

Memoirs of the Queensland Museum | **culture**

Volume 8
Part 2

Goemulgaw Lagal: Cultural and Natural Histories of the Island of Mabuyag, Torres Strait

Edited by Ian J. McNiven and Garrick Hitchcock

Minister: Anastacia Palaszczuk MP, Premier and Minister for the Arts

CEO: Suzanne Miller, BSc(Hons), PhD, FGS, FMinSoc, FAIMM, FGSA, FRSSA

Editor in Chief: J.N.A. Hooper, PhD

Editors: Ian J. McNiven, PhD FSA FAHA and Garrick Hitchcock, PhD FLS FRGS

Issue Editor: Geraldine Mate, PhD

© Queensland Museum
PO Box 3300, South Brisbane 4101, Australia
Phone: +61 (0) 7 3840 7555
Fax: +61 (0) 7 3846 1226
Web: qm.qld.gov.au

National Library of Australia card number
ISSN 1440-4788

VOLUME 8 IS COMPLETE IN 2 PARTS

COVER

Image on book cover: Pearlshelling station at Panay, Mabuyag, 1890s. Photographer unknown
(Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology: N23274.ACH2).

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A Queensland Government Project
Design and Layout: Tanya Edbrooke, Queensland Museum
Printed by Watson, Ferguson & Company

Aspects of early local administration, education, health and population on Mabuyag

Anna SHNUKAL

Shnukal, A. 2015: Aspects of early local administration, education, health and population on Mabuyag. *Memoirs of the Queensland Museum – Culture* 8(2):55-125. Brisbane. ISSN 1440-4788.

This paper surveys changes in administration, education, health and demography on Mabuyag within their socio-political context¹. Traditional clan governance was adopted (with modifications) by the colonial administration, when in the late 1870s it appointed a head man (mamoose) to ensure social order and administer justice, assisted by local police and courts; he was replaced in 1906 by an elected local council. These administrative arrangements were unique to Torres Strait in nineteenth century Indigenous Australia and encouraged by the London Missionary Society, which began schooling on Mabuyag in 1873. A government school was opened in 1900, a post-primary Training College for teachers and clerks in 1934. Improved health and sanitation measures and immunity from introduced diseases brought population stability and from the 1930s a slow increase. However, Mabuyag, like other islands, lost population in the postwar outflow to mainland Australia, not recovering until the mid-1990s.

□ *Mabuyag, Administration, Education, Health and population, Police*

Anna Shnukal, Honorary Associate
Queensland Museum PO Box 3300
South Brisbane Qld 4101



LOCAL ADMINISTRATION ON MABUYAG

This chapter surveys early administration, education and health on Mabuyag within the sociocultural and demographic context of the times. The authorities initially adopted traditional clan governance (with modifications) but soon began to innovate local solutions to perceived problems in the above domains, which were unique in Indigenous Australia at the time.

The following discussion conflates two theoretically distinct terms: the more general 'governance' (the maintenance of social control and the organization of culturally significant events) and the more bureaucratic 'administration' (the officially-sanctioned system of administering justice involving courts, policing and punishment).

Early administrative policy implementation varied considerably in the different islands of Torres Strait, as a consequence of availability of local human, material and capital resources, the size and cohesiveness of population and the remoteness and relative difficulty of communication with the regional administrative centre of Thursday Island. The focus here is on Mabuyag with illustrative examples from other islands where relevant. Similarities and differences between early administrative and educational policies in Torres Strait and in other Indigenous communities in Australia, Papua New Guinea and the Pacific are not addressed in the following discussion but it may provide useful primary source material for scholarly comparison.

TRADITIONAL GOVERNANCE ON MABUYAG

Describing the traditional mechanisms for organizing western island society and maintaining law and order, Haddon (1904: 263) tells us that most of the 'social duties of life' – managing disputes, arranging

ceremonies, forming alliances, organizing raids, making peace, etc. – 'were relegated by custom to definite members of the community' by virtue of their 'age, social importance and individual strength of character'. The political, social and religious leadership of pre-contact Mabuyag was conflated and clans were the organizing principle of social administration. The four clan leaders had primary authority over their territories. These were Wagadagam (Crocodile clan) in the west and northwest; Panay/Dabangay (Dugong clan) in the northeast; Maidh (Snake clan), comprising Bau and Mui, in the east; and Goemu (Shovel-nosed shark clan), which included Sipingur, in the south. The larger moiety incorporated the Crocodile and Snake clans; the smaller moiety the Dugong and Shovel-nosed shark clans of the windward side, which takes the full force of the south-easterlies for about seven months of the year (Lawrie in Gaulai, n.d.).² Cygnet Repu (pers. comm., 2004) adds a fifth group, the Dugong people of Pulu.

Clan leadership in the western islands is generally claimed to have been non-hereditary in principle but in practice it often passed from father to eldest son and then sometimes to second son, while bypassing individuals considered too young or otherwise lacking in the desired qualities and capabilities. Sons of men with specialised talents and knowledge 'took the place of their fathers'.³ W.H.R. Rivers of the 'Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to Torres Straits' in 1898 traced the chiefly succession of the Dugong and Crocodile clans of Panay: Peio was succeeded by his sons, Gasara and Ngaragi; Gasara was succeeded by his sons, first Newa and then Ganaia. Because he was too young, Ganaia's 'natural successor', his (adopted) son Ned Waria (later spelling 'Warria') was passed over in favour of Nomoa, Ganaia's younger brother. Ngaragi's sons, Pedia and Gulib, succeeded him. Wanakai, Pedia's son, succeeded his father.

In 1898 Ngaragi's grandson, Gaulai, was the clan leader (Haddon, 1904: 266). Similarly, the Wagadagam 'line of chieftainship was: Bari to Kadi to Aki to Mabua (very old in 1898) then not to Bani or Masi because of his youth but to Bagari or Muka' (Haddon, 1904: 267).

Although less detailed, Eseli's account accords with Rivers' observations (Haddon, 1912: 162): Bari is the first remembered leader of Wagadagam; Gasara the leader of Panay; Waba the leader of Maidh; Gaigai the leader of Sipingur. The first six clan leaders of Sipingur were Sande (Sunday), Sagul, Baia, Waiga, Konewe and Mau (Eseli, 1998: 74-75). In April 1908 John (Jack) Cowling, a resident trader and pearler, noted the continuing respect and deference paid by the younger generation to the four clan leaders at that time: to Masi [or Bani] of Wagadagam; to Waria of Panay, 'a very capable man'; to Maki of Maidh; and to Zezeu of Goemu (Cowling, 1908).⁴

Haddon characterises the Islanders' traditional form of government as 'limited democracy, or an oligarchy of elders', who based their decisions on 'tradition and custom'. We might today describe it as an hereditary male gerontocracy, which enforced its power through fear, hopes of booty through war, ceremony and ritual, and magic, but with a flexibility that prevented the kind of clearly defined chiefly leadership prevailing in other outposts of the British empire. This posed difficulties for officials seeking to establish administrative control over the islands.

COLONIAL ADMINISTRATION

The Mabuyag Islanders remained outside the colonial orbit until the visit – a few months after the beginning of the pearlrush in 1870 – by Henry Marjoribanks Chester, acting on behalf of police magistrate Frank Jardine. Chester made a second visit in 1872, the year

in which Mabuyag became legally part of the colony of Queensland, the first missionaries were appointed and pearlshellers are first recorded as taking men from the island to work in the fisheries. Given the social, political and physical realities of Torres Strait, the colonial authorities preferred as much as possible to keep the traditional system of governance in place and officially sanctioned the 'Mamoose system', a form of community self-government unique in nineteenth century Indigenous Australia.⁵ This system established the basic precedents, procedures and institutions which, with modifications, lasted until the gazettal of the islands as 'Aboriginal reserves' in 1912.

'Mamoose' system

The first government resident, the Hon. John Douglas, was appointed to Torres Strait in April 1885 and arrived at the beginning of May. Except for a short period as special commissioner for British New Guinea, he remained in his position until his death in July 1904. He had a great respect for Islanders and a genuine concern for their welfare, establishing early systems to deliver social order, education and health services. Haddon (1904: 263) describes Douglas's rule as 'a mild, paternal despotism ... as suited to the local conditions as it could be' and 'admirable in every way'.

Although Douglas is often credited with instituting the 'Mamoose' system in Torres Strait, writing that he had 'done the best I can to administer justice and maintain order in a patriarchal kind of way through the head men, or mamoses, as they are called, of the different islands' (Douglas, 1903c), it was in fact initiated by Chester on Mer (Murray Island) in mid-1878 at the instigation of the Rev. Samuel McFarlane and spread from there to other islands (McFarlane, 1879; Pennefather, 1882b). George Passi (1989: 2506) was told that the early Murray Island

Mamooses 'resolved disputes and dealt with wrongdoers. They were the first Murray Islanders to hold political power over the whole island [rather than merely one part].'

The origin of the word is uncertain but *mam(mam) mus* means 'blood-coloured/red hair' in the eastern island language and bleached reddish hair was considered a mark of beauty in both Torres Strait and southwest Papua. It was also a personal name. When Jukes (1847, I: 173) visited Erub (Darnley Island) in 1845, he met a local man named 'Mammoos'. Haddon (1904: 266, fn. 1) thought the name 'got into official use by Mr Chester, the Police Magistrate of the district, confusing in one instance the personal name of a native for the term of his office, and the error has since been maintained'. Chester recounts its origin in an official report to the Colonial Secretary. He was leading an exploration to New Guinea, accompanied by 'Mamoose', the chief of Mabuyag. The party landed on Boigu on 4 December 1877:

Towards sundown Mamoose returned with a number of men, including the chief [of Boigu], who also answers to the name of Mamoose; in fact, this name is now applied to the chief of any island, and has been adopted by the natives, although previously unknown. It may not be uninteresting to trace the origin of this novel application of a word foreign to their language. In 1870 I visited Darnley island, and having studied with much interest 'Jukes' Voyage of the "Fly";' I surprised the natives by recalling names of people who were then living but who have long since 'gone over to the majority,' and by repeating a number of words in their language. The simple natives would have it that I was Jukes himself, and told me that during the 'Fly's' visit I had changed

names with a man called 'Mamoose' (signifying red hair) and from that time they never spoke of me by any other name. In the following year I visited Marbiak [Mabuyag], where the chief, whose name was 'Genai' [Ganaia], insisted on my changing names with him; since which time, even among his own people, he has always borne the name of Mamoose. When the pearlshellers arrived in the Straits, Marbiak offered a fine field for recruiting labour, and finding the chief was called Mamoose, they concluded it was the native word for chief, and from hearing it so often the natives have gradually adopted the word (Chester, 1878a: 4).

A few months later Chester officially appointed a local leader on Mer as Mamoose and this became the official title given to island chiefs during the period of colonial administration (Chester, 1878a: 4). The Revs James Chalmers and Samuel McFarlane of the London Missionary Society (LMS) were present when Chester 'advised the chiefs to make a few laws and appoint magistrates and policemen. All the people assembled on the following day and expressed their willingness to adopt the new order of things, and their desire to follow the example of European nations.' (McFarlane, 1882).

In the presence of the Revd Mr. Chalmers and myself the laws were formally inaugurated and the officers appointed by Mr Chester, who publicly requested Josaiah (the native pastor) to guide them in their administration (he being accustomed to a similar state of things in his own country) until they themselves were capable (McFarlane, 1882).

The European pearlshellers also found it convenient to preserve local authority and

were generally respectful of it.⁶ This same respect was not necessarily shown by their South Sea Islander and Malay employees who considered themselves culturally superior to the 'uncivilised' Torres Strait Islanders and committed various offences against both people and property, notoriously stealing food from gardens and abducting women for their boats. The resident Pacific Islander teachers, who were only intermittently supervised by the LMS European missionary, also cooperated with the local men of power, on whose favour they depended for land for mission buildings and gardens, food, good order and church adherents.⁷

The situation changed legally (but not in great measure practically) in 1879 with passage of *Queensland Coastal Islands Act* and formal annexation of all the islands to the colony. Captain Pennefather was sent in the government schooner *Pearl* to inform the Torres Strait Islanders of this change in status. He was also instructed to muster and count the inhabitants and explain that, now that they were legally subject to colonial authority, they could look to colonial officials to protect their interests. Pennefather arrived on Mabuyag in mid-December 1879 (Pennefather, 1879b). Chester (1879) had advised the Colonial Secretary that, although the authority of the various chiefs was 'ill-defined', he thought 'it would conduce to the preservation of order if they were confirmed in it, such as it is, by the Government; they might then be held responsible for the safety of shipwrecked crews calling at the islands'.

The first Mabuyag 'chief' mentioned in colonial correspondence is Ganaia (in 1871),⁸ the second Bageri (in 1879).⁹ Ganaia's younger brother, Nomoa (or Mauga),¹⁰ was recorded by Rivers (Haddon, 1904: 267) as the first Mamoose appointed by the British government when the island came under definite British jurisdiction, by which he may mean 1885, when Douglas was appointed as

government resident. Nomoa was recognised as the Mamoose in 1887, when he ran an account with Burns Philp & Coy Ltd, being good for the amount of £25.3.1, possibly guaranteed by the pearl-ers (Bowden, 1887: 61). However, little else is recorded about the domestic administration of justice on Mabuyag during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. Minor offences were dealt with locally by the Mamoose and his advisers but colonial authorities were sent out to look into serious or criminal offences: murders and rapes were generally investigated, if not always punished, as was violence and major theft against Europeans. Men charged with desertion, creating a disturbance, boat theft and 'continuous wilful disobedience of orders' were brought before the Thursday Island court. The chief problems in dispensing justice were unclear policy, the remoteness of the islands, difficulties of communication, limited resources of money and personnel and the expense of bringing witnesses to Thursday Island. The Rev. Tait Scott discovered this on Mer in 1882 after receiving several threats. Nothing could be done, said Chester, until he received instructions from the Government. Pennefather informed him,

in the presence of the natives amongst whom were the offenders, that before anything could be done we must procure a warrant from a Magistrate and take the offenders and the witnesses into Thursday Island where the offenders would be committed and sent thence to Townsville or Rockhampton. Now, Sir, so much trouble and expense simply makes it impossible to maintain law and order on some of the islands, those farthest removed from Thursday Island. I do not wish to prosecute, not for a moment; but I think it extremely desirable that the people should know

for once that there is a law that can reach them. Many of the natives get paid for work at Thursday Island; they purchase grog with their money but they are not allowed to remain there and drink it; they are ordered off the island where there are policemen and a police court and they fetch the grog out here where they cannot be got at (Tait Scott, 1882).

Investigating abuses of power by the Mamoose of Mer that same year, Pennefather (1882a) advocated being given the power to punish Islanders and other residents on the islands on the spot, since, without this, repeated warnings and threats had little effect. By 1882 Europeans were complaining that the Mamoose system, at least on Mer, had fallen into disrepute,

as it was made the means of extortion by the chiefs and police and tyranny by the missionary teachers. People were run in for the most trifling offences such as picking a banana on Sunday. The prisoners were generally sentenced to hard labour for the benefit of the Chief and teachers, but the offence was frequently condoned on the friends of the prisoners making a substantial present to the authorities, when there ensued a row as to the division of the spoil (Pennefather, 1882b).

Consolidation of colonial administration

Passage of the *Pearl-shell and Bêche-de-mer Fishery Act* 1881 gave the colonial government power to issue licenses to occupy crown land on various islands and evict squatters, who were generally Pacific Islanders discharged from the fisheries. Mabuyag was already a flourishing pearling centre in 1882 when its eastern half was leased to George Mortimer Pearson for a pearling station but Pearson, the apical ancestor of the central island

Pearson family, was careful not to meddle in island governance. By November 1884 an 'intelligent', English-speaking Mamoose on Mabuyag, probably Nomoa, had 'established a few laws and appointed five policemen to secure order amongst his people' (McFarlane, 1884).¹¹ He was also 'an active deacon of the church', whose status was underscored by his 'highly raised seat' in the centre of the church, which he occupied during services (Strachan, 1888: 13), and no doubt also by 'some concrete sign of authority such as a walking stick, on the handle of which was inserted a silver coin of the realm' or on his chest 'a crescentic piece of metal' with the word 'mamoose' inscribed on it (Haddon, 1904: 265-266).

