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## ADOPTION ON MOKIL<sup>1</sup>

By J. E. WECKLER

THE adoption of children is a major means by which adults can alter the membership of that basic social unit, the elementary family. We may consequently expect that, where adoption is frequently resorted to, it will have important effects on the structure of the society and on the personality dynamics of the people involved. The comparative study of the role of adoption in diverse societies will increase our insight into the functions of the family in society. Polynesia and Micronesia offer one of the most fertile fields for such investigation, since adoption is known to be particularly common there. Although many anthropologists have mentioned adoption as an important institution in Oceania, there is no report of a detailed study of the phenomenon for any Oceanic society. Raymond Firth, in *We the Tikopia*, gives us our only general discussion of the practice in Polynesia; there is nothing comparable for Micronesia. The present paper is offered as a starting point for a comparative study of Oceanic versions of the institution. Perhaps students of other areas will add their portions. Ultimately we may develop insights that will illuminate the role of adoption in our own society where it is becoming increasingly common and is recognized as a social problem.

Mokil lies in the eastern Caroline Islands, at 6° 39' N. and 159° 53' E., about eighty-five miles easterly from Ponape. It is a tiny shield-shaped atoll with maximum dimensions of a little over two miles north and south and about one and a third miles east and west, inclusive of the lagoon. The total land area, less than half a square mile, is divided between three islets: Karlap, Urok and Manton. Karlap is located on the northeast sector of the reef; the Mokilese live along its lagoon shore where they are protected from the prevailing northeasterly trade winds. Most of the dwellings are concentrated on the northern half of the islet but there are scattered houses to the extreme southern tip.

Taro and coconut are the main vegetable foods, but breadfruit, bananas, pandanus and arrowroot furnish supplementary and mainly seasonal variety. Coconut trees grow nearly everywhere, intermingled in the interior with breadfruit. The main taro pit is located on Karlap but numerous smaller ones have been dug, mostly in recent years, in the interiors of the other two islands. The coconut land is divided into nearly 350 separate parcels and taro land is likewise divided into a large number of tiny plots. Both kinds of land are individually owned but all the plots under the control of one extended patrilocal family are worked as a unit under the direction of the family head. Family holdings are characteristically widely scattered and most families own some land on each of the three islets.

In 1947 the population of Mokil was 425. The present inhabitants are all descendants of 25 or 30 people who survived a prehistoric typhoon that occurred around 1775. I secured a complete genealogy tracing the descent of all the present Mokilese from those early survivors plus a few immigrants from other Micronesian islands and casual white men, mostly members of mid-nineteenth century whaling crews.

Nearly a third of the children born on Mokil since the prehistoric typhoon have been adopted. Almost twice as many boys have been adopted as girls. 115 of 178 known adoptees were boys, 63 were girls. This disparity is due partly to the emphasis Mokilese place upon patrilineity and the resulting desire of every man to have sons to "carry on his line," as the Mokilese say. Males are also more in demand than females because their work is considered to be more valuable and to require more skill than the work of women.

Most adoptions are made shortly before the birth of the adoptee or within a few months after that event, but the child remains with its mother until it is weaned, usually during its second or third year. The following table summarizes the data on age at time of adoption for both sexes:

Age at time of adoption	No. of boys	No. of girls	Total
At or near birth	77	44	121
Post-weaning but pre-adolescence	11	6	17
Adolescence	5	2	7
Young adulthood	4	0	4
Totals for whom age is known	97	52	149

These figures show the Mokilese are faithful to a principle of which informants are quite conscious: a child should be adopted early in life so it will grow up regarding its adoptors as true social parents.

Two kinds of adoption are recognized on Mokil. True and honorable adoption is called *sheri shoyshoy* (pronounced *ʃe'ri ʃoi'ʃoi*. "Typewriter orthography" seems less distracting than phonetic symbols so I shall use it with apologies to linguists). In this relationship the adoptor is expected to treat the adoptee as he would his own child. The adoptee has the right to expect that he will be loved, treated with consideration, and given land by the adoptor when the former marries or when the latter approaches death. In the second, and much less desirable form of adoption, the adoptee is called a *shotay* (*ʃo'tai*), translated with a sneer as "working man." The *shotay* is a dependent with a servant-like status who works for his adoptor for subsistence without hope of inheriting land or receiving rewards beyond the bare necessities of life. An adoptor may mistreat a *shotay* in various ways without incurring adverse

public opinion. The *shotay* may be required to do unpleasant tasks at inconvenient hours, he may be inadequately housed, clothed and fed, and his opinions and wishes receive little heed from the community—he is an inconsequential subordinate.

