial wages.

(23). Inventories of Maatea households are extremely eloquent : - out of 36 households, if only one television set and three electricity generators (in addition to the one at the Chinese shop which serves two other houses) are to be found, twelve households contain at least one of the following items : - tape recorder (9 households), camera (7), record-player (5) ; 33 households have a transistor radio set. Only five households are without some sort of vehicle : there are 21 scooters and motorized bicycles (solex), 11 form-wheeled vehicles (jeeps, trucks, vans), and 14 outboard motors fixed on to canoes. 14 households have sewing-machines, 12 have refrigerators, 10 have oil or gas cookers.

The construction of houses is also an eloquent phenomenon. Out of 45 houses (the entire centre of the village), 32 are built on concrete, 17 are made of painted planks of imported wood, 5 are built of hard materials, 33 have a corrugated iron roof. The other houses are of more humble construction unpainted wood, wooden fibre ("pinex") or of plaited bamboo with a roof of plaited coconut palms (ni'au).

Among these 45 houses, 3 were built before 1957, 16 before 1960. Subsequently, 26 have been built and 6 of the older ones have been repaired (roofing in particular).

(24). The SOCRÉDO (Société de Crédit et de Développement de l'Océanie) is a state company which lends money at a very low rate of interest for domestic equipment.

(25). Tahitian chestnuts (mapa, Inocarpus edulis) sold at Papeete market, and to spectators at sports grounds during football matches ; pandanus (fara, Pandanus tectorius) plaited in order to be used as roofing on Tahitian-style constructions and sold at Papeete.