

Symposium B 2.1 : Analysis and demographic consequences of migrations
in a rural district of TAHITI

has
This paper has a two-fold purpose :

1). Most of the studies completed for some ten years now emphasize the notion of "mobility" which actually covers quite diverse realities. Therefore, it is important in my opinion to make the distinction between :

a) Temporary movements lasting from a few days to a few months, and largely motivated by breaking up of family groups, whim and so on...

b) Lasting or definite movements, the real migrations which play a much greater importance in social and economic life, and which have effects on the demographic structures.

2). Highlighting migrations is useful in another way at this particular point in time. The country districts of TAHITI which have not absorbed into "greater" PAPEETE (I refer to the study of Ben Finney "Polynesian Peasants and Proletarians. Socio-economic Change among the Tahitians of French Polynesia". Polynesian Society Reprints Series, n° 9, Wellington, 1965...and to the one of ORSTOM : TAHITI and MOOREA. Etudes sur la Société, l'Economie et l'Utilisation de l'Espace 1970) are experiencing a true collapse in the production of the three export products (coprah, vanilla, coffee) which are traditionally the main guaranties of rural income. An interesting problem is to discover whether the expansion of the tourist trade (as of 1960) and setting up the C.E.P., Nuclear Experiment Center (as of 1964) have played a determining role in setting off the crisis or whether it started before 1960. In this latter case, the poor functioning of the agricultural system would be the main causal factor as has been shown by all of the studies in the last 15 years, the present socio-economic transformations doing no more than to take up the relay of a process of desintegration already well under way.

In the absence of a thorough study of all the elements of the problem, a study of migrations may furnish us with an interesting factor in its solution : both in terms of direction (immigration, emigration) and in quantitative terms, migratory movements reveal the extent to which such a geographical area is more or less prosperous. In the case which interests us (under study), it is obviously necessary to study these phenomena for a period of time not less than 20 years.

Research has been carried out in the district of PAPEARI in 1967 and 1968. This district is located on the Southern Coast (or Western Coast) of TAHITI at the boundary of TAHITI-NUI and TAHITI-ITI. On March 1968, I counted 1093 residents. It was still a country district because of two reasons at least :

- 1) PAPEETE is distant of fifty kilometers.
- 2) On 1968, 40 % of the residents were farmers or fishermen ; only 25 % of active ones went to PAPEETE for working.

My data concern a small area and a little population but I think they are available for all the country districts of the southern Coast of TAHITI. This opinion is based on a quick investigation carried out in these districts ; among others, it concerns the socio-professional structures and the migrants come from archipelagos outside of TAHITI (I refer to the study of ORSTOM...).

Providing evidence for migrations over such a long period of time creates several methodological problems :

- Investigation based on direct observation is obviously excluded. The available demographic documents are hard to make us of. Besides, certain items are completely devoid of any value : for example, the figures furnished by the administrative census of March 1967 are without residential criteria ; not the slightest use of controls was made over the census takers.

Theoretically, by using the official census results, one might be able to detect the evolution of internal migrations at different times (1946, 1951, 1956, 1962, 1971) by comparing the birth-places with the census locations for the people of each legal or geographical area (district, township, island, archipelago). This method was used by I.N.S.E.E. in 1962 for making the study of inter-island migrations. According to our own observations, it gives only highly approximate results : in March 1968, 31 percent of the 360 persons residing in PAPEARI but born elsewhere really belong to families established in the district for several generations. This fact is due to the importance of temporary movements. Especially, the women give very often birth to their children in the districts where they were born. In this way, the comparison between several censuses would be difficult because from an census to an another one the residential criteria may change (for example between 1956 and 1962).

The censuses taken in certain district of TAHITI by the Louis Malardé Institute of Medical Research are much more available, but making use of them poses delicate problems of interpretation. The "Inspectors" of the Institute are not demographers but health agents who visit homes regularly, count the inhabitants present, register births and deaths, arrivals and departures since their last visit : for them, the purpose is to detect the occurrence of bearers of filaria and find out what has become of former bearers. They record all possible kinds of mobility, both temporary and permanent movements. They record all possible kinds of mobility, both temporary and permanent movements. Well, the temporary migrations are the more numerous. So, the I.R.M.'s information must be very carefully verified with someone who is quite familiar with the population in question. Of course, only migratory movements occurring over just a few years in rather small populations can be analysed.