Adopted children know who their real parents are and maintain close and affectionate bonds with them and their *paneyney* (*pa nei' nei*, the most important social unit, the patrilineal patrilocal extended family).<sup>2</sup> The parents bring food and presents to the child and the child visits them at frequent intervals. Even if the child remains a permanent member of his family of adoption he has lifelong ties of mutual help and support with his parents and their *paneyney*. Particularly during the child's minority his parents watch over his interests and intercede if they feel he is being misused. They can and will take him back if he is abused or if he and the adoptor prove to be incompatible.

Speaking only economically, children are liabilities until late pre-adolescence and become definite assets during adolescence. If an adoptor rears a child through its unproductive years into adolescence he ordinarily has a lifelong claim on the adoptee's assistance at various tasks even if the latter returns to his *paneyney* of birth. If a parent takes his child away from an adoptor during the child's early years, however, the adoptor will have little or no claim on the child afterwards. In any case, if the adoption terminates in bitterness the persons involved may sever relations and refuse to acknowledge further mutual obligations.

Parents are motivated to permit some of their children to be adopted and removed from their households mainly by ideals of family structure or by hope of economic gain for the child or for their *paneyney*. Parents ordinarily feel flattered when a close relative or any couple with whom they are on intimate terms asks to adopt one of their children, and they usually accede. They expect that such an adoption will strengthen still further the bonds between the two families. They can refuse such a request, however, and commonly do if they suspect the prospective adoptor is seeking some excessive personal gain through the proposed relationship. Impoverished parents with many children will sometimes even agree to *shotay* adoptions in the hope that their children will receive better nurture than they can provide.

Several motives lead Mokil adults to adopt children. Many adoptions are based primarily upon ideals of family structure without concern for and sometimes contrary to the adoptor's personal economic advantage. The desire to help others (usually impoverished relatives), or to reward someone for services rendered are other motives that usually work contrary to the adoptor's economic self-interest. In some *sheri shoyshoy* adoptions, however, the adoptor may be primarily motivated by hope of personal advantage, and this is often his attitude toward *shotay*. Several motives of different types are usually

involved in any given adoption. I shall discuss the various kinds of motives and aspects of situations separately, however, in the interest of clarifying the various functions played by the institution.

Foremost among the motives for adoption based on ideals of family structure is the universal desire of Mokil married couples to have children. They clearly adhere to the principle that children are essential to transform a marriage into a family. *Every* childless couple during the past 175 years has adopted one or more children if the marriage endured even a few years. Several young married couples have adopted children during the first few months of their marriages. If the adoptors never have children of their own the adoptee, who is usually a boy, will probably inherit the bulk of their land. He will then be regarded by future generations as having carried on the patrilineal line of the male adoptor (or of the female adoptor's father if the bulk of the family land came from him).

Should the foster parents have children, particularly sons, of their own after they have adopted a boy, two important principles of Mokil kinship structure come into conflict. One is the emphasis upon primogeniture whereby the eldest son ideally assumes headship of the paneyney in the next generation and inherits the largest share of land. The other is the evident fact that, despite the ideals of sheri shoyshoy adoption, the Mokilese feel closer to their own children than they do to adopted children. Thus, in nearly all cases, a man's own son will ultimately become head of the paneyney even if he is born many years after his father adopted a son.

Because every man wants a son to perpetuate his line the first child adopted by a childless couple is usually a boy. This structural motive is sometimes satisfied, in families having no sons, by a man's persuading his eldest daughter's husband to join his paneyney. The Mokilese regard such an arrangement as somewhat akin to adoption. The son-in-law is promised the headship of the paneyney in the next generation with the understanding that his descendants will count themselves as descendants of his father-in-law.

A third motive for adoption that is concerned with the structure of the elementary family is the Mokil view that every man must have a sister and every woman a brother. The chief reason given for this need is that a Mokilese gives his word of honor by swearing on the good name of his (or her) sibling of the opposite sex.<sup>3</sup> It is particularly important that men be able to take this oath for it is they who are mainly involved in dealings with people outside their paneyney. The word of a sisterless man cannot be taken seriously. Hence a father who fails to provide a sister for his son is severely criticized because he has wantonly handicapped his son in future adult affairs. A dozen or more girls have been adopted for this reason during the known history of Mokil. Two unrelated children adopted into the same family are thereafter considered to be siblings.