In July 1885, shortly after his appointment as government resident, Douglas made his first visit to Mabuyag and penned the following portrait of its (unnamed) Mamoose, probably Nomoa:

Jervis Island has its potentate in a chief, who has some real authority. He hoists a blue ensign with the Queensland badge on any important occasion, and he sports a blue coat with mother-of-pearl buttons, which His Excellency was good enough to accept from me. He has a prime minister and a commissioner of police, next in authority to himself, and the influence which those officials have is not to be despised. The law, such as it is, though it is not very accurately defined, is thoroughly respected, and it is founded on a code which is both simpler and older than that of Queensland (Douglas, 1886: 77).

In mid-September 1886 Hugh Miles Milman, Douglas's temporary replacement, spent two days on Mabuyag, where the Mamoose system was still in operation, as it was also

on Erub, Mer, Saibai and Ugar (Stephens Island) (Milman, 1886). A week earlier, he had found that the Murray Island Mamoose had assessed fines not on the gravity of the offence but on the offender's ability to pay. He therefore abolished the system of fines and drew up what was apparently the first 'code of penalties applicable to the most common offences committed on the island'. These were rape, land boundary disputes, and theft of garden produce. At the same time, he pointed out the difficulties of legislating for all the islands as a group. For example, on Murray he had 'fixed a penalty of so many days' work, with an alternative of bringing in 1,000 cocoanuts. On another island, where cocoanuts are not so plentiful, 100 nuts might be an equivalent in value, and so on.' He also suggested gazettement the G.S.S. Albatross as a 'ship or place for holding courts of petty sessions', when on island patrol duty 'so that any serious case coming under my notice might be inquired into on the spot, without the trouble and expense of taking in principals and witnesses to Thursday Island'.

In a prescient innovation, Douglas (1894b: 7) sought a popular vote for the successor to Amani, Mamoose of Erub. Mamai, his son, had succeeded him but asked to be allowed to resign. 'There was some doubt as to his successor, opinion being somewhat divided. I therefore put the question straight to the people, and the choice was decided by open voting. An excellent selection was made.' In fact, wrote Douglas, 'on the whole the conduct of the natives is exceedingly good, and the peace of these little communities is seldom disturbed by any serious crime. Theft is almost unknown, and the most serious offences are those of marital infidelity, but even these are rare.' The fines recorded for these offences were usually appropriated under Douglas's authority 'for the purchase of medicine, paint for the boats, or some other specially local requirements' (Douglas,

1898: 6). Reporting on the Mamoose system generally, as part of his inquiry into policing in the region, Parry-Okeden (1897: 12) noted that it was well entrenched in the strait, popular, and 'most successful' in dealing

with minor offences committed by natives by means of a simple penal code drawn up by Sub Inspector Urquhart and sanctioned by Mr Douglas for use in the native courts. Beyond arrest and conveyance to Thursday Island neither chief nor police have any power to deal with serious offences, or with offences committed by Europeans.

In 1898 Nomoa was away from the island most of the week in diving boats and at a public meeting on 11 August 1899 Douglas appointed Ned Waria, the adopted son of Ganaia, to replace him (Douglas, 1899b; *Torres Straits Pilot and New Guinea Gazette*, 19 August 1899).¹² Waria immediately made a list of proscribed activities and punishments, presumably inspired by the ten Judaeo-Christian commandments (Gaulai, n.d.):¹³

1. *Wati pawa*. 'Sin' (lit. 'bad deeds').
2. *Puru*. 'Stealing.'
3. *Adakadan butu*. 'Defecating on the beach.'
4. *Kaziu adaka adai na tatika a apuka modo bia mai gasaman*. 'The parents of a child defecating on the beach will be punished.'
5. *Gizun mabaigau na iana uiai taim iamuli polisman gasaman*. 'If the chief feast planner makes a request that is not carried out, he may summon a policeman.'
6. *Bagai sögul*. 'Arguing.'
7. *Wati iagi kazika mata mina iamuli*. 'Using bad language to a child.'
8. *Adia taran wara*. 'Slander.'
9. *Kuiku garokaziu na iadu ime kuruig sugubau dadal unigi*. 'Smoking tobacco while the mamoose is giving a speech.'

10. *Doia tudan mura göiga gagat.* 'Weeds are to be cleared from the village every day [except the Sabbath].'

On his next visit of inspection, Douglas (1899c) reported that Waria 'shapes fairly well'. However, his first tenure lasted only a short time: by 1903 he had been replaced by Ioane Dorrick (Douglas, 1903a). Waria was again Mamoose in 1905, when he was threatened with dismissal during the quarrel between the Mabuyag and Pacific Islanders involving his eldest son; and again in 1906, when he was imprisoned on Thursday Island (*Torres Straits Pilot*, 10 March 1906). Waria was the last Mabuyag Mamoose. Milman replaced him with an appointed four-man council in 1906 (Milman, 1907: 10).

Rule by teachers and traders

Political power on each island was constantly in play, competed for not only by the men of the island but also by resident Pacific Islanders and Europeans, who at times interfered in local governance and sought to undermine the authority of the Mamoose. The LMS teachers were notorious for their 'theocratic rule' and their interference in island affairs. Haddon (1904: 265) describes local Torres Strait administration after the arrival of the Samoan teachers in 1892:

Very frequently the teacher took more or less complete charge of the internal administration of public affairs and very rapidly the social life of the people was modified. Most of the old customs were prohibited, and usages in themselves harmless, or at most inexpedient, were made into crimes... On the whole the mamoooses behaved with good sense, and at the present day most of the difficulties that arise in local politics are due to the intriguing and officiousness of the Polynesian [Samoan] teachers. There are a number of South Sea men in the various

islands, many of whom have married native wives, and when disputes arise between them and the Torres Straits Islanders the influence of the teacher is generally in favour of South Sea men whatever their nationality.

One egregious instance occurred in 1898, when Douglas (1899a: 4-5) found that the Samoan teacher, Finau, had persuaded the Murray Islanders to elect a number of magistrates to replace the Mamoose and his police. Douglas investigated the matter and informed Finau that, if he continued to interfere in this way, he would be removed. He suggested that an advisory council for the Mamoose be elected by Murray Islander heads of families who were householders. 'The Island was divided into three districts; an election took place, and the Mamoose has now a council of five to advise him in the administration of his office.'¹⁴ This is why Milman welcomed the Rev. Benjamin Thomas Butcher's appointment in 1905, since he would closely supervise the LS teachers,

who hitherto, for some years past, have undoubtedly been too much left alone, and in consequence had, in some instances at any rate, acquired an exaggerated idea of their own importance and had displayed some reluctance in submitting themselves to the control of the civil authorities (Milman, 1905c).

European teachers were often no better. In 1903 the husband of the European teacher on Saibai threatened the Mamoose and most of the people with gaol because the Mamoose had refused to allow a Samoan in the husband's employ to land on the island, despite the latter having earlier been removed by Douglas (Bennett, 1903). However, some LMS and European teachers provided valuable advice and assistance to the Mamoose and police: John Stewart Bruce on Mer and Edward James Hamon on Erub acted as clerks of court

and unofficial registrars of births, deaths and marriages. Butcher, too, scrupulously separated matters of church from state during his tenure on Mabuyag and resolutely refused to participate in the local administration of justice. During the aftermath of the quarrel between the Torres Strait and Pacific Islanders in late 1905, the local protector pressured him to charge some of the men so that they could be punished but Butcher would have 'nothing whatever to do with such a thing' (Douglas, 1899a: 5; Butcher, 1905b).

Mabuyag had not always been so fortunate. The Loyalty Island teacher, Saneish, was removed in 1880 after many complaints about his behaviour and both John Cowling and James Doyle were reprimanded for interfering in island affairs. Doyle was a pearler, trader and justice of the peace, living on Mabuyag under a yearly occupation lease of five acres. In 1899 he agreed to assist Waria in administering the island (Douglas, 1899c, 1903a). However, he used his position to further his own interests and stir up dissension and resentment among the local people (Roth, 1903). Waria seems to have been very much under Doyle's thumb. In 1905 he ordered a woman named Ada,¹⁵ who had committed 'a trifling offence' against Doyle's wife, to be 'ironed with an anchor chain and marched through the village' (O'Brien, 1905a). After numerous complaints Doyle was 'instructed to refrain from meddling in native affairs, leaving native differences to be settled by the Mamoose and Elders or by the officials charged with the supervision of the Torres Strait Islanders'. Despite being forced to resign as a justice of the peace after supplying alcohol to his boat crew, he continued to exercise an 'almost unbounded' influence over the people (Douglas, 1903b). The authorities finally lost patience with him and, after his conviction in November 1905 for harbouring unsigned crew, all his permits to employ local labour were withdrawn and

his license to occupy land on Mabuyag, which expired at the end of 1905, was not renewed (O'Brien, 1905c; Annual Report, 1905: 7).

The Mamoose system was suited to the times, in that it mediated administrative continuity and change by preserving traditional power relations and shaping modes of governance more suited to the new civil order. The extent of a Mamoose's authority at a given time appears to have depended on traditional leadership qualities: force of individual personality; ability to command obedience; relative importance of his clan; individual skills and/or knowledge; and ability to forge internal and external alliances. However, the Mamoose served at the pleasure of European authorities and could be deposed by them. Edward Mosby of Masig (Yorke Island), who came to Torres Strait in the early 1870s, told the 1908 Pearling Commission that he did 'not think any Mamoose in the Strait has any authority. Certain people order the natives about and they obey them' (Mosby, 1908: 215).

Police

What appears to have been the first island police force was formally appointed by Chester on Mer in 1878. Along with the new Mamoose, they were chosen by the Murray Islander leaders to help maintain good order and had 'the power to arrest offenders and punish them', generally by flogging, as there was as yet no purpose-built lockup (Tait Scott, 1882; McFarlane, 1882).

If there were police on Mabuyag by 1881, their powers were limited: they could not, for example, charge and punish resident Europeans or Pacific Islanders. In February 1881 Chester proposed placing European constables on Mabuyag and building a small lockup financed by the shellers, after he investigated a drunken disturbance on 23 January. Mabuyag had become 'a rendezvous for most of the boats employed in the Straits and on a Saturday it is not unusual for twenty or thirty boats crews to land and camp there

until Monday, and as there are only three Europeans living on the island they find it impossible to preserve order'. Christopher Scanlan, one of Pearson's Samoan divers, had demanded 'a bottle of grog' from Pearson, who refused and ordered him away from his house. Scanlan then struck him and was placed in irons. Then another diver and boat captain, Billy Tanna, led 'about 50 Polynesians' to force his release. Scanlan continued to abuse Pearson and threatened several times to kill him:

had not Mr Jardine's manager and another European who happened to be there, gone to Pearson's assistance it is probable he would have been maltreated as the men were very violent and excited with liquor. Two other Europeans witnessed the affray, both managers of shelling stations, but would not interfere to preserve order! (Chester, 1881).

Pearson brought charges against Scanlan for assault and the case was heard in the Thursday Island court of petty sessions on 26 January.¹⁶ This semi-riot was not by any means an uncommon occurrence 'but the European managers are so entirely at the mercy of their divers that they very rarely venture to punish them for misconduct for fear that they will get less shell'.

In 1884 occurs what may be the first written mention of the Mabuyag police, five men appointed by the Mamoose to assist him in that capacity (McFarlane, 1884). In mid-September 1886 Milman 'thought it advisable to approve of and encourage' them by providing them with native trooper uniforms to enhance their morale, just as Douglas had provided the Mamooses with a uniform and a Queensland ensign as insignia of office (Parry-Okeden, 1897: 12):

Though I do not anticipate much good arising from the movement, still I do not see that any harm

will be likely to ensue, and I take it that an initiatory step such as this towards order and discipline and the recognition of a quasi authority is one of the first steps towards a higher state of civilization (Milman, 1886).

The policemen took their job description seriously. In 1890, faced with irregular attendance at the Murray Island school, the Mamoose

suggested that the policemen should seize the truants – and he would send them to prison if they would not attend school. This was taken up by them as being a splendid idea. I could not help smiling at the policemen's eagerness for such a law. Evidently the idea of arresting a small boy had charms to them. But though the idea was a good one from their point of view I felt it most undesirable from ours (Hunt, 1890).

In the early 1890s Douglas brought in a rule that, while the Mamoose might suspend policemen, any new appointments must be confirmed by the Government Resident (Douglas, 1894b). Visiting Mabuyag towards the end of September 1902, Anglican Bishop Gilbert White (1903) characterised the local police as 'the most active and influential men' on the island. Their general duties were 'to uphold [the Mamoose's] authority and repress crime or disorder' (Parry-Okeden, 1897). More specifically, they were engaged

in keeping order in the villages on the various Islands, in superintending prisoners engaged at roadwork etc. (this only on certain Islands) under sentence of the Mamoose's Court, and generally in obeying the orders of the Mamoose or Council of the Island to which they belong, in the maintenance of order and discipline. The police constitute an integral part of the very

excellent system of governing the Straits Islanders by allowing them to govern themselves (under supervision, instituted, or I should say continued and approved with modifications and amendments by the late Hon. John Douglas, Government Resident) (O'Brien, 1906c).¹⁷

Because the police were not officially connected with the Queensland Police Department, there are few official records of their actions. They were not armed¹⁸ but they were paid an annual honorarium of £1 and supplied with a ration of tobacco, blankets and a uniform of jumper, trousers and cap (Roth, 1904: 7). Douglas, who had made the appointments, reported that 'the advantage of the system cannot be too highly spoken of, the result being that troubles and breaches of law and discipline are reduced to a minimum'. Regular visits of inspection, however, were necessary to prevent 'unruly characters' from defying the Mamoose and attempting to take charge (Annual Report, 1904: 21). Not only were the police effective in reducing to a minimum 'troubles and breaches of law and discipline' but the system was remarkably cost-effective, a point often stressed by the authorities. In 1897 Mabuyag had four policemen for its approximately 100 'much scattered' population out of a total of 24 appointed to the eight largest islands (Parry-Okedon, 1897). O'Brien (1906b) set out the chain of command as follows: 'The police are subject in the first instance to the Mamoose on the Island to which they belong, or where there is no Mamoose, to the Council of the Island, and the Mamoose or Council is in turn responsible to the Aboriginals Department.'

Courts, courthouses and lockups

Unique among Indigenous Australians, Torres Strait Islanders from the late nineteenth century administered their own local justice in local courts, conducted in

local courthouses according to a formal penal code drawn up by Sub Inspector Urquhart, and they were empowered to imprison those they convicted in local gaols. The first reference to this administrative infrastructure occurs in Chester (1878b: 8), who had advised the Murray Islanders to appoint a Mamoose and a small police force: 'Before leaving [Mer] we learnt that the chiefs ... had resolved to build a house to serve the double purpose of a court-house and council-chamber.' By 1897 the Mamoose customarily 'preside in a courthouse (built by the natives themselves for the purpose) and deals with minor offences committed by natives'. Nevertheless, '[b]eyond arrest and conveyance to Thursday Island neither chief nor police have any power to deal with serious offences, or with offences committed by Europeans' (Parry-Okedon, 1897: 12).