The only method permitting of analysing migratory movements covering a long period of time consists in utilising the possibilities offered by genealogies (see fig. 1). A Tahitian is perfectly familiar with all his relatives belonging to his father's and his grandfather's generations ; beyond that, his knowledge is vague or non existent. On these bases, it is possible to determine and to date all arrivals and departures for three generations of migrant adults belonging to localised family groups in a given place for several decades. The informants themselves eliminate movements of short duration and remember those that connect up with an important event of the social or economic life : marriages, migrations to work in NOUMEA, and so one...

Applied to the family groups whose members living in PAPEARI on the 1st March represented 95 % of the total population of the district, this method permit us to record :

- 1) between 1950 and 1960, the arrival of 22 men and 27 women, the departure of 25 men and 39 women ;
- 2) between 1960 and 1970, the arrival of 24 men and of 10 women ; the departure of 52 men and 59 women.

These figures would be much more large if the children less than 15 years old were counted.

So, between 1950 and 1960, the family groups settled at PAPEARI lost 92 adults (31 men and sixty two women). There already existed between 1950 and 1960 a very unfavorable migratory balance, especially in as far as women are concerned.

The motives of migrations are always complex to analyse at TAHITI ; on the other hand, it is difficult to interrogate the absents. Nevertheless, the destination of the migrants proves that as early as 1950, the inhabitants of PAPEARI left in search of work :

- between 1950 and 1960, 33 percent of the departures had as destination PAPEETE and the districts near PAPEETE (PIRAE, FAAA) ; 25 percent were for NEW-CALEDONIA and the NEW-HEBRIDES.

- between 1960 and 1968, because of socio-economic transformations undergone by FRENCH POLYNESIA, the departures towards the urban area increased : 55 percent of the migrants from PAPEARI left for PAPEETE, PIRAE or FAAA. 14 percent only left for the French Pacific Territories.

On the other hand, it may be observed that the major part of the arrivals (76 percent between 1950 and 1960 ; 66 percent between 1960 and 1970) come from the rural districts of FRENCH POLYNESIA. The greater part, 72 percent between 1950 and 1960 and 69 percent between 1960 and 1970 were motivated by matrimonial alliances. All of these facts prove that PAPEARI has lost all economic dynamism without losing its rural character.

The migrations have also demographic consequences. The persistence for 20 years of an unfavorable migratory balance is responsible for a whole series of demographic unbalances certain of which show up clearly on the age pyramid (see fig. 2).

- Men are much more numerous than women ; PAPEARI counted 578 men for 515 women on March 1968. The sex-ratio was 112 while it was 108 in 1962 and 104 in 1956. That one for the whole of FRENCH POLYNESIA was 102 in 1962.

- The inactives ones, children less than 15 years old and adults more than 60 years old, make up almost 55 percent of the total population.

- Compared with the children less than 15 years old and the people more than fifty years old, the adults at the age of procreation are little numerous, particularly for women (for instance, women from 20 to 25 years old). In the long run, this might have grave consequences. The crude birth-rate is 36,5 per thousand and the crude death rate 9,1 ; for the whole of FRENCH POLYNESIA, according to the figures calculated by Mr. CLAIRIN for the period 1962-1967, these rates are 42,5 and 10 per thousand. At PAPEARI, the natural rate of population growth is great (2,7 percent) but it is very much lower than that calculated for the whole of FRENCH POLYNESIA (3,2 percent).