Another structural, or perhaps purely emotional, motive for adoption has its

roots in the frequency of extra-marital sexual affairs on Mokil. Several married men have adopted children who are widely suspected of being their own through illicit unions and whom they fear to acknowledge. (Wives are troublesome about such matters on Mokil, too, but adultery is not an almost automatic cause for divorce there as it often is in our society.) Conversely, if a man's wife bears a child he knows or suspects is not his, he will readily give it in adoption, even as a shotay.

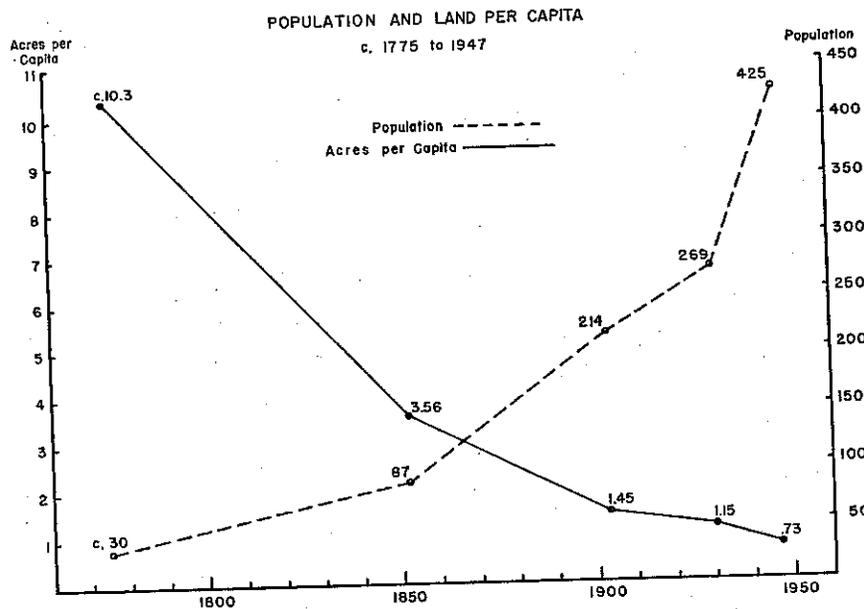
Middle aged people frequently adopt offspring of their married children when they still have immature children of their own. When the adoptee is the child of a son the motivation seems to be primarily sentimental, for no change of residence or household make-up is involved. The child is expected, however, to be particularly close to the grandparents. A more obvious strengthening of social bonds occurs when the adoptee is the child of a daughter and comes back to grow up in the household of his maternal grandparents. People sometimes use this device to pass extra land to a favorite child by adopting an offspring of the favorite and bestowing land on the adoptee. This indirection minimizes protests from other interested parties because of the acknowledged propriety of giving land to an adopted child.

Adoption is also used to establish artificial kinship bonds with unrelated people on or from other islands. Several Mokil families have exchanged children with unrelated friends on Ponape, Pingelap and Kusaie; a few even with Marshallese and Gilbertese families. After such a child exchange the families involved may visit one another for months at a time and thus have a home away from home. In such adoptions the children usually remain with their own parents, paying the adopting parents extended visits from time to time. When occasional Mokil children have been sent to school on Ponape, arrangements have been made for some Ponape family to adopt them, thus insuring the child a home and supervision.

The people of eastern Micronesia have probably always been able to move from island to island as individuals or in small groups. Two of the twenty-five to thirty survivors of the 18th century typhoon on Mokil were the children of a Pingelap couple who had previously moved to Mokil. During historic times, at least, this mobility has been possible only via adoption or marriage, since the right to utilize land and its products can only be acquired through kinship claims. Today many Mokilese trace their ancestry in part to individuals from one or another of all the island groups in eastern Micronesia. These outsiders were all integrated into Mokil society either by adoption or by marriage or both. In later times whenever a person from one of these islands has come to Mokil, the Mokilese who have kinship ties on that island (not necessarily with the particular individual), have felt obligated to sponsor and provide for the newcomer. In many cases the individual or his children have been adopted and permanently absorbed into the Mokil population.