POST-COLONIAL ADMINISTRATION TO 1939

Federation of the Australian colonies in 1901 made no perceptible impact on the administration of the islands. In March 1904 a single chief protector replaced the northern and southern protectors in Queensland and a sub-department of native affairs was created but again the Torres Strait Islanders were largely unaffected. In his influential book, *Torres Strait Islanders: custom and colonialism*, Beckett (1987: 45) states that Torres Strait Islanders became subject to the Queensland Native Affairs department upon the death of John Douglas in July 1904. He restated this in Beckett (2011). Although often repeated, this is a somewhat misleading simplification, which elides a sequence of different, though related, events, of which Douglas's death was merely one of a series of policy and personnel changes which ultimately brought the Islanders under suffocating state control. As with most political change the 'protection' of Islanders was negotiated through a process which involved a complex interplay of power, policy and

personality. Douglas had publicly and privately objected to the application of the Aboriginal protection acts to Islanders and such was his prestige as a former Queensland premier that he managed to forestall the departmental bureaucrats. His death made it easier for them to put in place their long-desired action but it took a further eight years of incremental steps to achieve their goal: the 1912 gazettal of the Islanders as 'Aboriginals' and their home islands as 'Aboriginal reserves'.

We can trace the main legal and administrative steps leading to the Islanders' 'protection' with reference to events on Mabuyag, as the powers vested in authorities responsible for the conduct of Torres Strait affairs were increased. This was in response to bureaucratic pressure for consistency in Queensland Indigenous administration under the repressive *Queensland Protection of Aboriginals and the Sale of Opium Acts 1897-1901*. Islanders began to receive closer oversight from Brisbane and improved communications meant a greater number of inspection visits by government and religious authorities. Their reports allow us to track the progress of local administration on the islands, including Mabuyag.

George Harpur Bennett had been appointed Protector of Aboriginals for Somerset in 1889 but Torres Strait Islanders were outside his purview. Charles David O'Brien, the inspector of Pacific Islanders, replaced him in mid-1904, but it was not until December 1905 that he was accorded full powers of a protector 'to maintain uniformity'. This occurred after a two-year hiatus during which responsibility for administering the Queensland protection acts was transferred from the Home Secretary's to the Public Lands Department between April 1903 and August 1905 (*Queensland Government Gazette*, 18 April 1903, 19 August 1905). Milman, Chief Protector Roth and O'Brien were all formally advised of the new administrative arrangements in letters dated 21 March 1906

and Milman was asked to make his usual visits of inspection to the island schools and continue to report on them to the department.

Referring to the administration of matters affecting aboriginals at Thursday Island, I have the honour, by direction to inform you that, in order to secure uniformity of practice through the State, the local Protector of Aboriginals, Mr C. D. O'Brien, will in future perform all duties which appertain to the position of Protector under the Aboriginals Protection Act. The Home Secretary desires me to state ... that it has been necessitated in order to bring the system of administering matters relating to aboriginals at Thursday Island into conformity with that obtaining in other parts of Queensland, by restricting to Mr O'Brien the duties which attach to the position of Protector (Ryder, 1906).

O'Brien and Milman, both men in the Douglas mould, appear to have respected each other and co-operated in all 'matters affecting the internal discipline and government of the communities on the Islands' (O'Brien, 1906b). However, O'Brien's scrupulousness and willingness to bring charges against the shellers contravening the law led their association to complain to the Home Secretary on 14 October 1905 that he 'was obstructing them and doing them a lot of harm generally' (O'Brien, 1905b, 1905c). Despite replies to all of the charges levelled against him and letters of support from influential churchmen and others, he was forced out on 1 January 1907 and replaced by John Moody Costin.¹⁹ According to F.C. Hodel (1916), O'Brien 'was shifted too easily, because he had the temerity to attack abuses which existed, and upon which certain traders fattened'. Roth was 'well aware that in a country such as this it is impossible for a Protector of Aboriginals

to faithfully discharge his duties with any vigour or impartiality and avoid making enemies' (Annual Report, 1905: 30).

Costin was anxious to regularise the supervision of the state's most valuable Indigenous asset, Torres Strait Islander labour, forcing the men into the marine industries and the young unmarried women into domestic service on Thursday Island, thus antagonising both their parents and the LMS. According to Butcher (1908), the 'local Protector of Aboriginals under the influence of the strong anti-missionary spirit in Thursday Island for a time did all he could to hinder our work and interfered in a most unwarrantable [sic] manner so much so that I was forced to send [a] letter to the Home Secretary'.

By 1907 the role of the Mamoose was as official representative of his island and primary mediator between his people and the government. His duties now included nominal oversight of the island 'company' boats: he was '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' (Annual Report, 1907: 16). Chief Protector Howard explained the system of island self-government as it obtained in 1907:

The governing body consists of the native chief or 'mamoose' assisted and advised by the councillors and elders of the village with a staff of native police to uphold his authority and keep order among the inhabitants or visitors.

The European school teacher acts as clerk and treasurer of the native court, assisting with suggestion or advice, when requested, but otherwise, has not authority to interfere in the internal management of affairs.

The duties would be as follows:-

The mamoose acts as a 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 offenders, but misdemeanour and serious offences must be reserved for the bench at Thursday Island. The councillors attend at 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 with the mamoose monthly, upon any questions 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 arrest and lock up offenders till the next meeting of court. They have also 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 repairs and order; also that the public properties (cocoanut trees, fishtraps, etc.) and buildings (court-house, lock-up, school house, 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 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, repairs 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 periodical reports, returns, and requisitions to the head office.

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

He also acts as the local medico, and reports all cases of infectious diseases and improper attention to the mamoose, treating in simple remedies from a medicine chest, but recommending serious cases to the hospital at Thursday Island.

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 per cent. of the money to the payment of interest and ademption, another smaller percentage to repairs, renewals, purchases, etc., and the remainder is either handed to the

mamoose or his agent, or expended by the Protector for the general benefit (Annual Report, 1907: 15-16).

In December 1907 Costin (1907a) suggested several reforms to the financing of island administration, prefiguring what would, five years later, be officially gazetted as the 'island fund':

It has become necessary to limit the number of dogs and the natives have suggested that a dog tax of 2/6 per annum be imposed ... They also spoke to me about those who are earning wages contributing a small amount, say 1/- per month, towards providing the island with a medicine chest, as they state that the hospital in Thursday Island is of very little value to them...

Formerly these court collections have been paid to the Mamoose, and in the case of one island I am told they are paid to a white man living on the island, on the understanding that they are to be used for the general improvement of the island. This has not given satisfaction to the natives and in several cases the Mamoose has been charged with using such collections for his own use and deposed from office.

I would propose that:

1. Such collections on all of the islands be paid into the account mentioned above, when the whole of the transactions will be submitted for inspection by a Government Auditor.
2. The wages of deceased natives of these islands and of those who desert from service on Articles should be placed in this account and the island to which the

native belonged credited with the amount so paid into the account.

3. From this fund island court houses be provided, uniforms for councillors and in fact any local requirements which make for the protection and comfort of the native.

With regard to number 3 I am just a little doubtful as to whether the fund would ever be large enough to meet more than a portion of the legitimate claims which the natives could make upon such a fund, and it would then be a question for the Department to assist the natives after say they have collected 50% of the amount proposed to be spent, the amount of such assistance to be refunded by the natives from subsequent collections. Of course in the erection of court houses etc. every effort would be made to use native labour and material to the utmost extent. All of these are reforms which I think would tend to the protection and comfort of the native and with which I am heartily in accord. I shall be glad to be advised that these suggestions meet with your approval.

The Chief Protector recommended adoption of the reforms on 3 January 1908 and, a few months later, set out in detail in an important memorandum the different functions and duties of the local protector and government resident, the two most important government officials in Torres Strait. Designed to clarify the administrative ambiguity that existed over their respective areas of authority, it demarcates the division of power. Restating the system of self-government then in place, he suggested that the control of such matters

scarcely come within the province of my Department, and would be more

properly controlled by the Government Resident at Thursday Island. Of course, matters relating to the employment of, purchase or boats, sale of produce obtained by, and necessary relief of natives, together with the Schools, are within the scope of, and should be controlled by, my Department.

I would respectfully suggest all those affairs relating to the system of Local Government, instituted by the late Hon. John Douglas, be placed under the supervision of the Government Resident at Thursday Island, who would be in a better position, to regulate and enquire into such matters than an officer of this Department (Howard, 1908).

Milman (1908) replied that he was

quite in accord with Mr Howard's suggestion that the Government Resident should have full control over the welfare of the natives of the islands in Torres Straits, leaving the domestic economy of the Islanders in the hands of the local Protector. Now that the Resident will have the means of making regular visits, it is most desirable that the Government Resident should exercise supreme authority, and no friction need occur between the two Departments. The schools should in my opinion be looked after by the Government Resident, more particularly if handed over to the London Missionary Society. I am not in favour of the fines and amounts received from each island being placed in one general fund, but that amounts so collected should be dispensed at the discretion of the Government Resident for the benefit of the island contributing.

Costin was removed in 1908 for misconduct and replaced by Milman, who carried out the



FIG. 1. Street view of Mabuyag settlement, 20 July 1911 (Queensland State Archives, Digital Image ID 5863).

duties of both government resident and local protector.²⁰ He reestablished cordial relations with the LMS and instituted a reward for the hitherto honorary councillors of 'a couple of figs or tobacco every week', which 'will satisfy them and enhance their position in the community' (Milman, 1910). However, Milman died in 1911.²¹ Having established the precedent, the Chief Protector could then appoint a single local protector with overall administrative authority. This was the more ideologically doctrinaire William Miller Lee-Bryce, who arrived in December 1911 and served until 1917. His tenure coincided for several years with that of Chief Protector of Aborigines, John William Bleakley, whose protection policy with respect to the Islanders he was eager to implement. He set in train changes that would usher in the era of legal protectionism (Figure 1).

THE ERA OF LEGAL PROTECTIONISM

It had become clear by the time of the visit to Torres Strait of the Home Secretary, the Chief Protector and various members of parliament in May 1911 that a change in policy had been agreed upon, which would see the department given full authority over both

administration and education in Torres Strait and abandon the 'dual control' it shared with the LMS. The department used the media to lobby public opinion for the change, inviting a special correspondent from the Brisbane *Daily Mail* to accompany the party. He ridiculed in print many practices of the society, labeling its proposal, possibly first raised by Butcher (1905a), to take over all outer island education with European Christian teachers as 'preposterous', despite the possible savings to the government: 'Economy is all very well, but to grant to such a body a valuable monopoly such as this would mean is not to be thought of by our legislators, if they are in earnest in their policy of State control' (Anon., 1911a). The 'period of missionary usefulness is passing in Torres Strait', he wrote, 'and the times call for a more businesslike Government control than they have proved themselves capable of maintaining' (Anon., 1911b). The LMS was also becoming more committed to the conversion of the coastal Papuan peoples and debating whether it should move its scarce resources away from Torres Strait.

In early July 1912 the Chief Protector visited Thursday Island, where he had discussions with the local protector and

'others interested in aboriginal matters'. Certain recommendations, the outcome of these discussions, were placed before the Home Secretary and, as a result, regulations proclaimed on 15 November 1912 under the Queensland *Land Act* 1910, gazetted Torres Strait Islanders as 'Aboriginals' and their islands 'Aboriginal reserves' (Annual Report, 1912: 5). The Islander population was thus divided into two groups: 'Aboriginals' on reserve islands and subject to the control of the protector; and non-'Aboriginals' on non-reserve islands (missions and the Prince of Wales group of islands), exempt from such control despite an often identical ethnic heritage. A series of regulations were promulgated, which severely restricted Islanders' freedoms and gave the European teachers the legal authority of 'superintendents' to act as agents of the local protector. With almost total control over their island (Williamson, 1994: 73), superintendent-teachers were now expected, in addition to their school duties, to provide medical aid, 'arbitrate in family quarrels or land disputes, supervise village development, sanitation, the working of the fishing vessels and garden culture and observance of reserve regulations, acting as far as possible through the native council and police, to whom they afford advisory aid' (Wilson, 1933).

Another important development in local administration was the gazettal on 21 December 1912 of island fund regulations, which came into effect the following January. Each island was to have an island fund comprised of all fines, penalties and taxes collected on the reserve, as well as a percentage of male wages and net company boat earnings. The contributions would be paid to the local protector and used to provide general welfare, infrastructure, boat building and repair (Harries, 1913; Annual Report, 1913: 14). In 1913 approximately

£2000 per annum was being spent each year on Islander administration and education, excluding the salaries of local officials (Lee-Bryce, 1913). By 1922 the total administrative cost was estimated to be double that figure, a calculation made when the department actually considered handing over the administration of the islands to the Torres Straits Mission. Of that sum, £242 would be spent on providing 'uniforms, tobacco, lanterns, etc. for police and councillors and special police', who numbered 61, although it was proposed to lower the figure to 48 (Holmes, 1922) (Figure 2).

The councillors were marked out as important men (never women) by their red jerseys with the word 'councillor' in white letters on the front. According to McMahon (1922: 8), they were 'usually of quite high intelligence, and some personality. They are either nominated by the people, or in case of a deadlock of votes, appointed by the Queensland Government at the suggestion of the administrator.' Full of praise for the synergistic functioning of governance, administration, religion and commerce, he describes their many duties:

to see that the villagers keep their houses, food, and clothing clean, that they do not gossip, that they send their children regularly to school, and that church is attended every Sunday. They also visit the native gardens to see that they are properly tended and planted to their full capacity. If they are suspicious of a good wife and her cooking, they enter her kitchen, lift up the lid of a saucepan and taste whatever is being cooked. Woe betide the lady if any fault is found, for next day she is summoned before the local court, admonished, and fined. The councillors keep an eye on the pearl divers, and how their boats are kept

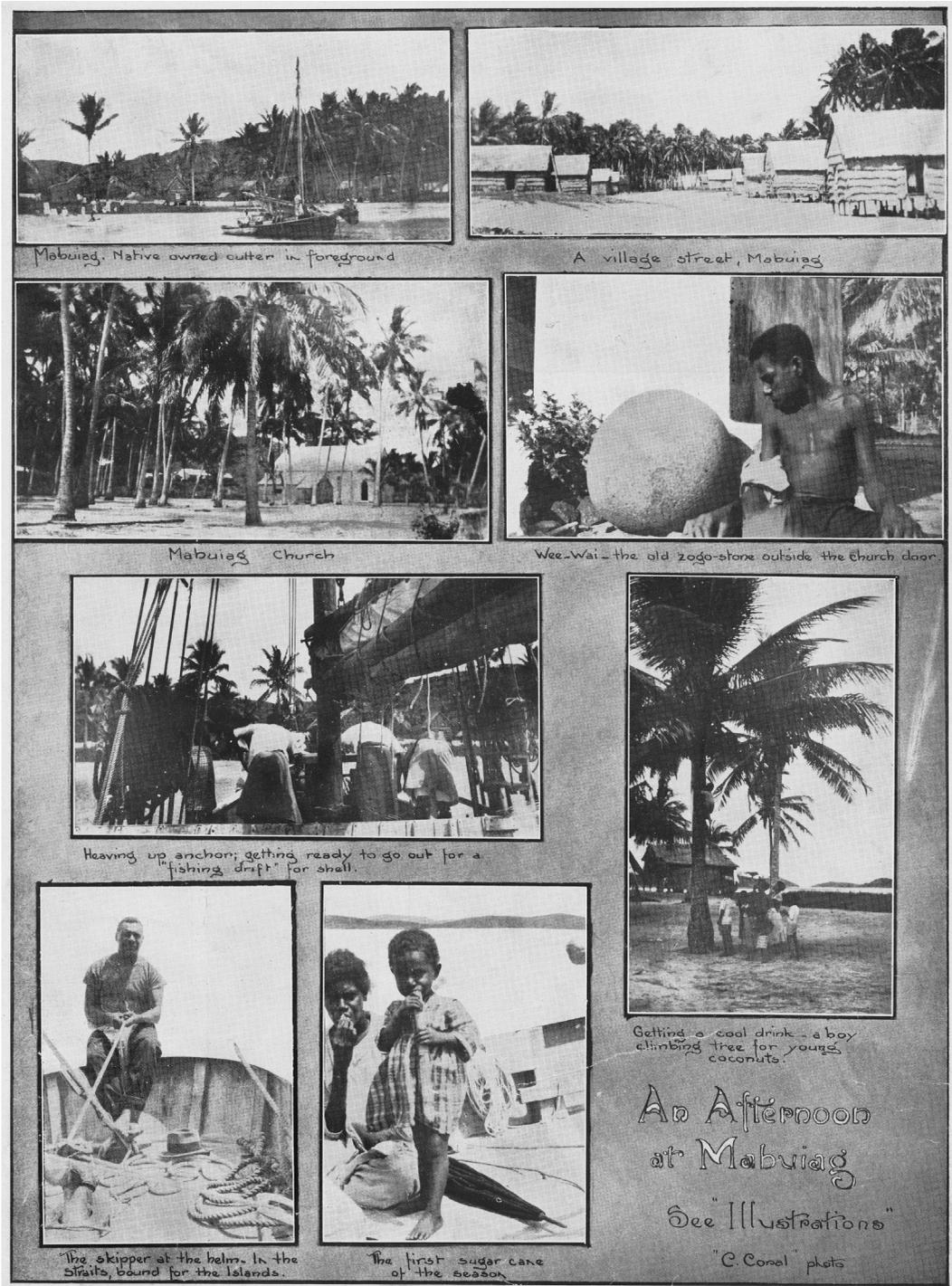


FIG. 2. Views of Mabuyag, 1925 (from *The Queenslander*, 3 October 1925, p. 28).

in repair. Men idling, and unable to account satisfactorily for being idle, or away from their work are dealt with promptly, and work found for them. It is put down as a bad mark against the native owner of a pearling fleet if he cannot keep his divers busy, and he is called over the coals by one of the councillors who lectures him soundly (McMahon, 1922: 9).