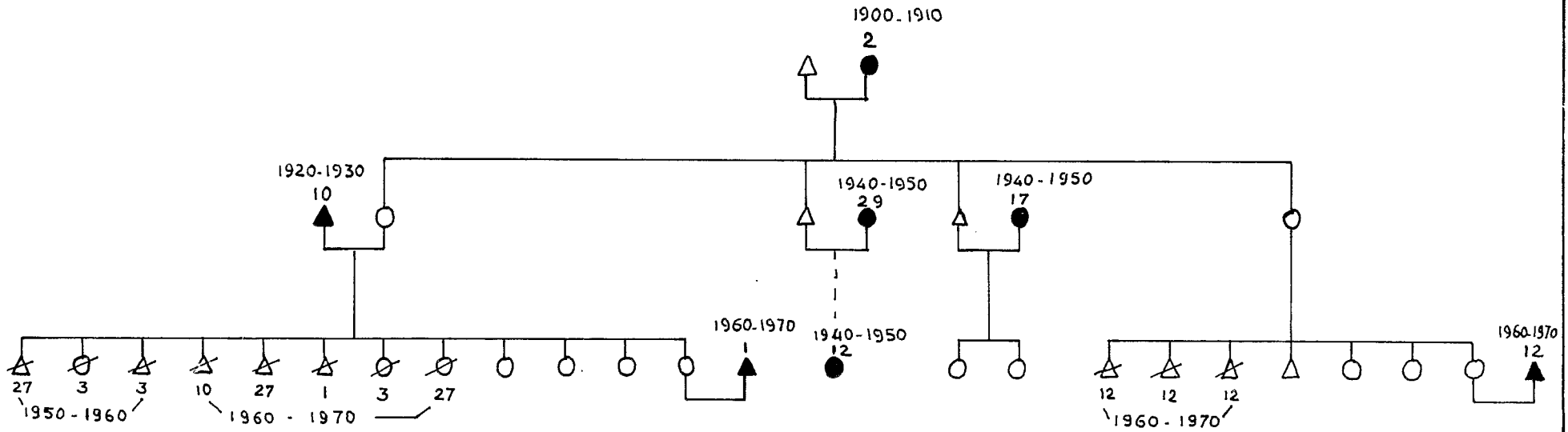
It would seem that the reason does not lie in the people's vitality. I have tried to appreciate it by calculating the general rate of fertility for a year (see fig. 4) and the number of children per woman (see fig. 5). The curve of the rate of fertility is different from this one available for the whole of FRENCH POLYNESIA, because women get married late; for instance (see fig. 3) 25 percent of ones from 20 to 25 years old are not been married. So, one can find that the women between 30 and 40 years old have more children than the ones between 20 and 30 years old. In spite of these differences, the women of PAPEARI seem as prolific as the other ones of FRENCH POLYNESIA. So, the persistence of an unfavorable migratory balance would be responsible for the light natural growth of the population.

PAPEARI :

EXAMPLE OF MIGRATIONS

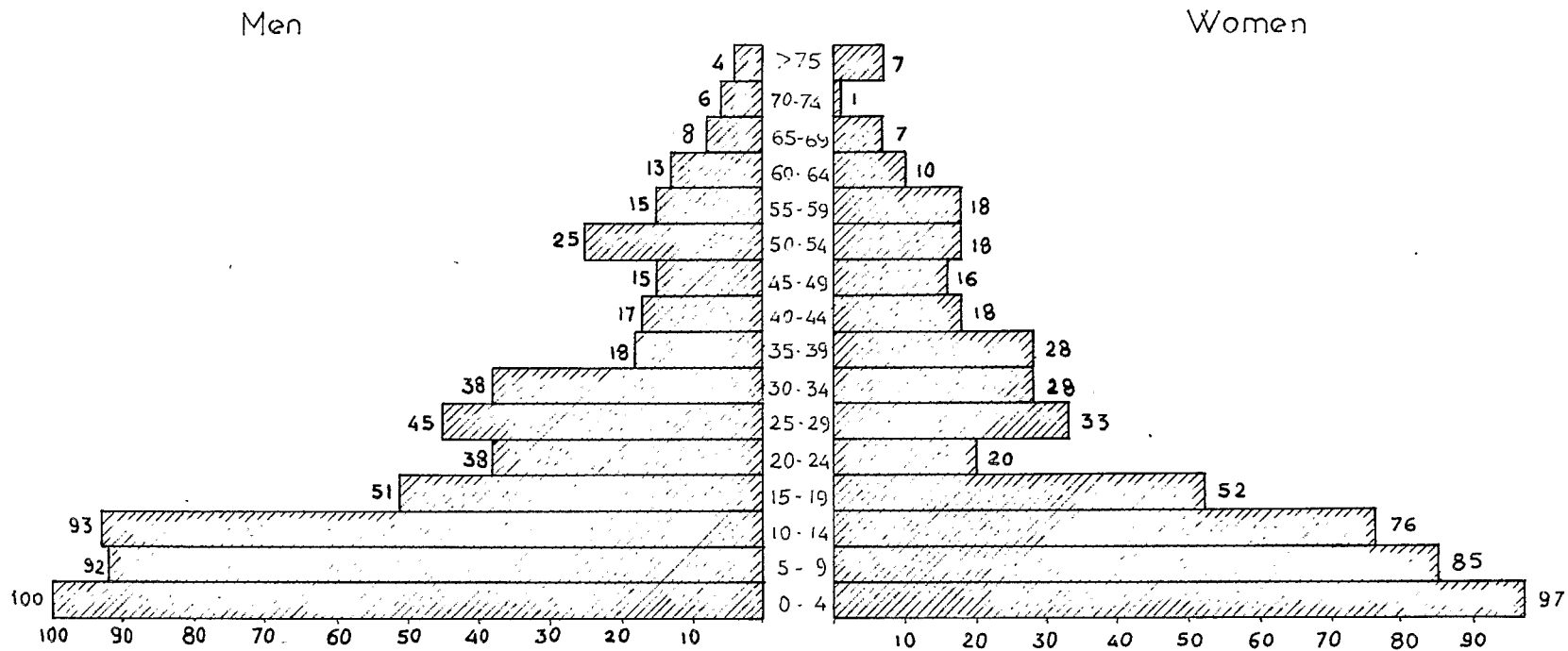
- 1 - Mataiea
- 2 - Papara
- 3 - Afahiti
- 10 - Paea
- 12 - Papeete
- 17 - Tiarei
- 27 - Noumea
- 29 - Christmas