The manipulation of land is often an important motive in Mokil adoptions.

It is almost fair to say of the Mokilese that family land is part of the family structure. They feel particularly attached to land that has passed from father to son through several generations. The intensity of these feelings has doubtless increased considerably in recent generations. There are two main reasons. The first is that during the past seventy-five years the Mokilese have given up their aboriginal communal use of the products of the land and have adopted Western ideas of restricting the utilization of land to its owners. The second reason lies in the exceedingly rapid increase in population which by 1947 had reduced the average holding of land to .73 acres per capita. The accompanying figure shows the relationship between population and acres of land per capita as it has developed over the past 175 years. The poorest family on the island in 1947 was trying to eke out an existence on .24 acres per capita. Under these circumstances concern about the ownership and transfer of land is often a primary consideration in adoptions.



Several Mokil paneyneys own land on other islands, notably Ponape. Some men of the paneyney, with their wives and children, will then live on the other island. They nearly always exchange sons with the men of the paneyney who remain on Mokil. The primary purpose of these adoptions is to have constant reminders of the absent ones at hand and thus to maintain a close family feeling. There are economic overtones, too, because the exchanged children become heirs to their fathers' shares of the paneyney land on each island.

Sometimes a Mokil woman marries a man from another island and goes to live with her husband's people. She may send a son back to be adopted by her brother. Unless the brother has requested it, however, or the woman has a large dowry of Mokil land, her son will be in danger of becoming a shotay.

Adoption has been used many times by conscientious people to return land to the heirs of its traditional patrilineal owners and on other occasions by selfish people to circumvent such an eventuality. If the land held by a childless couple has come mostly from the wife's people the couple is expected to adopt a boy from one of her close patrilineal relatives and settle the land on him. If half or more of their land has come from the husband's people, however, the couple is obligated to adopt at least the first child from the male side of the house and to bequeath the bulk of their holdings to him. Failure to do so results in public censure and creates a situation in which collateral patrilineal heirs may appropriate the land that has been alienated from the patrilineal line. Persons both ruthless and clever have sometimes managed to use adoption as a ruse to alienate land from patrilineal heirs the public regards as its rightful owners.

Occasionally a parent, hoping to recover patrilineal land through one of his children, accedes to an adoption against his better judgement or permits it to continue, knowing his child is being mistreated. Sometimes a person adopts a child and gives it land in order to express gratitude to the child's parents for services rendered. This mechanism has also been used at times in culturally disapproved ways, to transfer land over which the donor has only temporary control.

In some sheri shoyshey adoptions the adoptors are motivated primarily by self interest. These are instances in which the adoptors are seeking current or future "social security." Numerous aging people, usually women, have adopted children, often granddaughters already living in the same household as themselves. The adoptor gives special attention to this child and seeks to build up strong bonds of mutual affection with it. Then when the adoptor becomes enfeebled with age she can expect the adoptee, by now an adolescent or young adult, to return the loving attention by preparing special foods for the adoptor, washing her clothes and person, devoting time to her amusement and generally ameliorating the infirmities of age. Old women frequently need such assurance of comfort and companionship, especially if they are widowed. Daughters-in-law evidently often resent the authority the mother-in-law exercises over them when she is in charge of the feminine activities of the paneyney. As the old woman becomes infirm the younger ones are liable to ignore or even mistreat her. In such situations an adopted child is a great comfort to the aged woman.

Variations on this theme have occurred several times when aging women have had particular reason to feel insecure in their husbands' paneyneys. A

woman who has come to her Mokil husband from another island, for instance, may be very insecure if she becomes a childless widow. The same may be true of a woman who is the widow of a junior member of a fraternal paneyney, even if she has children by her dead husband. Such women can strengthen their positions by creating new kinship ties via adoption.

Men ordinarily need not employ this strategem because, as permanent members of their paneyneys of birth, they enjoy greater economic security than women at all stages of life. The occasional male who does lack secure membership in a paneyney (e.g., an illegitimate son whose father has not acknowledged him) is likely to employ adoption in his effort to attain it.