At that time Europeans with an interest in the Queensland government's policies with respect to the 'Aboriginal problem' saw in the pre-war administrative structures of Torres Strait a highly enlightened government policy

aimed at 'development on improved native lines, fostering native village life, arts, crafts and music and avoiding Europeanisation' (Wilson, 1933). But grievances and resentments after over two decades of increasing control, the inability to control earnings and spendings, the constraints on movement and the humiliations of curfews went unaddressed by the administration (Figure 3-5). The Islanders had lost all confidence in the then protector, the unsympathetic John Donald McLean, and their resentments came to a head in 1936 with the declaration of a strike by the 'company' boat crews. This remains one of the most successful strikes by Indigenous Australians.

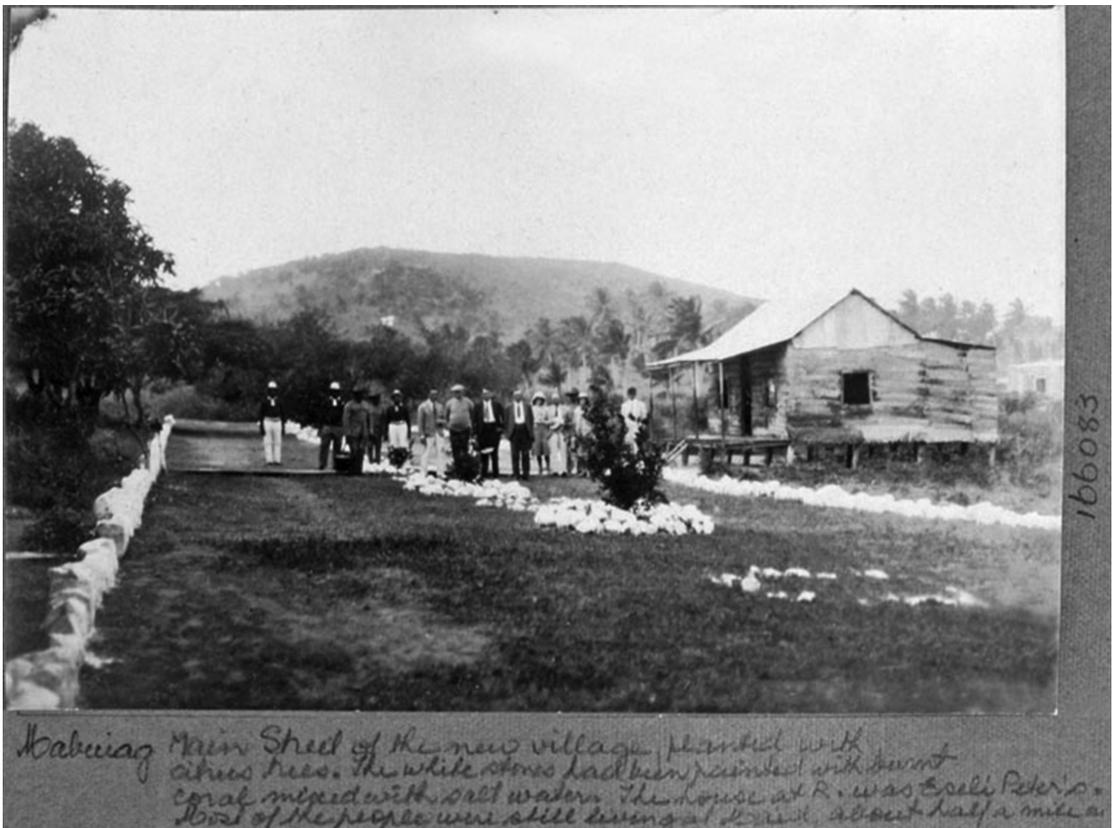


FIG. 3. Main street of the 'new village' with planted citrus trees and white stones painted with burnt coral mixed with seawater. Photograph taken during visit by the Hon J.C. Peterson Home Secretary and party accompanied by local councillors and police, June 1931. The house on the right belonged to Eseli Peter (Queensland State Archives, Digital Image ID 5752).



FIG. 4. Street view of Bau village, Mabuyag, with St Mary's Church in background, June 1931 (Queensland State Archives, Digital Image ID 5753).

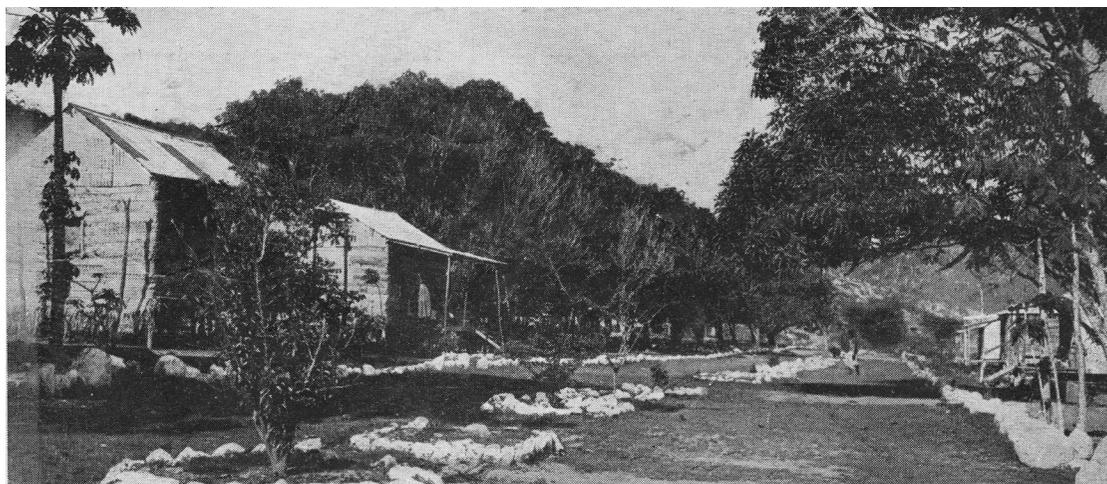


FIG. 5. Ordered streetscape, Mabuyag, 1932 (from *The Queenslander*, 12 May 1932, p. 29).

Shaken by the determination of the Islanders to be rid of the protection acts and fearing the decrease in revenue, the government offered them administrative concessions in 'a limited form of home rule'. In November 1936 the councillors were given more control over their communities, replacing the superintendent-teachers as final arbiters in domestic island matters. The councillors were now elected by secret ballot of all residents over 18 years for a period of three years 'unless dismissed for an offence by the native court or a Police Court elsewhere', i.e., they could no longer be dismissed at the whim of the protector, as was previously the case (Annual Report, 1936: 14).

Such administrative reversals are not made in a vacuum. A decision by the Australian premiers' conference held at Adelaide in 1936 led to a conference of state and territories Chief Protectors and Aboriginal Protection Board representatives being held in Canberra in April 1937 to 'discuss questions of aboriginal welfare and formulate a uniform policy'. This was followed in May and June by a visit of inspection of the islands by the minister and under secretary for the Queensland Department of Health and Home Affairs, the chief protector and the deputy chief protector, who promised the Islanders a greater measure of self-government (Annual Report, 1937: 3, 13); in late August the first councillors' conference was held at Masig, during which the councillors put forward a range of demands to be considered by the Queensland government. Its most significant response was to repeal the *Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Acts 1897-1934* on 12 October 1939 and introduce the *Torres Strait Islanders Act 1939*, the first legislation dealing specifically with Torres Strait Islanders. For the first time Islanders received legal recognition as a separate people with legally established councils elected by adult community

franchise. Each council continued to levy an island tax on a per capita basis for every adult resident in order to provide an additional source of income but formulated its 'own practices in relation to the collection of the money' (Killoran, 1989: 2492-2493). For local protector O'Leary, passage of the new act 'placed the Torres Strait island communities in a unique position, in that they now have a constitution giving them a system of self-government, more comprehensive and progressive than is enjoyed by an other native race of similar circumstances' (Annual Report, 1939: 4).

Island councils

Although it was clear from the outset that the Mamoose served at the pleasure of the colonial authorities, the system proved flexible enough to respond to local conditions without antagonising the Islanders. Mabayag's last Mamoose, Waria, was dismissed by Milman in 1906 and replaced by a four-member council. The Mabayag teacher reported:

The councillors have met regularly each month as you requested, and I can with great pleasure report very favourably on their work in general. The village has been kept much cleaner than was done before, more attention has been paid to the gardens, the councillors having insisted on each man doing his share to increase the food supply; the two cutters have been kept more regularly at work, the wells have been properly cared for and cleaned, the courthouse doors and windows painted in two coats, and a number of cocoanut-trees planted (Milman, 1907: 10).

The replacement of the Mamoose by elected island councils became the norm during the early twentieth century. Councils took on the functions previously held by the Mamoose, with the additional duties of

appointing their company boats' skippers and dispensing justice. The councils could decide on appropriate punishments, such as whether people should be removed to Cape York missions or, increasingly, to Palm Island. They could also consider applications to return. This new administrative model, an informal system with no legal force, spread gradually to the least populated islands. Harry Oroki (pers. comm., 2003) likened them to the councils of the magic men, the *maydhalgal*, where the men sat together to discuss matters of state and killed anyone who interrupted them. The councillors' status was proclaimed by their red coats, provided by the government after Howard (1907) reported: 'At present, the island police, a subordinate body, attend their meetings in uniforms whilst the councillors [sic], the superior body, appear in rags this seems an anomaly, moreover, the clothes would be the means of enforcing authority.'

Eseli (1998: 76-79) records the first Mabuyag (chief) councillors as Mooka, Ned Waria, Peter (Eseli's father) and Maki. Mooka was appointed a councillor in mid-1906 by local protector O'Brien to replace Mabuyag's last Mamoose, Waria, presumably because of the trouble with the Pacific Islanders and his conviction and imprisonment in 1906. O'Brien had 'paid a hurried visit to the island on the 1st May, meeting the natives in the courthouse, and going into a few matters of interest to them' (Milman, 1907: 11). However, by early 1908 a majority of the people were complaining to the trader, John Cowling, that the councillors did not represent their clans.

O'Brien I believe introduced this system picking out what he thought were the most intelligent men without considering their clan, consequently some of the clans are not represented at all, which is the cause of their complaints. No doubt formerly the

Mamoose's executive power was weak but the way these Councillors are chosen is much worse than the old system partially no doubt through the Islands not being administered by the Resident Magistrate who was well known to all the natives personally and was acknowledged to be the representative of the Crown, this administration is best suited to local conditions and has formerly proved admirable in every way.

Cowling wrote that Mooka was 'an incorrigible loafer has no traditional rights for the position at all and should be removed'. He (Cowling, 1908) suggested instead that 'one head man from each clan' be elected a councillor and that they should then:

elect their chairman, whose duty it would be to report to the Protector and carry out his orders. The time has not yet come for the Govt to ignore native tradition and customs, the younger generation are still well grounded to respect the head man of their clan and there can be no doubt that deference for the head men is thoroughly ingrained in the native mind.

In 1908 the government decreed that 'in future elections of councillors, a representative be chosen from each clan and they elect their own chairman' (Bleakley, 1908). The first elections were by adult male franchise but soon women were also allowed to vote. As always in Torres Strait, the method of choosing a chairman ('number one councillor') varied from island to island: he – until the 1980s it was always a male – might be elected from among the councillors, or the candidate with the highest number of votes might automatically become chairman. Councils could on occasion be dissolved, if the authorities disapproved of their conduct

or following a request to the authorities, and new elections held. In 1908, for example, in accordance with the local protector's request, the Mabuyag government teacher dismissed the four councillors, two of whom were considered unsatisfactory, and held an election, 'which resulted in three new men getting this most coveted position, only one of the old councillors being re-elected' (Annual Report, 1908: 26).

Three years later the Mabuyag people were still unhappy with their four-member council. They asked that it be dissolved, since they wished 'to return to the old habit of having a Chief'. They were refused (Macgregor, 1911). While the councillors had a fair degree of control over public matters, ultimate authority rested with the chief protector acting through the local protector

and the superintendent-teacher. The local protector could veto the nomination of any candidate he deemed unsuitable and dismiss any council for failure to carry out his instructions. Even the Rev. Harold Harper Ayscough (1914: 35), who considered the system 'most satisfactory' on account of its low cost and effectiveness – in 1921 the councillors were paid £10 per annum and the police £6 (Bleakley, 1921) – observed that, if the teacher had a strong personality, 'he practically becomes the governor of the island'. In a revealing memorandum, Lee-Bryce (1915) professed his astonishment that Islanders could believe 'that the Government Teacher is subordinate to the Councillors' (Figure 6).

Describing the characteristics and duties of the island councillors, McMahon (1917: 443-444) wrote that, while the islands were said



FIG. 6. Island Councillors, Island Policemen and Island Police Sergeant (all standing) and European official (seated), Bau village, Mabuyag, 1915-1926 (John Done Collection, Queensland Museum: EH-7690-0).

to be 'self-governed', in practice the teacher was in charge, aided by the councillors who

are men either picked out by the Government on the recommendation of the Teacher, or are elected by the villagers, men and women all having votes. The Councillors are chosen for good character and strong personality, for their duties require that they should be determined and level headed, not given to favoring or lapses of morals, in short, should be above suspicion, and like Caesar's wife beyond reproach. They have at times ticklish and serious disputes to adjudicate upon, and often troublesome regulations to enforce, and if they did not command general respect, their chances of governing would only end in results farcical and abortive. Great care then is exercised and in every case where there is an election, the elected councillors are usually the right men put in the right places. They take in a sense the positions of the old chiefs, but with very moderated powers, and are not allowed to turn the course of justice as many of the old autocratic chiefs did to suit themselves; ... The Councillors as a mark of their status wear at trials and on gala days a uniform of either white or blue trousers, a bright red sweater on which in white letters is the title "Councillor". Among the many duties of the Councillors is that of inspecting the villagers' homes and inquiring into their personal cleanliness, turning up beds and boxes and clothing for bugs or unsavory insects, tasting the housewife's cooking, seeing children are not under any excuse

less than serious sickness kept from school, prying into the business affairs of the men and how the native gardens are being attended to. These and many other duties give the Councillors a certain power which makes their instructions absolute commands no sensible villager would dare to question.