- △ Resident
- Immigrant
- ⊖ Emigrant



PAPEARI :

THE AGE PYRAMID

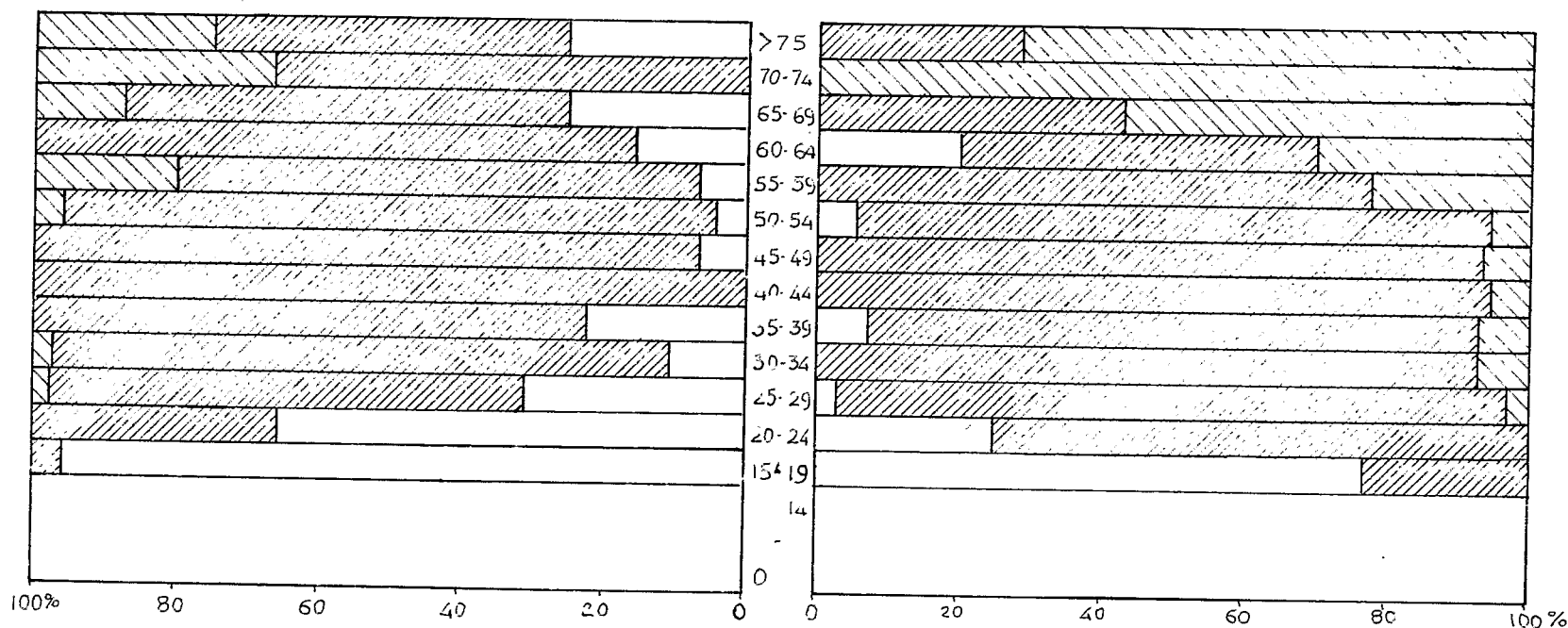


PAPEARI :