Many adoptions on Mokil have been based on the wish to help unfortunate relatives. Thus a man with considerable land but few children wins public approval if he adopts children from close relatives (especially patrilineal ones) who are short of land. During the heyday of whaling in the mid-nineteenth century a landless woman named Jalis entered into a succession of temporary marriages with a series of outsiders, some Micronesians and some members of whaling crews. The series of children by these various fathers were all adopted by Jalis' brothers and sisters and given land. Some of Mokil's most solid citizens today, including the man with the largest single holding of land, are descendants of these off-spring of Jalis. Were a woman to produce a series of children by transient fathers today, however, they would probably become shotay, for hardly anyone has enough land to give a waif independence.

Nowadays junior branches of several families are nearly destitute. Close relatives sometimes adopt their children just to help feed them. Such adoptees are shotay in the sense that they are uninfluential dependents and cannot hope for sufficient land to achieve independence. But the adoptors commonly feel strong affection for them and treat them well. Waifs are always adopted by some relative out of pity and a sense of kinship responsibility. Such adoptees usually become shotay.

An unmarried woman with a child is handicapped in getting a husband. This is true whether the child is illegitimate or is the offspring of a prior marriage. A man may propose marriage to her but specify he doesn't want her child. In such circumstances the woman's father or a brother will usually adopt the child who will have the status of a shotay in his household. To reduce the number of unwanted waifs due to illegitimacy the Mokilese have recently ruled that a man must take and rear his illegitimate child. (Paternity is established in doubtful cases by deciding which of the possible fathers the newborn child most resembles.) The society expects that a man will have enough affection for his own child to give it land whereas, since men control the bulk of the land, a fatherless child has little hope of obtaining any.

Occasionally an adoptor, saddled with a child he has taken out of a sense of kinship responsibility, will become fond enough of the adoptee to "legiti-

mize" the relationship by giving land to the adoptee, thus creating a situation the community will accept as a sheri shoyshey adoption. Commonly, however, the shotay is an inconsequential, essentially unwanted, subordinate. His lot, as the song goes, is not a happy one. He labors all his life merely for his keep and has no basis for hoping, if a male, to become head of his own paneyney, or if a female, to make a good marriage.

Mokil informants imply, and evidence supports them, that the openly exploitive shotay relationship came into existence shortly before 1880. All the aboriginal and early post-contact shotay described to me were adults who came to Mokil from elsewhere and were accepted into the household of the king or of some other important man. All such individuals who served their sponsors well seem to have received handsome portions of land, sufficient to enable them to become respected members of the community. The earliest non-Mokilese now remembered to have been incorporated into the community were the two Pingelap children who survived the typhoon that occurred about fifty years before the European discovery of Mokil. They were adopted by Mokilese survivors and received ample gifts of land. The term shotay is not applied to them. These and all aboriginal adoptions of Mokilese by Mokilese seem to have been of the sheri shoyshey sort.

A century and a quarter of contact with Western culture has produced many changes in Mokilese social structure, including modifications in the role played by adoption. Aboriginally, when the Mokilese lived on a purely subsistence basis and shared the products of the land in a semi-communal way, adoption had little or no economic import. When they became dependent on trade for essentials like tools and cloth, however, and especially after they accepted, in the interest of trade, the idea of restricting the use of land exclusively to its owners, then the land transfers traditionally involved in adoptions became an important aspect of the practice. The acceptance of trade and of Western concepts of land use also created the need for extra-familial labor among the few who emerged with large holdings of land. Instead of taking over the Western custom of wage work to meet this need, however, the Mokilese developed the exploitive form of adoption. In the next few paragraphs I shall present the salient facts of the economic acculturation and show how they affected adoption.

Whalers, the first important instruments of acculturation, began visiting Mokil in the 1830's and were most numerous in the 1850's. They introduced trade to the islanders, taking native produce in exchange for such items as tools, cloth, sugar, tobacco and liquor. The Mokilese quickly became dependent upon these goods, especially tools and cloth, and were avid traders. Until around 1880, however, they clung to aboriginal economic patterns in their dealings with the white men. Aboriginally, all resources were public property and first fruits had to be brought to the king to be "blessed" before anyone

could partake of the year's crop or the season's first catch of a migratory species of fish. All early trade was likewise channelled through and controlled by the king. People gathered coconuts, bananas and other vegetable foods wherever they chose, caught the half-wild pigs and chickens, and took them to the king to trade. After making the trade the king distributed the proceeds according to need. If several men in one family needed pants they might all get them even if they had not gathered produce on that occasion. If the men of another family were all adequately clothed they would get no pants but might get some steel tools if they could convince the king of their need.