In 1913 there were 20 island councillors; by 1933 there were 35. They were recognised as a crucial communication channel 'between officialdom and the people'. They were paid from the island fund and McLean advocated restricting the number of councillors to no more than two on each island, because of the drain on the fund (Lee-Bryce, 1914; McLean, 1933).

As part of negotiations to end the 1936 maritime strike, the Queensland government agreed to call the island councillors together to present their complaints and demands. The Mabuyag representatives, Manase Bani (chairman), Ephraim Bani Snr and Obediah Warriia, met with the others for the first time formally at an historic meeting at Masig from 23-25 August 1937.²² Among their 22 demands, most of which were met, were an end to unpopular regulations, an increase in starting wages on the master boats, the transfer of power from the superintendent-teachers to the local councils and improved services, particularly in education and health (Annual Report, 1937: 13). Demonstrating the cultural importance of symbols of authority, the first discussion item was councillors' uniforms:

The view was held that the time has come when Torres Strait Councillors should not be required to wear the elaborate uniform previously supplied. The Lava Lava and blue shirt, introduced by Mr McLean is obnoxious and although some of the Councillors favoured the retention of the red Guernsey, ultimately it was

decided to have no Uniform but to ask the Department to supply in lieu, Badges to be worn by Councillors. Sketches of the Badges and application for same will be forwarded in separate communication (O'Leary, 1937).

O'Leary professed himself satisfied 'that the people are more contented, now that their views have been expressed and many grievances rectified, than they have been for many years'. The new arrangements specified that three councillors from each island would hold office for three years. The councillors would deal with all domestic offences brought before the local court and the maximum punishment they could inflict was a £1 fine or three weeks' imprisonment in the local gaol. During imprisonment prisoners would do manual work on the roads or building other infrastructure. The local police would continue to be appointed by the protector at Thursday Island and paid by the department.

At the second councillors' conference, held at Mabuyag from 22-25 May 1939, the Mabuyag representatives were Epesia Hankin (chairman), Manase Bani and Joseph Mooka. They 'represented us very well and achieved all the benefits we had fought for to the continued blessing of Torres Strait' (Eseli, 1998: 80).

The names of some pre-war Mabuyag councillors can be gleaned from material on tombstones, commemorative plaques, church records and official reports and correspondence. Members of the Bani, Hankin, Phineasa and Warriia families figure prominently: Epesia Hankin, for example, was a councillor in 1910, 1920, 1928, 1935 and 1947 and chairman in 1910, 1928, 1939 and 1947 (Figures 7). Frith (n.d.) wrote that he 'was for many years the Chairman of the Mabuyag Island Council and the term of his administration was marked by great success in the well being of the people'.



FIG. 7. Grave of Epesia Hankin, Hankin family cemetery, Mabuyag (Photo: John Burton).

Epesia 's brother, George Hankin, served as a councillor on various occasions from the late 1920s through the early 1960s; other councillors during the 1920s and 1930s were Ephraim Bani Snr, Manase Bani, Eseli, Luffman, Mene, Joseph Mooka, Phineasa, Guru Spear and Obediah Warriia. Phineasa, one of the ringleaders of the 1936 'company boat' strike, was elected chief councillor in 1936, replacing Epesia Hankin. His son, Tom Lomak Phineasa, served during the 1950s and was chairman in 1956 and 1957. After Manase Bani's retirement, Obediah Warriia replaced him as chief councillor. According to Eseli (1998: 81), Warriia, with his 'strong and resolute voice' was the only councillor who was still a conference member in 1957.

Local police

The system of local police acting under council orders continued until World War II with few alterations beyond an increase in numbers and associated costs. During his two decades as government resident, Douglas had personally appointed all the island police, with their number being based on population, presumably

after vetting the Mamoose's choice. After Douglas's death in 1904, the police were appointed or dismissed after consultation between Douglas's successor, Milman, and local protector O'Brien, who attempted to limit the number to no more than 25 (O'Brien, 1906b). By the end of 1907 that number had grown to 32, each receiving the nominal sum of £1 per annum, and the local protector objected on the grounds of cost and lack of consultation:

I have the honour to inform you that the appointment, payment, dismissal, and general government of these men in the past appears to have been left solely in the hands of the local Police here, and no reference has been made to this Department, except to obtain from this Department the sum of £25 per annum to pay [their] wages (Costin, 1907b).

In July 1905 Luffman Kris was appointed as policeman on Mabuyag and Aroone,²³ Charlie Poko and Johnny were appointed in April 1906 (Costin, 1907c). They probably replaced Dick Tanna and Frank Maubiag [sic],²⁴ who arrested and briefly detained Tipoti Nona on the orders of Mamoose Waria for not obeying Waria's orders to return to his vessel. Nona then brought a complaint against Waria, who was convicted and sentenced to two months hard labour in the Thursday Island gaol. A strongly-worded editorial in the local paper defended Waria as being a scapegoat for James Doyle, Nona's employer, and called for his immediate release on the grounds that he had not had proper legal representation (*Torres Straits Pilot*, 10 March 1906). While investigating Doyle, O'Brien found 'an almost incredible state of things, it being shown that some of the island police had obeyed Doyle's orders implicitly, handcuffing, arresting, and imprisoning natives without warrants

or any authority whatever. I learned since that some of them were in his pay!' (Annual Report, 1905: 28).

Island police were provided with shirts, caps, blue jumpers, blue and white trousers and blankets (Lee-Bryce, 1914). They took their position, uniform and perquisites extremely seriously and when, in 1906, they were offered khaki jumpers as well as blue, they rejected the former and the local protector feared further offending them by stopping the issue of blankets, a cost-cutting measure proposed by his superiors:

It has become a recognized issue and the men expect it, and withdrawing it now may lead to dissatisfaction among a body of men whose services are of very great value in administering and maintaining law and order among the communities on the Islands under the direction of the Mamoooses and Island Councils; some of these Islands not being visited by a Government Officer for many months at a time (O'Brien, 1906a).

By 1922 there were 61 police and councillors, whose uniforms cost about £4 per annum each (Holmes, 1922). The appearance of the Erub police sergeant while on duty was probably fairly typical: he wore a 'gorgeous uniform, a combination of police and navy, with a touch of the army to give it a little extra glitter, a pair of brown boots, emphasising the largeness of his feet, and a silver-topped stick, giving just the suggestion of the "knut"' (Coral, 1925). Island regulations prescribed a 9 p.m. curfew and one of the policeman's duties was to blow a conch shell to warn the residents that 'they should be in bed, or, at any rate, inside their house'. In 1933 Mabuyag was served by seven police and councillors (Schomberg, 1933). In 1935 'a new police station and quarters were erected' (Annual Report, 1935: 18), possibly to provide for

police recruited from other islands, a short-lived scheme, approved in June 1935, which proved unpopular and was abandoned in 1936, as part of the reforms negotiated by O'Leary (1936: 20). However, Albert Bosen from Kubin, who married Urima Whap from Mabuyag, is recorded as the policeman there in 1962. According to his tombstone at New Mapoon, he served as a policeman for 14 years but it does not specify where. He may have taken over for a time from the longest-serving police sergeant on Mabuyag, Charles Hankin, son of Epesia Hankin and Charlotte Ware, who died in 1965 (Figure 8).



FIG. 8. Charlie Hankin and Harry in their police uniforms, Mabuyag, 1952 (Barbara Stevenson Collection, Queensland Museum: EH-7490-0).

Courts, courthouses and lockups

There appears to have been no courthouse on Mabuyag until a new building, 'a little concrete lock-up' with 'good substantial walls' and 'quite sufficiently large for all purposes', was erected by the beginning of 1900 with the government supplying iron for the roof at a cost of about £30 and the resident Pacific Islanders ordered to assist in building it (Douglas, 1899c, 1900c; White 1903) (Figures 9-10). It was in this courthouse that



FIG. 9. 'Girl's House' with court house building in background, Bau village, Mabuyag, 1901. Photographed by William Edgar Geil (McNiven Collection).



FIG. 10. Ruins of the 'old courthouse', Bau village, Mabuyag, 16 November 2011. (Photo: Matt Coller).

O'Brien spent three hours on 17 November 1905 listening to the grievances expressed by the people against the Pacific Islanders, whose opposition to the marriage between Charlotte Ware and Zachariah Waria, son of the Mamoose, had brought long-standing tensions to a head (see Shnukal, Butcher paper, this volume). Waria acted as spokesman and was threatened by O'Brien with dismissal from his position by the local protector 'if he did not keep the people in better order in future'.

Prior to 1912 the local court dispensed justice according to current island norms of morality and with minimal government interference. At the end of 1902 Bishop White, who was visiting Mabuyag at the time, described a not uncommon punishment: 'a big, strong woman was doing hard labour (stone-carrying) for the crime of adultery, her hair being also shaved on one side of her head. These punishments are inflicted by the native court, and are not interfered with by the Government' (White, 1903). According to the teachers' reports 1904-1912, very few cases were tried at the local courthouse each year and they were not of a serious kind: assaults, indecency, obscene language, abduction, being unlawfully on premises, theft, adultery and land disputes. The court dealt with exclusively with local offences and collected local fines and dog and gun licence fees, which were recorded and then handed over to the local protector during his visits of inspection (Milman, 1909).²⁵ In 1908 no cases were tried at all.

The 1912 regulations entrenched the councillors in their positions as law-enforcers, although now overseen by the superintendent-teachers. Criminal offences were dealt with by the magistrate on Thursday Island, who could send the most serious cases on to the district court at Cairns. Minor infringements were dealt with by the councils following a set of

'native' by-laws which varied somewhat from island to island depending on local norms and circumstances. In the Mabuyag court in 1912 adultery was punished by a fine of £2 for each party and the possibility of being expelled to mainland Aboriginal reserves (Harries, 1912). By contrast, a man charged with wilful disobedience of the protector's orders was 'fined £1 and cautioned against doing so again'. None of the cases heard by the Mabuyag court was apparently serious enough to warrant imprisonment on the island and the bishop, visiting at the end of 1922, found the court house and gaol 'in ruins and have been for years, silent testimony to the content and prosperity that reigns on this island paradise' (Davies, 1923: 715).

Court decisions by date, place of charge, type of charge, verdict, and remarks were recorded by the Department of Native Affairs on individual social history cards until the 1960s. Some offences against island laws were: drunkenness; drinking methylated spirits or bringing it to island; swearing; disobeying councillors' or police order(s); entering a house without permission; inducing villagers to refrain from village work; being absent from village work; being absent from one's house after 11pm (or 6pm for women); quarrelling with wife; brandishing a weapon; carrying a gun without a licence; destroying property; giving false evidence; improper or indecent conduct; sorcery; defamation of character; not paying island tax; assault; fighting and creating a disturbance; killing sea birds; destroying property; breaking out of jail; procuring for immoral purposes; defamation; and incest.

By contemporary standards, however, the pre-war councils excessively monitored female behaviour, particularly that of unmarried girls. Nonie Sharp (pers. comm., 1997) was told that during the time of the

superintendent-teachers, it was forbidden for a boy and girl to walk together. If they were seen, the councillors shaved half the head of both parties. Sharp (1992: 203) also tells us that, because of the curfew, 'it was home-time after 6 p.m. for girls and at nine o'clock, when the "Bu" whistle was sounded the men were obliged to return to the boats even when they were on their home islands.' Other punishments that people remember include: cutting off a girl's hair and putting her in gaol for a month for writing a compromising letter to a man; school girls punished if they were caught smoking; and 'promiscuous' young women ordered to marry outside the island. A woman could be whipped for 'immorality' even in the mid-1950s; and even into the late 1960s, a pregnant, unmarried girl had to go before the island court and name the father for maintenance purposes.

POST-WAR ADMINISTRATION

The outbreak of the Pacific war was followed by military control of the region and the evacuation of the non-Islander population, a consequence of which was that Islanders were for the first and only time directly administered by the Commonwealth. However, after the war the military authorities returned the islands to Queensland's authority and the *Torres Strait Islanders Act 1939* came back into force (Sheehan, 1987: 48-49). Immediately after the war the councillors requested copies of the island by-laws. A copy of the pre-war and wartime by-laws was found and 'examined by the councillors, and they were acceptable and were duplicated, and a copy of those by-laws were forwarded to each island council in about 1948' (Killoran, 1989: 2490).

However, post-war circumstances were changing in response to broader economic, social and political events, both nationally

and internationally. Economic imperatives, namely an increase in post-war births, allied to the projected increased cost of services, forced the department to permit some emigration to the mainland from 1947, while continuing to control Islanders' employment and earnings. Islanders had no direct means of influencing government policy, as their access to officials was mediated through the department (Sheehan, 1987: 50).

In 1947 the councillors in conference sought an increased involvement in the administration of their people and, as a result, 'three persons to represent the people of the Torres Strait were to be elected to have direct discussions with the Protector on all matters concerning the general welfare of the islands' (Killoran, 1989: 2490-2491). These men were known as the western islands, central islands and eastern islands representatives.

Apart from consultation with the government, the particular role of the group representative was to hear appeals by aggrieved Islanders from a decision of his own Council, or the group representative would act as an adviser to individual councils or would help to coordinate individual councils within a particular group; that is, Western, Central or Eastern. This was in due course formalised in the *Aborigines and Torres [Strait] Islanders Affairs Act* of 1965.

From 1949 the department worked increasingly through these three elected representatives. Mabuyag was for many years represented by Tanu Nona, a Badu Islander and great favourite of the administration. The 1960s collapse of the Torres Strait marine industries, which had for decades been the economic mainstay and source of most local employment, brought further changes. The Department of Native Affairs was replaced by the Department of Aboriginal and Islander Affairs under *The Aborigines and Torres Strait Islander Affairs Act 1965*, which removed almost all the restrictive

clauses under the previous Act, including the right to travel to the mainland. Subsequent emigration led to a steep decline in the Islander population of Torres Strait, which has only recently been reversed.

Islanders became active in the various organizations which arose after World War II to support Indigenous rights and self-determination and, influenced by the worldwide context of Indigenous struggle, they have extended their political activity from home island to island group, to region, to state and, increasingly, to federal politics. Mabuyag Islanders, while not in the forefront of post-war political struggle, have generally supported political and economic autonomy: some of them took part in the maritime strike of 1936 and the army mutiny of late 1943 (Ball, 1996: 160). They embraced assimilation during the 1950s and 1960s and self-determination in the 1970s and 1980s, as official government policies swung from the former to the latter. In 1962 they were for the first time permitted to vote in Federal elections and in 1964 in state elections. The Lieberman Report, tabled by the Federal House of Representatives Standing Committee in August 1997, accepted the principle of future autonomy for the region, although the precise form of the emergent political entity was left open and its economic base unspecified. More recently the previous Queensland Premier, Anna Bligh, wrote to the Prime Minister to support self-government for the region. Mabuyag Islanders, both in the islands and on the mainland, have participated in the revival of 'traditional' dance, music, art, ceremony and cuisine, which each year finds its most intense expression in the Torres Strait Cultural Festival on Thursday Island, an event initiated and organized for many years by Ephraim Bani, grandson of Bani Mabua and sixth traditional Wagadagam clan leader.