THE MATRIMONIAL SITUATION

Men

Women



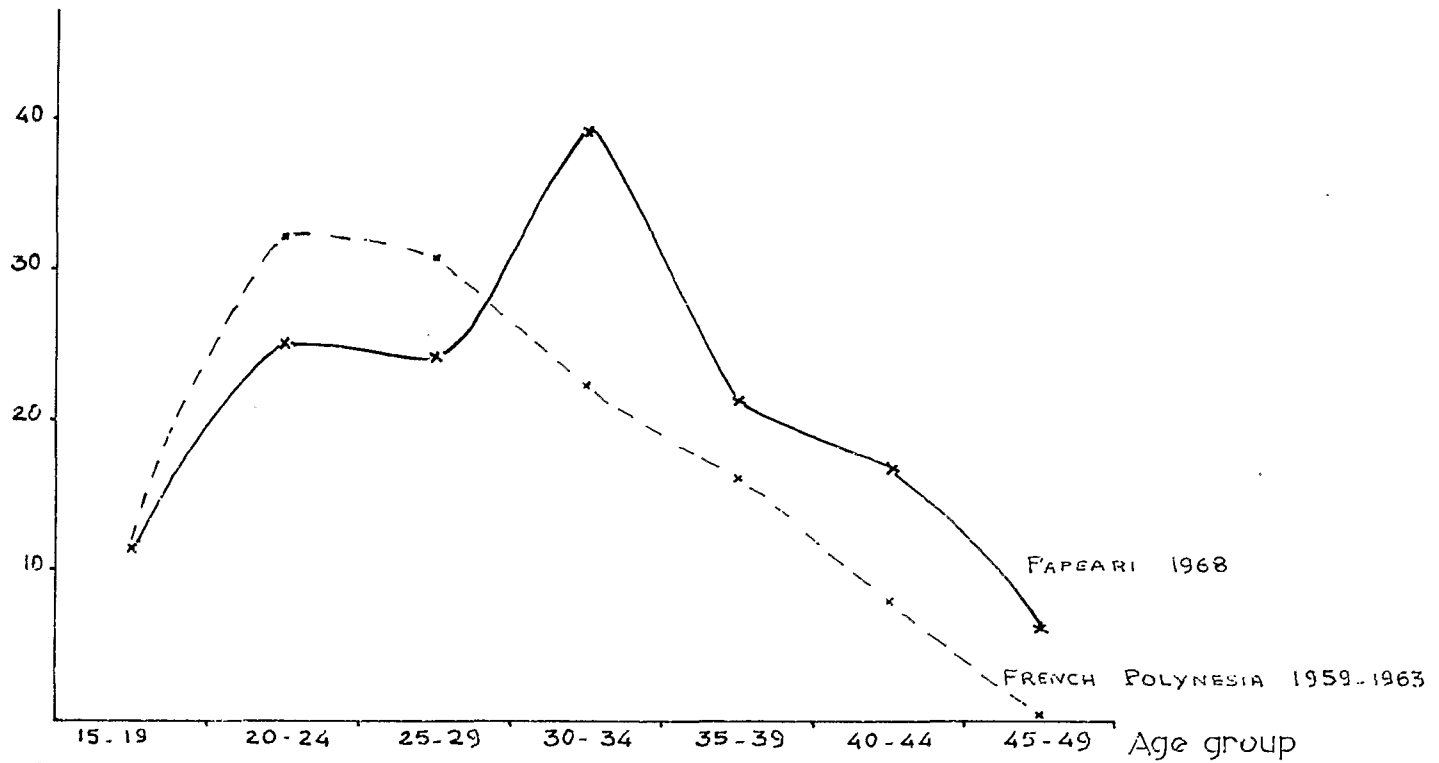
□ Celibate

▨ "Married"

▩ Widowed or "Divorced"

FERTILITY RATE

Number of children
per 100 women



PAPEARI :

NUMBER OF CHILDREN PER WOMAN

Number of children