According to modern informants all the land of Mokil was privately owned even before the first contacts with whalers. My accounts of land transfers go back to the original division between the heads of the three families that survived the 18th century typhon. I think the authenticity of some of the alleged early transfers is questionable, however, and it may be that not even pseudo-private ownership came into being until after the first white men began living on the island in the 1830's. At any rate, modern informants old enough to remember events in the '80's are quite definite that until sometime between 1875 and 1880 anyone was free to gather the produce of the land wherever he chose, regardless of property lines. The only restrictions concerned specific trees of newly introduced varieties and planted crops of taro on which an individual had expended considerable care and labor. He had exclusive rights to such produce even if it grew on another person's land, but would ordinarily share it upon request.

A Mokil king voluntarily "converted" his people to Christianity in 1862 and established a native church on the island for which there was no trained minister. American members of the Boston Missionary Society visited the island occasionally and briefly during the next twenty-odd years but did not station an American worker there until 1890. They could hardly have had much influence in favor of private utilization of resources and individual enterprise prior to 1880.

A crucial event in changing the orientation of Mokil culture in its economic aspects was the fact that around 1870 a Mokil man named Zachariaias joined a whaler's crew and was away from the island about ten years. He became fluent in English during that time, visited many of the great ports of the world, and undoubtedly had assimilated numerous new cultural ideas by the time he returned to Mokil. Other Mokilese served as whalers, but none for so long a time, and none of the others became king as Zachariaias did shortly after his return.

The second crucial acculturative event, which occurred within a year or two of 1875, while Zachariaias was away on his long stint of whaling, was the introduction of organized copra trading to Mokil. The earlier trade with whalers, while it had become important to the Mokilese, had always been casual.

The whalers wanted fresh fruit, fresh meat and women for their crews. They accepted pigs, chickens, breadfruit, bananas, green coconuts for drinking, but only a small amount of ripe coconut, mostly in the form of oil. They could not take large quantities of any produce because of the danger of spoilage. Since the population of Mokil during the whaling period never exceeded a quarter of the present figure, much of the land must have been idle; the resources of the island were never strained to supply the whaler's needs. Essentially, the Mokilese were trading an easily produced surplus for the cherished manufactured goods. Moreover, trade with whalers decreased markedly after about 1860 because of the near extinction of whales in the tropical Pacific.

When the New Zealand, American and German copra traders extended their operations westward from Polynesia into Micronesia in the 1870's a whole new vista of economic opportunity opened to the Mokilese. For the first time there was an unlimited demand for coconuts, the major product of their soil. There was reason now to keep the land in full production, to gather the fallen nuts regularly and systematically and prepare them for the traders rather than allowing the uneaten nuts to rot, sprout or feed the coconut crab. Yet, for the first four or five years, the old pattern of trade persisted; anyone who felt like it gathered nuts wherever he chose and brought the prepared meat to the king to trade. At this time only one trader was stopping at Mokil for copra.

In the late 1870's these two acculturative developments came to fruition almost simultaneously. Three or four traders began to compete for Mokil's copra and Zachariaias came home from the sea. He found his younger brother about to inherit the kingship and, asserting his right of primogeniture, took the post for himself. One of his first acts as king was to issue an edict modifying Mokil land tenure in the direction of customs he had observed among the white men. He ruled that henceforth people could gather produce only from their own coconut land, that taking even so much as one banana from another's land would be punishable as theft. He is said to have proclaimed: "If there is anyone who has not enough land let him work for others or starve." At about this same time each competing copra trader appointed a man on Mokil to represent his interests. One firm stationed a white man there for a couple of years but the rest all set up Mokil men as traders from the start. Each paneyney thereafter made copra from its own land and traded it to the Mokil representative with whom it had the closest bonds of kinship.

Under the new conditions a few men found themselves with more land than they could work efficiently. Two of the largest holdings were those of Zachariaias and Charlie Dennis, son of a Mokil woman by a white whaling captain. These two men solved their labor problems in the same way, whether by diffusion or by independent invention I can't say. They each "adopted" seven adolescent or young adult males from poor families and put them to

work making copra. They evidently fed, housed and clothed their working men well. I do not know what verbal agreements the two men made with the families of the "adoptees" but the relationships might easily have appeared to the public for many years to be bona-fide sheri shoyshoy adoptions. (This is implied by modern informants.) Neither do I know whether the two acculturated men used the traditional practice of adoption cynically from the first to get cheap labor or whether it only dawned on them slowly that they could do so at the slight expense of some bitterness among inconsequential people, and muted public criticism. (The Mokilese today, and probably far back in their past, tend more to rally around a powerful man and seek his favor than to smite him in support of the weak.)