EDUCATION ON MABUYAG

As one of the most populous islands, Mabuyag was among the first to receive a 'European'-style education system when the first LMS school was opened there in 1873. The LMS teachers taught elementary literacy and numeracy as well as carpentry and gardening skills in the local traditional language but the Mabuyag Islanders were keen to be taught in English (Chalmers, 1898). Mabuyag provided a number of young men for training as LMS pioneer missionaries at their 'Institution' on Mer (see Shnukal, paper on Christianity on Mabuyag, this volume) and in early 1882 sent 'eight small boys and three girls for the proposed institution [at Erub], and they seem to be very promising children' (Ridgley, 1882).

Aware of the inadequacies of LMS education and educators, particularly in the matter of their poor grasp of English, John Douglas persuaded the Home Secretary to appoint European teachers for Badu, Erub, Mabuyag, Mer, Saibai and Yam. Thus, Mabuyag was among the first islands to be provided with a government teacher in 1900. In 1935 Mabuyag was chosen as the site of the first Islander teacher training college under the direction of Philip Raymond Firth. Among its alumni are counted almost all the early Islander school teachers and local store managers, as well as the older generation of Torres Strait religious and political leaders. After much controversy about the continuing control of Islander education by the department responsible for Indigenous affairs, the Queensland Education Department assumed responsibility in 1985 and erected a modern school on the site of the first LMS mission school (Teske, 1986: 14).

LONDON MISSIONARY SOCIETY EDUCATION

The first school on Mabuyag was opened by the resident LMS teacher, Waunaia, on Sunday 7 September 1873 under instructions from the Rev. Archibald Wright Murray, two weeks to the day after the school on Erub (Murray, 1873).²⁶ The 'civilizing' task espoused by the LMS included both religious and secular instruction. Church and school were intertwined on Mabuyag for 75 years, long after the appointment of the first government teacher in 1900.

The early missionaries on Mabuyag 'taught the children the way of God and included some writing and reading. The curriculum also included many useful things for the people. For example, the making of dinghies was one of the things taught at school' (Teske, 1986: 14). By 1878 there was a regular attendance: 'The people are beginning to see the advantages of being able to read and write, and are anxious to learn' (McFarlane, 1878). By April 1880 the LMS teacher was conducting regular day schools at all five mission stations in Torres Strait (Chalmers, 1880), although the nature, duration and efficacy of the teaching varied widely. By 1883 Mabuyag was one of only three stations with a resident teacher, Haxan from Lifu (McFarlane, 1883). It may have been then that he had segregated dormitories built for the older boys and girls who attended school. In November 1891 Chalmers (1891) examined the school and was pleased with the children: 'Several read well, know their tables, do the two first rules [of] arithmetic, and a little mental arithmetic.'

Successive LMS teachers of varying abilities continued to teach basic literacy and numeracy on Mabuyag in Kala Lagaw Ya until the end of 1899, when Chalmers (1899) professed himself satisfied with the school despite the lack of reading material. Douglas, however, considered the LMS teacher, Isaia,

to be 'an excellent clever man, but imperfectly equipped' to teach the children (Douglas, 1900a). Moreover, by 1898 the Mabuyag Islanders were demanding English as the language of instruction as more appropriate to their emerging circumstances (Chalmers, 1898). By then, LMS resources were chiefly directed at mainland New Guinea and it had been clear for several years that it was incapable of providing an acceptable standard of teaching and attendance. Interest and attendance fluctuated depending on other attractions and at times the young men left school *en masse* to earn wages in the fisheries.

GOVERNMENT EDUCATION²⁷

John Douglas took a particular interest in the schooling of Torres Strait Islander children and in 1899 advocated appointing a government teacher for the larger islands to instruct the children through the medium of English. He argued that the establishment of government schools on the islands would 'impart some additional vitality to the instruction given by the teachers of the London Missionary Society':

The most of these men are Samoans, and are capable of giving the religious instruction which is no doubt the basis of their moral influence, but they do not understand English, and of course cannot teach it. The natives themselves are anxious to learn English, both to read and to write it, and it is our hope that the teaching of English and the discipline of school habits will benefit them and make them more useful members of our community (Douglas, 1901c: 4).

Buoyed by his conviction and his successful experiments of appointing European teachers to Mer (Murray Island) in 1892 and Saibai in 1899, Douglas convinced the Home Secretary's Department to provide

funds for government teachers on four additional islands, including Mabuyag, to provide an education for both boys and girls, based on the Queensland primary school syllabus.²⁸ These schools were not administered by the Department of Public Instruction but by the Home Secretary's Department and between 1903 and 1905 by the Department of Public Lands.

The first government teacher at Mabuyag, Edith Rosa Frances Muston, was appointed with an annual salary of £70 and began teaching her 75 pupils in a 'tiny elementary school' held inside the church in March or April 1900. A new cottage was specially built for her at a cost of £200 but until it was finished she boarded with the Samoan teacher, Isaia, to whom she paid her weekly 10 shillings sustenance allowance as board (Douglas, 1900a, 1900b, 1900c, 1901c). One of her first actions was to remove a number of children for 'being either too old or too young' (Muston, 1900).

Muston resigned from 1 December to marry the trader and pearler, John (Jack) Cowling. Douglas replaced her with the proven Alice Huddy from Yam, with instructions to reopen the school on 2 January 1901 (Douglas, 1900d, 1901a). Visiting the island in early March to distribute commonwealth medals and explain to the children 'their new birth as Australians' after federation, Douglas (1901b) found 67 children in attendance out of an enrolment of 73. Huddy was working 'in perfect accord' with Isaia and had established good relations with both the children and their parents. Everywhere was 'good order and discipline' and the elder children had made good progress since his last visit, although not the younger children. He therefore arranged that she should be assisted by two of the elder boys to assist her in the instruction of the 'babies'. These were the first (unnamed) school monitors. Douglas (1901d) judged that 'her influence both over

the children and people of this island has been very beneficial.' That year the school was inspected and received a good report, the inspector expressing 'himself as well pleased with the result of his examination, though, of course, pointing out how improvements might be made' (Douglas, 1902: 3).

In September 1902 the Bishop of Carpentaria visited the Mabuyag school and noted the 'wonderful' progress of the children during its two years of operation: 'I was particularly struck by the writing, which even in quite young children has a character and individuality of its own, very different from the "made-to-order" writing of the ordinary white child' (White, 1903).

The Mabuyag school, which began each day at 8.30 a.m., maintained an average attendance of 72 during 1903 and Douglas (1904: 5) wrote enthusiastically of the attainments of the Mabuyag children, who were 'really wonderful, and may be favourably compared with the children at the Thursday Island State school'. Huddy was briefly assisted from the end of the year by Winifred (Winnie) Steele, who took over the Naghir (Mount Ernest) school the following year.

Huddy taught at Mabuyag until replaced at the beginning of March 1904 by Andrew Struthers Cairns from Saibai, who was generally accounted a successful teacher and attracted a high average daily attendance. He arrived on 28 February 1904 immediately commenced duty; his salary was £144 p.a. and 10 shillings per week sustenance allowance. Classes were still held in the church building and by the end of the year enrolment had risen from 74 to 107 (Milman, 1905a: 11). On the government resident's advice, the parents of the children agreed to contribute one shilling annually for each child from five years old upwards towards the upkeep and repair of the school (Milman, 1904).

The 1905 school year began in February with an enrolment of 87 and, during his visit on 17 November 1905, the local protector found the children 'very intelligent and, generally speaking, were well advanced. I was agreeably surprised at the excellent results shown and the general proficiency of the pupils'. The two monitors assisted Cairns generally and took the two lowest classes in some subjects (O'Brien, 1905a). He applied for some remuneration for them and the following year the chief protector approved payment of £2.10.0 each per annum (Howard, 1906). Despite all the problems of epidemic disease and drought that year, Cairns reported that 'the children come to school very clean and fairly respectably clothed' (Cairns, 1905a).

By then, an official memorandum dated 8 June 1905 had ushered in a significant new direction in Torres Strait Islander education. Douglas had envisaged island schools little different in method and curriculum from the mainstream, which followed the regulations set down by the Department of Public Instruction. Only after his death did it become permissible to question whether this practice wholly suited the circumstances of the children and the department's policy aims. Milman began to gather information about altering the curriculum focus from academic to practical subjects as being more appropriate to the children's future,

Edith Jones, an English educator, was asked to inspect the Mabuyag school and provide her impressions:²⁹

I should like then to say that I was much struck with the quickness shown and the standard attained by the children in such subjects as reading, writing and figures; they also sang very creditably and appeared to be keen on their work, the discipline in the school was excellent.

I was however much disappointed to find that no provision appears to be made for teaching such subjects as carpentering, gardening, mat and basket weaving, sewing or cooking, or the laws of health.

I am told that most of these native girls marry very young and seldom leave their own island; under these conditions it seems to me very unnecessary for them to spend time on such a subject as definitions of parts of speech (they wrote out these when I visited the school). But it seems highly important that they should become skilled in the simple manual occupations I have named, and of which they know the rudiments naturally; for example they weave nice grass mats suitable for use in their own houses or in any house for floor covering, but the art is capable of much development.

Cooking and sewing would furnish suitable occupation for the women, who though they help in the gardening and the very elementary cooking, appear to spend most of their waking time in lounging. Of course it is impossible for the school teachers to attempt to teach any of these manual occupations unless they have the knowledge and the apparatus necessary.

A barrier to the effective teaching in some of the island schools is that in some cases the teacher is a single man or woman and it is not reasonable to expect a man to teach sewing or cooking, nor a woman carpentering; whereas if a suitable man and wife were appointed each with a stipend they should be able to share the teaching of the manual occupations (Jones, 1905).

Cairns also had misgivings about the policy of teaching the pupils 'in accordance, as near

as possible, with the schedule laid down by the State Education Department'. Echoing Jones, he suggested that

some form of technical instruction should be given, such as carpentering, boat-building, agriculture and wood-carving for the boys, and sewing and domestic economy etc. for the girls. I realise that there would perhaps be a difficulty in teaching these subjects as the schools are at present staffed, for where some may be able to teach, say sewing, in other schools where male teachers only are employed, it would be impossible and vice versa. But if this difficulty can be overcome, I would suggest that the elementary subjects taught be confined to reading, writing, arithmetic (four compound rules), object lessons and physical drill. It has been suggested that it might be possible to get the wives of the Samoan teachers to teach the girls sewing, but I foresee a difficulty in this, as they only cut one (1) style of garment, and do not sew by hand, always using a hand sewing machine. As far as I am concerned I think that I could get my wife to teach both subjects to the girls for a small remuneration (Cairns, 1905b).

He was anxious to explain that by recommending a more technical education he did not mean to imply

that the time spent in teaching the native children now is wasted or that the children do not learn. As a matter of fact they learn very well, in some cases a great deal better than the European children, but the trouble is that it is of so little use to them now after they leave school, owing to the fact that there are few, if any, openings

for them. My idea in recommending technical instruction is to raise them above themselves, in a manner of speaking, and to train them as they grow older to healthy agricultural and industrial pursuits, thus making them a valuable working asset to the State. My experience there has taught me that all the native children are exceptionally smart at mechanical work and there are some who are also quite intellectual (Cairns, 1905c).

The chief protector agreed that a more 'useful' (and gender-based) curriculum would include technical education in place of 'the more advanced subjects'. Mindful that the teachers' salaries and maintenance were paid for out of the Aboriginals vote, he recommended the following:

1. The elementary subjects taught to be confined to reading, writing, arithmetic (four compound rules), local geography, and physical drill.
2. Arrangements to be made with the existing staffs wherever possible to teach subjects of a more or less technical nature on the lines above suggested.
3. The Government Resident be asked to advise as to the cost and quantity of the special apparatus, tools, and other requirements necessary.
4. The question of extra remuneration, if any, for these special duties to be referred to the Government Resident. So long as the teacher's time is not taken up beyond the number of hours already required of them, I cannot recommend any increases.
5. In all future appointments of teachers, the imparting of technical education to be provided for, I would strongly advise further that in all cases, the teachers be married people (Roth, 1905; see also Milman, 1906b: 11-12).

It was in this context that Butcher (1905b) raised the possibility of the LMS taking over all outer island education, dispensing with Pacific Islander pastors in favour of white Christian teachers, mainly to forestall the Anglicans, who were seeking to further their influence. However, the proposal was couched in economic terms and for some years the Queensland government apparently considered it seriously. In the event, the scheme came to nothing and the government assumed control of the islands through its agents, the teacher-superintendents.

A fierce tropical storm badly damaged the church, village and gardens on 21 January 1906 but Cairns soon reopened the school with an enrolment of 82. During the first few months of 1906 this fell after the exodus of about 25 pupils from Pacific Islander-headed families, five to Samoa and about 20 to what was to become St Paul's Church of England Mission for Pacific Islanders on Mua (Milman, 1906a, 1907; Cairns, 1906). Committed to the new syllabus, Cairns found that

school has become to the youngsters much brighter and more interesting. Before that it was considered sufficient to teach the child to read and write and a smattering of arithmetic; and, under these conditions, the children found life at school was dull and colourless in the extreme. It was the same old routine, day after day and week after week. Now, the children are brought more directly in touch with Nature and the world around them. While it has been possible to do a good deal, it has not been possible to do all that one wished to do, because the materials for instruction and tools at our disposal are quite insufficient, and, in some cases, inadequate for our requirements. Agriculture was the work we tried most. The seeds supplied by the Government and sent

us for trial were very unsatisfactory. Of course, the soil on this island is not very good, and we had very little rain during the early part of the year, and this may perhaps account for their failure. We planted, with good results, a number of cocoanut-trees, custard apple seeds (kindly supplied by you), a few young rubber trees (presented by the Papuan Industries, Limited), cotton plants, and the usual native vegetables and fruits. Needlework, cookery, and laundry work form part of the education of the girls. The amount of information gained by the youngsters doing this work has greatly enhanced the attractiveness of school life.

Cairns' tenure at Mabayag was generally accounted a success. He remained as head teacher until his resignation at the end of 1908 and was replaced by William Caid Minniss, who reopened the school on 3 May 1909 after several months' closure (Fox, 1924; Cairns, 1908: 204; Annual Report, 1909: 19). Enrolment had fallen to 56: a further 32 pupils had left, some to Mua and a number of older boys to the boats, but Minniss expected more to enrol in 1910 (Annual Report, 1909: 19). Like Cairns, Minniss was a married man and his wife assisted him in the school, teaching 'sewing, mat and hat making, etc.' (Macgregor, 1911). His annual salary was £156 with sustenance allowance of £61.0.0. Mrs Minniss taught singing and held classes for the senior girls for 'sewing and household work, such as laundry work, baking and cooking. The girls, however, do not seem to be fond of it, and I am afraid do not appreciate Mrs Minniss's efforts' (Annual Report, 1911: 19) The nexus between education and religion continued with Mrs Minniss agreeing 'to teach the children the Creed, the Ten Commandments, and the General Confession' in 1915 after the handover from the LMS to the Church of England (*The Carpenterian*, 1 October 1915: 477).

Until 1912 schoolteachers had (at least in theory) played a circumscribed administrative role, acting 'as clerk and treasurer of the native court, assisting with suggestion or advice, when requested, but otherwise, [with] no authority to interfere in the internal management of affairs'. They were 'paid by and responsible to the Chief Protector of Aborigines, and under the inspection of the local Protector at Thursday Island' (Annual Report, 1907: 15-16). The regulations of 1912 gave them far greater powers and a far greater role in the administration of their island. School attendance became compulsory for all children between the ages of five and 16, truants could be whipped and their parents or guardians fined (Williamson, 1994: 73). The curriculum of the island schools was further weighted towards non-academic subjects, further reducing Islanders' aspirations and ensuring they remained a subject people, the chief protector having decreed

that industrial pursuits should form the basis of operations on all aboriginal settlements, whether under the control of a Government Department or a religious body; this does not imply that secular or religious instruction is to be neglected or unnecessarily curtailed, but it is apparent that the earlier generations of natives who come under a civilising influence do not require a high standard of education to enable them to follow the only pursuits open to them. In course of time as a higher type of native evolves, the school curriculum could be extended to meet the altered conditions (Lee-Bryce, 1913: 2).