It seems clear that Zacharias placed his seven working men in a special category. A childless man, he had adopted several children before his whaling career. At his death his land was divided among these genuine adoptees and none went to any of those he later "adopted." None of Charlie Dennis' working men received any inheritance, either. (Because I believe these fourteen shotay were not genuine adoptees, I have not included them in the table showing age at time of adoption that appears early in this article.) People still speak of Zacharias and Charlie Dennis with a mixture of awe and resentment as "smart." I believe these two men invented the modern shotay form of adoption by combining elements of aboriginal adoption and of the aboriginal "working man" relationship, adding to this mixture the exploitive element *foreign to both* of giving the shotay no reward beyond his keep. The derision that attaches to the term and to the relationship nowadays is the complement of the Mokil attitude toward "big men."

Today the Mokilese judge every adoption pragmatically. When the adoptor's behavior toward the adoptee is adjudged by the community to exhibit the raw self-interest of exploitation the adoption is regarded as a shotay or working man relationship. An essential feature of the honorable sheri shoyshoy adoption is that the adoptor shall ask for the child freely and without the existence of any coercive situation. It is nearly as important that he make the request before or shortly after the child is born so that culturally acceptable parent-child relations can be established between him and the adoptee. The adoption of a person past infancy always creates some doubt about the legitimacy of the relationship unless the adoptor immediately gives land to the adoptee or the adoption is the result of some special set of circumstances accepted by the public as a reasonable basis for a sheri shoyshoy adoption. The same doubt exists if a comparatively well-to-do person adopts a child from a poor person who is neither a particularly close relative nor has performed any signal service for the adoptor.

No parent who is able to maintain his reputation of being able to provide

for his family will permit his child to enter a shotay adoption. Nevertheless, the avowedly shotay adoption has some integrative functions on Mokil today. It permits a comparatively poor man to fulfill culturally determined kinship obligations to adopt a waif or the child of still poorer relatives without at the same time committing him to further subdivide his already inadequate land holdings. Families that are too poor to afford pride can permit a child or two to be adopted as shotay and salve their feelings with the hope that the child will be better fed than they could manage.

The vast majority of adoptions are still entered into as sheri shoyshoy relationships. Ancient cultural ideals and expectations still motivate people to participate in adoptions. But the economic facts of life on Mokil today often counteract traditional values. There is more jockeying for advantage by participants, and more concern about the economic aspects of adoption, than there used to be. Parents concern themselves about the economic status and reputation for generosity of anyone who proposes to adopt their child. Poor parents must guard against allowing their child to enter an adoption in which he will be called a shotay. All parents must watch developments in the adopting family and intervene to protect their child's interests if they feel he is being pushed to one side or mistreated. The adoptor's own children frequently resent the adoptee when they grow old enough to be concerned about their own economic futures. The adoptor can always break his word and unilaterally create a shotay situation by failing to give land to the adoptee. His children and other relatives can find ways to poison his mind against the adoptee to that end.

Under these pressures many present day sheri shoyshoy adoptions degenerate into shotay-like relationships that fail to fulfill the expectations of participants. Nearly every adoptee sooner or later returns to his paneyney of birth, often in an atmosphere of bitterness and recrimination. Parents sometimes take their offspring away from an adoptor while the adoptee is still a child. They are impelled to this step by pity if the child is mistreated, but also by pride if they suspect, or people begin to say, the adoptee is nothing but a shotay. Other adoptees return to their paneyneys of birth at or shortly after their marriages because the adoptors fail to give them land on that occasion. Some linger on in the adoptor's paneyney after marriage even under such circumstances, hoping for a deathbed bequest. If they are again disappointed they return to their paneyneys of birth, sometimes as adults with several children of their own, unless circumstances force them finally to acknowledge a dependent shotay status. Some adoptions, of course, still do work out satisfactorily for all participants. But an institution that formerly functioned entirely to increase social solidarity, today often produces discord and dissension.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The field work for this paper was done in 1947 as part of the Coordinated Investigation of Micronesian Anthropology, organized by the Pacific Science Board of the National Research Council and supported by the Office of Naval Research and the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, Inc. I thank these agencies and the people of Mokil who together made the research possible. I also want to express my appreciation of the comradeship and collaboration of my colleague in the field, Mr. Conrad Bentzen. The present paper is based entirely on my own work but some future papers will utilize data gathered by him.

<sup>2</sup> Aboriginally, matrilineal clans were important social units on Mokil. Today they do not function, however, and are nearly forgotten. Less than half the adults remember their clan affiliations off hand and clan exogamy is no longer enforced. The shift to almost exclusively patrilineal emphasis apparently occurred during the stringent cultural readjustment that followed the prehistoric typhoon and seems not to have been a result of contact with Western culture.

<sup>3</sup> This custom is connected with brother-sister restraint oriented around sexuality, which on Mokil leads to respectful formality between such siblings. Neither may use obscene language nor refer to sexual matters in the presence of the other and it is exceedingly bad manners for a third person to do so in their joint presence. Brothers and sisters do not sleep under the same roof after reaching puberty. Similar rules apply between parallel cousins of opposite sex. A person who lacks a suitable sibling may swear by the good name of such a cousin but this oath is not as convincing as the proper one.

<sup>4</sup> This ruling applied only to coconut land, the source of money income as well as of all dry land crops. Taro land continued to be used in a modified aboriginal way up to 1911. Until the early 20th century the swampland available for taro production exceeded the food needs of the population and some of it was always lying fallow. People who had excess taro land loaned it freely to those who needed more. Theoretically the owner or his heirs could recover the land whenever they wanted it but the borrower was entitled to harvest his current crop first. Actually, as the pressure on the land increased because of population growth, borrowers became more and more reluctant to return land to its owners, especially plots they had been using a long time. Hard feelings and bickering grew to such proportions that in 1911 King Joel ruled that the lending of taro land must cease.

## TWO SURVIVING LUISEÑO INDIAN CEREMONIES

By RAYMOND C. WHITE

MANY factors have contributed to the decline of Luiseño Indian culture in southern California since it came under the influence of Christianity with the founding of the Mission of San Luis Rey in 1798. The observance of native religious rites has not escaped this decline. For instance, the puberty ceremony is reported as having been last performed perhaps ninety years ago (DuBois 1908: 77), and current investigations reveal that little understanding of its proper forms, significance, or secret ritual remains among these Indians.<sup>1</sup>

But one hundred and fifty years of acculturation have not sufficed to snuff out all of the old social structure and religion, even though most of the remaining rites are infrequently observed. Two ceremonies that have persisted are the installation of the religious chief, called *scheiyish noti*,<sup>2</sup> and the clothes-burning ceremony, or *ichoiyish*,<sup>3</sup> having to do with the disposal of the spirits of the dead. These two, attended by a group from the University of California at Los Angeles on the night of Saturday, June 21, 1952, provide a modern version of these relatively infrequent ceremonies.

Even though all of the Luiseños are nominally Christian, the old native religion along with its cosmogony and origin myths is crucial to all that remains of the culture core, and the performance of the clothes-burning ceremony serves as a determinant in the maintenance of social structure as well as in the preservation of Indian values and attitudes. Kroeber (1925: 675) has commented on the intensity with which death preoccupies the Luiseño: "He wails for days for his kin . . . shudders at their mention, but lavishes his wealth in their memory."

This attitude toward death has to do with the Luiseño story of the mythical ancestor, Wiyot, who was the "father of" all things. He provoked the anger of one of his "children," Frog, who murdered him. In the period subsequent to the death and cremation of Wiyot, immortality for his "children" became impossible; for with all of their discussion and effort they, unlike Wiyot, who knew all things, were unable to solve the problem of overpopulation. The Eagle dance, now no longer observed, was in part commemorative of this fact, for Eagle alone escaped death by "giving up his children." (It is said that Eagle must either himself destroy his young, or evict them from the nest so that they perish from some other cause.) Other than adult Eagle, all Wiyot people must die in some manner or another.

Thus, the spirits of Luiseño dead are disconsolate over the loss of immortality and reluctant to leave the region of their lifetime attachment. The clothes-burning ceremony serves to "make the spirits happy" and less reluctant to depart by restoring to them belongings made inaccessible by death. Although it is said that formerly all possessions belonging to the dead, includ-