A building program was instituted from the 1920s after the stringencies imposed by World War I and new schools were constructed throughout the islands, 'well

lighted and ventilated, with iron roof and raised wooden floor. The days of the old grass building on ground floor have passed' (Annual Report, 1928: 6). Mabuyag's new school was built in 1921, entirely by local labour and at no expense to the department, as the chief protector noted with satisfaction (Annual Report, 1921: 4). Atalia was a monitor in 1920;³⁰ Pinnow (possibly Pinau or Pinu) in 1921. Classes were first officially inspected on 28 August 1924 by Clement Lyman Fox, an inspector from the Department of Public Instruction. He delivered a damning report of Minniss, now earning an annual salary of £240 plus £61.0.0 allowance (Holmes, 1921a), and recommended that he be dismissed:

if he ever was capable of doing satisfactory work as a teacher, he seems quite incapable of it now. I know nothing of how he performs his other Island duties, but in school he is an 'absolute dud' - a slangy term but unfortunately one which aptly describes him. He shows none of the essentials of either a disciplinarian or a teacher. Whatever success has been achieved here must, I feel, be attributed to the efforts of Mrs Minniss.

After nine years of schooling, few Islander pupils had progressed beyond third class work in mainland Queensland schools. They were

admitted to school with little and sometimes no knowledge of English. They are taught on English lines but they cannot think in English; their environment, habits, and social conditions place them at a distinct disadvantage in matters of education compared with white children. Moreover the teachers themselves when first appointed have a deal to learn before they can present their instruction in a form that can be understood and assimilated (Fox, 1924).

Minniss resigned on 30 April 1925 and George W. Agnew, previously assistant superintendent on probation at Palm Island, was appointed in his place. The school was inspected on 7 May 1927 by the under secretary of the Department of Public Instruction, who reported that Agnew was assisted by Cauni and Bisikup,³¹ 'native monitors' or 'native student teachers'. Agnew 'appears to have been 90% an administrator and only 10% a teacher'. The review recommended various measures including the provision of a new syllabus 'more in keeping with native mentality and conditions of life' and new readers 'with subjects more familiar and applicable to native life', the introduction of vocational work, prescribed outcomes, regular inspections and Islander teacher training (McKenna, 1927; Annual Report, 1925: 6-7).³²

The inter-war years saw great building activity in the islands, with the department driving material improvements through the local superintendents, often to the detriment of their teaching. According to Teske. (1986: 14), Agnew's time as superintendent-teacher saw the construction of many streets and dams and a football ground where the airstrip is today. The Chief Protector reported in 1926 that the village was greatly improved with the formation of several streets, the clearing of a recreation ground and about 20 new houses erected, as well as a 25,000 gallon capacity concrete tank (Annual Report, 1926: 4). The authorities may have praised Agnew's energetic administration but, in McKenna's opinion, it interfered with his teaching (Figure 11):



FIG. 11. Coconut saplings ready for planting, Mabuyag, 1915-1926 (John Done Collection, Queensland Museum: EH-7703-0).

Mr Agnew has to supervise the administrative work of the Island and has done exceptionally good work in street forming, in hut building, in gardening, in installing a good water supply, in supervising luggers engaged in obtaining trochus and pearl shell, and in carrying out various other kinds of work associated with his position as Chief Administrative Officer. The teaching of the children has been a side line and a very subsidiary one. The amount of training given in school has been so little that the children would have been little worse if the school had been non-existent. To the native boy [monitor] who has a very imperfect knowledge of the English tongue has been assigned the lower section of the school, with a result that can be better imagined than described.

McKenna (1927) feared that the children would 'grow into men and women ignorant of the English language and unable to calculate or compose or even to converse in English. From the standpoint of efficiency therefore they will probably be inferior to those native adults who, as Councillors, are at present assisting in the administration of the Island.' Agnew remained on Mabuyag until his appointment to Mer from 1 January 1928, when he was replaced by William Miller, a plumber by trade then teaching at Erub (O'Leary, 1927). Miller was not a success, according to the local protector, in that he had failed

to keep the Island up to the standard that has been set by Mr Agnew. Mr Miller's knowledge of citrus trees, town planning or anything that is going to stand to the credit of the Island is deplorably weak. Certainly he may take an interest in such matters, but such interest is useless in that he has

neither the brains nor the ability to back up his interest with any tangible improvement. I feel that Mabuyag will be a better Island as the result of my visit, but I can hold out no hope for the success of this island while the present Government Teacher is stationed there (O'Leary, 1928a).

Miller, although conscientious in duty and conduct, was neither a good scholar nor a good superintendent and O'Leary (1928b, 1928c) proposed transferring him to Masig at the beginning of 1929. The school inspector shared this view: James Edward Western, head teacher at Thursday Island State School, who carried out the school's next inspection on 3 June 1929, found Miller to be 'a thoroughly good living earnest man' but 'incompetent' as a teacher (Western, 1929). The school then had a female assistant teacher and two female monitors, as usual not named but possibly Diat Hankin, Annie Hankin and Marie Ahmat (Gall, 1929). Miller retired from the public service as from 31 December 1929 on the grounds that he was 'inefficient and incompetent' (O'Leary, 1929).

He was replaced by Philip Raymond Frith, appointed to Mabuyag on 28 January 1930, with George Hankin as assistant teacher, Charlie Hankin as student teacher and Annie Hankin as monitor. Continuing the close association between school and church, Frith also taught Bible class on Sundays (MacFarlane, 1930). Western inspected the school again in 1931 and reported that 'better results were obtained than in any of the schools of the Western Islands'. Frith received excellent reports during his teaching career. He introduced kindergarten classes (Annual Report, 1930: 8) and pioneered new teaching methods, using models to introduce new concepts to his pupils through visual means:

On tables are erected large models of the Suez Canal, Tilbury Docks,

a coal mine, and the Straits, with model ships indicating the various shipping lines passing through; and the latest addition is a six-foot model of Sydney Bridge, with shipping passing beneath and a stream of traffic crossing the structure. The walls carry presentations in colours of the various marine and other products which the islands provide, with pictures signifying what purposes commerce puts them to and the countries which buy them. The ceiling is decorated with portraits of Cook, Bligh, Torres, and other navigators who wandered over these waters in the past. Thus, the youngsters here know a good deal more of what becomes of the stuff their fathers bring up in the way of trochus, m.o.p., beche-de-mer, etc., than do a great many southern children, while their knowledge of early North Australian history is also pretty considerable' (Anon, 1932).

In February 1931 two of the women assistant teachers left, one being replaced by Charlie Hankin, since no one else was available. Buxton requested that the appointment be approved until the end of the year: 'He is apparently doing good work as I have had no complaints' (Buxton, 1931a). However, in July 1931 Marie Ahmat resigned as monitor, her place taken by Satraika, and at the end of the year Charlie Hankin resigned as student teacher (Buxton, 1931a, 1931b). Frith's report on Hankin was reasonably favourable (Buxton, 1932) but there was some question about his suitability for the position and the protector recommended against his employment. Marie Ahmat was appointed in his place.

In 1932 the staff consisted of Frith as head teacher – receiving a salary package of £390 – George Hankin as assistant teacher and Annie

Hankin and Marie Ahmat as monitors. These appointments saved the department £24 a year (Buxton, 1932). The following year Marie Ahmat and Mauare Eseli were appointed assistant teachers at an annual salary of £23.16.0 each with Buwa Mene as monitor.

Frith applied for a transfer to either Thursday Island or Palm Island in mid-1931 but, since there were no vacancies, he remained on Mabuyag until temporarily transferred to Mer in 1934. During his absence Jomen Tamwoy, who had received further teacher training on Badu, took Frith's place until his return at the beginning of 1935 (Tamwoy, 1973; Frances Rooney Frith, pers. comm., 1982; Lawrie, 1996: 227). At the inspection on 9 October 1934 the school was rated 'very satisfactory' and all areas either 'good' or 'very good'. Tamwoy himself was rated as 'very fair' in personality. He 'carried on the native school at Mabuyag for a period of nearly twelve months [with Marie Ahmat and Mauare Eseli as monitors], and earned great praise for his work from the inspector of schools' (Annual Report, 1934: 15). He also attracted special mention for arranging a display of 21 scouts and cubs from Mabuyag as part of the welcome given to the World Chief Scout (Lord Baden-Powell) and the World Chief Guide (Lady Baden-Powell) during their visit to Thursday Island on 14 December 1934 (McLean, 1934). Tamwoy's success may have contributed to the establishment in 1935 of a teacher training school on Mabuyag under Frith's direction, the next milestone in Torres Strait education.

MABUYAG TRAINING COLLEGE

Suitable European teachers were always hard to find and training for Islander teachers was less than satisfactory. What training there was provided with varying degrees of success by European teachers for their Islander assistants and monitors

but in 1934 the local protector, J.D. McLean announced the establishment of a 'native training school' on Mabuyag for selected advanced pupils from neighbouring islands: 'a training college for selected youths who have satisfactorily completed their school course has been established at Mabuig Island, under the direction of Mr Frith, Government teacher' (Annual Report, 1934: 15; Williamson, 1994: 79).

The college was the first entirely government-supported secondary educational institution in Torres Strait. Williamson (1994: 155-162) rightly stresses the systematic nature of this teacher training program and gives Frith credit for the idea but, in dismissing former 'uncoordinated local training given in the 1920s and 30s' (Williamson, 1994: 79), he downplays the importance of the prolonged policy debate on post-primary education for Islanders from the time of the LMS handover in 1915. In February 1917 the Church of England had opened 'a small training college for teachers and clergy' at St Paul's Mission, Mua, with Mabuyag-born Aviu Ware as one of its first four students (White, 1925: 48)³³ and various suggestions for providing teacher training can be found in correspondence and reports from the mid-1920s. After Fox's school inspections of 1924, annual teacher training classes were instituted, the first of which took place at Badu from 28 July to 11 August 1926. Charlie Hankin, William Namok, then at St Paul's, and Satraika, then at Cowal Creek (now Injinoo), seem to have been the only Mabuyag-born attendees (Furnivall, 1926).

The Anglican authorities strongly supported higher education for selected men and women as teachers and nurses and in 1927 proposed setting up a secondary school at St Paul's, Mua, using a modified version of the NSW curriculum, to provide 'the advanced education necessary to bridge the gap between the standard of the primary

schools of the islands and those required for the Theological College and Island Native Teachers' Service' (Bleakley, 1961: 285). The Rev. W.H. MacFarlane negotiated with the government for funding and syllabus improvement and in May 1927 he took part in a discussion with senior government officials about reorganising and improving island education. He hoped that they would ask the church 'to undertake a scheme at St Paul's for higher education of selected natives (in accordance with idea we have had as objective for some time)' (MacFarlane, 1927). The St Paul's school received an excellent report after a visit by the Under Secretary for Public Instruction: 'the quality of the work at this school shows that, with proper teaching, the natives are capable of reaching a good standard of intelligence and attainment' (Annual Report, 1927: 8). The Department of Native Affairs was considering 'a class for the training of native assistant teachers' at the mission and increased the government subsidy from £250 to £400 to enable the school to employ two European teachers and a Torres Strait Islander assistant. However, the Depression cut funds and St Paul's had temporarily to abandon its college. Nevertheless, demand for trained Islander teachers still exceeded supply and the department in 1930 considered establishing a training class at Mer, where Agnew had been conducting a night school which had produced '[t]hree of the native teachers now giving satisfactory service' (Annual Report, 1930: 8). By 1932 the department, despite the evident need, had still not decided on where to establish 'an intermediate college for secondary education' (Annual Report, 1932: 10). In the event, it was decided to bring Frith back from Mer and install him at Mabuyag to take charge of the new college, which was opened in June 1935 in a building specially erected for the purpose. The college offered a pre-service course for 25 selected advanced school pupils, both

male and female, focusing on preparation for classroom teaching and further general education (Williamson, 1994: 155). It taught the ordinary curriculum as well as sewing, woodwork, carpentry, basket-making and mat-weaving for students up to the age of 18, when they were sent to island schools as assistant teachers. The first such institution created for Indigenous Australians, the college, variously referred to as the 'Mabuiag Training College' or 'Mabuiag Island Training School' also provided annual 'refresher courses' for Islander teachers and branch store managers for the Aboriginal Industries Board (the forerunner for IBIS) during the school holidays (Annual Report, 1935: 17).

Mabuyag enrolment soared to 105 in 1935 after the establishment of the college. Mauare Eseli and Marie Ahmat continued as Frith's assistant primary school teachers with Wagi Mene as monitor. The number of pupils dropped to 87 in 1936 but the school received an 'extremely favourable' assessment in early November, when the inspector praised its organisation and methods, especially 'the models constructed which now extend around three sides'. He reported that the work done in the school was beyond syllabus requirements: 'One cannot fail to be impressed with the appearance and atmosphere of the school room. The brightness and alertness of the pupils coupled with their readiness and eagerness to please, make the examination of this school a pleasure rather than a task' (Portley, 1938).

In 1937, 16 students had completed their teacher training and the college was becoming more popular 'as the parents of the pupils become more enlightened as to the aims and achievements' (Annual Report, 1937: 13). In 1938 double that number completed their studies, while 43 teachers attended the 'refresher classes' for a fortnight

in May. In 1939 there were 37 students. 'The main purpose of this intensive training is to refresh teachers in all work pertaining to their duties as school teachers and administrators. The results obtained were very satisfactory, and the benefit of the course was reflected in the subsequent improvement in their work on the Islands' (Annual Report, 1938: 12). According to Renard (1938: 59) over 60 teachers had graduated after two years and been sent to local schools.

The first Mabuyag-born teacher (not monitor) may have been Mary Wallace Bann (1897-1947), who was trained by Deaconess Buchanan at St Paul's Mission and appointed as assistant teacher at the school in 1923; she kept it running throughout the war (*A.B.M. Review*, 12 June 1923: 48; Tennant 1959: 50). The greatly respected Mauare Eseli from Mabuyag was one of the original teachers who began as class monitors and became teachers, beginning her classroom teaching in 1936 under Frith.³⁴ Other early Mabuyag-born school teachers, most of whom were trained in the college and from the 1930s to the early 1970s served throughout the region, including Cape York communities, include Sanawai Lee Aragu, Ngailu Bani, Waiu Eseli, Alfred Hankin, Charlie Hankin, Jack Hankin, Getano Lui Snr,³⁵ Marie Bageri Magala, Marie Ahmat Nona, Alam Mene, Orepā Mene, Gabai Min, William Min, Moran Misi, Laura Paipai, William Paipai, Tom Lomak Phineasa, Wabu Matthew Phineasa, Uzu Gaulai Phineasa, Patipat Repu, Tigi Repu, Ned Tekelu, Andai Ware, Te Wittie Ware and Dillyapo Warriā. College alumni also included significant political and religious leaders, among them Adikuiam Adidi, Fr Sidsulai Gebadi, Getano Lui Snr, Murray Lui, George Mye, George Passi, Fr Boggo Pilot and Wagea Waia.

At the end of 1937, after eight years of service on Mabuyag, Frith (1937) again applied for a transfer 'in any capacity whatsoever

wherever there is a school for [my] children to be educated'. He was then receiving a salary £320 with quarters, school allowance of £60 per annum, special allowance for training student teachers £30 per annum and district sustenance of £75 per annum and was willing to reduce his income but he had 'displayed such outstanding ability in the education of children, by hand and eye methods, that it would be a waste of material to place him in any position where such ability would be cramped or not made effective use of' (Bleakley, 1938). Daniel Passi from Mer transferred from Poid school in 1938 to be head teacher of the primary school, while Frith continued to direct the college until December 1939, when he received his transfer (Sam Passi, pers. comm., 1981; Frances Rooney Frith, pers. comm., 1982). In January 1940 the Frith left Torres Strait and William Charles Venning Turner moved from Saibai to become head teacher of the Mabuyag school and principal of the college (Turner, 1944).³⁶ The last pre-war inspection of the Mabuyag school was made on 14 May 1940, when the assessment was 'quite satisfactory and very promising'. Turner's assistant teachers were Wabu Matthew, Uzu Gaulai and Sumai Tekelu from Mabuyag and Waraka Adidi and Idabi Babia from Saibai. Getano Lui assisted Turner in 1941.

WARTIME AND POST-WAR SCHOOLING ON MABUYAG TO 1985³⁷

The March 1942 evacuation of almost all Europeans from Torres Strait meant the closure of the Mabuyag teachers' college but primary schooling continued under dedicated local teachers. According to George Mye (pers. comm., 1995), a former student of the college, Turner returned to Mabuyag without his family and remained there for the duration of the war. However, he seems to have spent much of the war at Masig: in December 1944 he requested

special leave to go to Mabuyag from Masig on the grounds that he had been at Masig since September 1943, while his family had remained on Mabuyag. He made a similar request in January 1945 (Turner, 1944; Forsythe, 1945).

Three Islander teachers signed Mabuyag school returns during the war years: Wabu Matthew, government teacher in 1942 and 1944, Ned Tekelu, government teacher in 1943, and Zanobeza Sunai. At the end of the war Turner took 16 weeks recreation leave before returning to teach at Mabuyag in August 1945 and taught there until replaced by Frith from November 1945 to September 1946 (Francis Rooney Frith, pers. comm., 1982). Tom Lomak Phineasa, who that year married his colleague, Wabu Matthew, then took over the school. Frith was moved to Badu to organise a secondary school but his removal 'caused an outcry' from the Mabuyag Islanders: The Protector of Island, P.J. Jensen, wrote to Frith in July 1937 [?1947],

Although it is pleasing to note that Mabuyag people are anxious to have you return to their island, I cannot see where such a transfer would benefit Mabuyag Islanders specifically or Torres Strait islanders generally. From reports received it is apparent that your set-up in the secondary school at Badu is receiving highest acclaim and as you are the only man capable of extending the good work already commenced there, I am certain it would be disastrous for me to even recommend a change (Anon., 1953: 36-37).

William Min succeeded Phineasa at the Mabuyag school in 1947 and C.J. Burge was appointed in 1948, assisted by Ngailu Bani. After two years B.J. McGuire became head teacher from 1950 to 1958, with Michael Bani as acting government teacher for some of

that time. After McGuire left, Mauare Eseli stepped in until the appointment of E.A Polkinghorne in the second half of 1959. Appendix 1 lists the Mabuyag primary school teachers and yearly enrolments from 1900 to 1945; Appendix 2 the pupils enrolled in the school from 1939 to 1973.

The provision of mainstream education for Torres Strait Islanders remained of major concern to their post-war leaders and there were persistent calls for the Queensland Department of Education to take over the island schools, calls which for decades were resisted. However, various attempts were made to improve local teacher training and inservicing and provide general access to kindergartens. In 1965 the first Torres Strait Islanders' teachers seminar was held at Thursday Island, attended by 37 teachers from every school in the strait and Bamaga. Among those who attended lectures on English expression, mathematics, social studies, music, games, first-aid, health, art and care of animals were Mauare Eseli and Laura Paipai from Mabuyag. Opening the seminar on 7 January 1965, the Hon. J.C.A. Pizzey, Minister for Education and Native Affairs, described it 'as the beginning of real development in providing more efficient teaching and better educational opportunities for the Torres Strait children' (*Torres News*, 12 January 1965: 7). At the end of that year, Mauare Eseli was one of four Torres Strait Islanders among the 363 students who passed out at the fourth graduation ceremony at Kedron Park Teachers' College (*Cairns Post*, 21 December 1965: 4).³⁸ In 1985 the Queensland Department of Education took over responsibility for all the island schools and erected a new modern building which was completed in March 1986 (Teske, 1986: 14).

HEALTH AND POPULATION OF MABUYAG

On 11 June 1840 Dumont D'Urville, sailing close to Mabuyag, saw numerous columns of smoke and formed the impression that the islands of the Banks Group (Mua, Badu and Mabuyag) were heavily populated (Dumont D'Urville, 1987: 551). Other early estimates of Mabuyag's population are similarly vague, not always consistent nor reliable. The Rev. Archibald Wright Murray (1872) of the LMS estimated the population in 1872 as '300 or more' but, two years later, after Mabuyag became a pearling centre, Murray's colleague, the Rev. Samuel McFarlane (1874) thought it to be 'about a hundred natives' with a further 200 from the Pacific and other Torres Strait islands.

Disease, drought and crop failure took their toll of Mabuyag's population, as did pre-war migration to other islands and post-war migration to the mainland. Long before the arrival of Europeans, Torres Strait Islanders suffered from a host of endogenous diseases, including endemic dengue fever and malaria, dysentery, elephantiasis and yaws. Pacific Islanders and Europeans introduced bronchitis, chickenpox, influenza, leprosy, measles, mumps, smallpox, tuberculosis and whooping cough, which devastated local populations. To counteract the effects of malevolent magic, which was believed to cause disease, traditional healers used a variety of locally-sourced herbal remedies and incantations but the chief cure was to bleed the patient. Treatment for a dying child on Mabuyag in September 1891 was to 'cut its forehead and body to draw blood when the pain came on, and this seems to be their only remedy' (Rowan, 1898: 126). There is evidence that missionary and government teachers were valued by Islanders in part because they dispensed Western medicines and simple first aid.

With the introduction of so many outsiders and their diseases, the population of Mabuyag may well have decreased by a half to two-thirds by 1874, as McFarlane claimed. It is equally possible that during McFarlane's visit the majority of the people were away either on pearling boats or camping elsewhere and thus not gathered around the mission compound and available for counting. In this case, both sickness and absence may account for the rapid decrease, since we know that around July-August 1873 Mabuyag lost 15 of its inhabitants to an unknown disease and the people fled from their homes (Murray, 1873). By the end of April 1874 'many of the young men are away from their homes working for the white men notwithstanding their unwillingness' (Murray, 1874). These workers were vulnerable to contagion and sometimes brought disease to the island when they returned.

Little mention is made in the LMS records of the 1875 measles epidemic which spread from Somerset to almost every Torres Strait island and coastal New Guinea, partly through the actions of the LMS (Chester, 1882a). Chester thought it probable 'that not less than one fifth of the natives perished'; others estimate that up to half the Torres Strait population on islands frequented by the pearlers may have died. The Mabuyag Islanders, who were in constant contact with Somerset through the voyages of the shelling boats, must also have been affected. Nor were the Lifuan missionaries immune: Gucheng from Katau and his sick wife, who died shortly afterwards, took refuge from the fever at Mabuyag towards the end of 1875 (McFarlane, 1876). In 1879 the first official population count on Mabuyag (Pennefather, 1879a) enumerated 257 'natives' but these may well have been augmented by the many pearling station workers from the other Torres Strait islands, eastern Cape York and the Pacific.

If the Mabuyag population was significantly reduced by the measles outbreak, then the McFarlane (1884) figure of about 400 in 1884 is surprising and must surely be attributed to the inclusion of outsiders, if it was not an exaggeration designed to impress McFarlane's superiors (Chester, 1882b).

Mabuyag's population grew during the early 1890s thanks to its prosperity and the influx of foreigners.³⁹ However, during the 1892 monsoon season the supply of garden food ran dangerously low and several people died from starvation. Responding to the crisis, John Douglas ordered every individual on Mabuyag, Badu and Mua 'to plant and tend two coconuts every year, subject to the fine of 1s. each on failure' in order to build up the food supply (Douglas, 1894b: 8). The plantings were too young, however, to prevent the deaths from starvation of two old women and five children in February 1894, when heavy rains washed away their sweet potato crops and made it impossible to catch fish. Douglas immediately sent out a cargo of flour and rice with instructions that it should be doled out carefully to the hungry, 'especially to women and children' (Douglas, 1894a, 1894c). In August and September 1893 there had been another outbreak of a mild type of measles, which spread through the islands from Erub and ultimately to New Guinea (Douglas, 1894b: 7). This was followed in March 1894 by an influenza epidemic and in mid-1898 'fever was bad for the first time in the memory of the oldest European in those waters' (Bruce, 1898). During this period a number of families left for Badu.

Mabuyag people suffered throughout the first years of the twentieth century from recurring cycles of infection and disease. There was a whooping cough outbreak in 1904 and dengue fever, malaria, bronchitis and entiritis in 1905 caused a record 26

deaths, predominantly 'children or young people, and mostly females' (Cairns, 1904, 1905d). Cairns had to close the school for eight days after the Islanders fled Mabuyag for safer locations. Drought and brackish wells situated 'rather more than a quarter of a mile' from the village (Douglas, 1900a) combined with generally unsanitary conditions to spread disease and Cairns complained to the local protector:

There is no proper system of earth closets connected with the camp, the natives being in the habit of retiring to a small scrub almost in the middle of the inhabited part of the camp. The bad odor from this scrub was noticeable when I inspected the place (there being a good breeze blowing at the time) and it must be very obnoxious during calm weather. I recommended the Mamoose to erect three latrines some distance from the camp which he promised to do (O'Brien, 1905a).

According to Cairns (Milman, 1906b: 12), during 1905 Mabuyag gained a reputation as one of the most unhealthy of the islands with a very high death rate from three serious epidemics, the worst being measles. 'Towards the end of the year we were threatened with a water famine, but fortunately the rain just came in time. For about two months the water was hardly fit for drinking, being very brackish and also dirty.' No deaths occurred, which Milman (1905c) put down to Butcher's 'care and attention'. By the following year the epidemic had passed and the health of the people of Mabuyag was reported as 'exceptionally good' with no epidemics (Milman, 1907: 10). However, sickness returned to the island in 1908, 'a kind of low fever which I put down to sleeping on the ground' (Cowling, 1908). Almost 30 new houses had been built in the new camp

but, despite government resident Milman's instructions, only three were on piles.

EPIDEMICS

Teachers were expected to act as the local doctor and they had to report 'all cases of infectious diseases and improper attention to the mamoose, treating in simple remedies from a medicine chest, but recommending serious cases to the hospital at Thursday Island' (Annual Report, 1907: 15-16). The health of Mabuyag remained reasonably good for a few years until the tropical dysentery epidemic of 1911, when 13 of its adults and 17 children died (Lee-Bryce, 1912: 18): this figure represents a death rate of 9.1% of the Mabuyag population of around 253.⁴⁰ The epidemic began on Thursday Island but soon spread throughout the region. It arrived at Mabuyag from Saibai, having most likely originated in Papua, and the first case came under notice on 8 March when the school was closed and the people distributed generally on the hill tops to avoid infection. Quarantine measures were widely implemented throughout Torres Strait (Guilletmot, 1912; MacGregor, 1911; Milman, 1911a: 2). At first cutters were used to transport the sick from Mabuyag to the hospital at St Paul's Mission but soon the hospital was unable to cope and people were sent in to Thursday Island (*A.B.M. Review*, 22 May 1911). The hospital there was also overwhelmed and a temporary isolation hospital for Islanders was set up on Muralag (Prince of Wales Island). After a fresh outbreak on Mabuyag ten new cases arrived at Muralag on 26 April. There had already been several deaths, three people died on board the boat taking them to Thursday Island and another died shortly after arrival. Milman instructed Minniss to close the school from 10 March until 15 May

but it was too late to prevent deaths among the children. Throughout the islands 'supplies of medicines and disinfectants [were] issued, houses were fumigated and bedding and clothing affected destroyed'. Minniss took extreme measures to prevent a recurrence of the epidemic during the northwest season: 'Any house that had sickness in it I had pulled down and all the grass and old mats burnt, and new houses built.' (Annual Report, 1911: 19) By early May, after the epidemic had somewhat abated, Milman sent a warder out to Mabuyag to assist the teacher in treating the convalescents 'with a supply of medicines, arrowroot, preserved milk, etc.'. Of a total of 309 cases throughout the strait in 1911, 42 deaths were reported, 30 of those from Mabuyag, 'including 17 school children, who lost their lives, as the teacher says, through the cursedness and stupidity of the natives, who were too lazy and superstitious to assist in the measures taken for their relief'. A journalist visiting in late May 1911 described the effect on Mrs Minniss of 'a village reeking with infection and deaths occurring every day close by!' and 'the tolling of the little church bell and the hammering of the coffins'. He blamed the high death rate on Mabuyag to the 'idiocy of a Samoan mission teacher who failed to notify the first cases, and so allow of necessary precautions being taken', presumably influenced by Minniss (whose duty it was) and the department's campaign to discredit the LMS and bring an end to the 'dual control' of the islands (Anon., 1911a). A mild outbreak of dysentery reappeared in the beginning of 1912 but no further fatalities occurred (Annual Report, 1911: 14, 19; Lee-Bryce, 1912: 18, 1913: 2; Milman, 1911b, 1911c, 1911d). See Appendix 3 for a list of Mabuyag dysentery patients admitted to hospital during 1911.

In 1915 there was a mild epidemic of influenza but the islands continued to be reasonably free of disease. One preventable cause of death was neglect during infancy, which was gradually being overcome and a suggestion was made to offer a bonus for every child that reached the age of two. The teachers were also finding that patients were disinclined to attend regularly for their medicine and Mabuyag Islanders were singled out as being the most unwilling to put in place the new sanitary arrangements (Annual Report, 1915: 11). July 1917 saw an outbreak of measles in a mild form, which affected all but the far northern islands, but malaria was again becoming prevalent (Annual Report, 1917: 7). There were severe water shortages in 1919, necessitating the sinking of a well for the Rev. John Done's family; by January 1920 'the situation was very serious and the family could only obtain one kerosene tin of water per day from their well' (Reid, 2007: 10).

In February 1920 the influenza 'Spanish flu' pandemic killed about 2% of the population of Torres Strait or approximately 2,500 people (*The Carpentarian*, 1 April 1920: 630). The pandemic killed millions world-wide but on this occasion Mabuyag suffered fewer fatalities than most of the other islands with only one death reported out of 200 cases by mid-February (Bleakley, 1920). This may have been the Pacific Islander, Samaka, who died of influenza on 9 February. He, however, was only the first of eight people to die from influenza on Mabuyag that month: Wamia Goomitara and Nowia Bageri both infants, died on 11 February; Alam Mene two days later aged 4 months; the elderly Dugui on 15 February; the three-year old Tom Dorrick on 16 February; Kubi Gagai on 17 February; and 9-month old Kubi Frank on 26 February 1920.

Health in the islands was markedly improved by 1921 but whooping cough and influenza broke out again in 1922 (Annual Report, 1922: 6) (Figure 12). Mabuyag escaped these outbreaks but its people succumbed to scabies. Mild outbreaks of influenza, measles and chicken-pox afflicted the islands for the next few years but the fatalities of the recent past were never repeated. The Mabuyag water supply continued to be a problem. The concrete tank leaked dry in 1932 and had to be refaced but, despite the sinking of several wells, the water supply did not improve (Annual Report, 1932: 12) (Figure 13). In November 1935 there was an epidemic of vomiting amongst the children resulting in

the death of a baby but 'otherwise the health of the people was good' and continued to be so thanks to the 'excellent sanitary service' (Annual Report, 1935: 16, 1936: 8). The 1938 outbreaks of malaria, tuberculosis and influenza as well as the whooping cough 'introduced from southern ports by the crews of trochus boats, who were returning home at the end of 1937', resulted in many deaths on Mabuyag, mostly of older people with little immunity. The Government Medical Officer advised a daily issue of dugong oil 'to every school child and to those adults whose physical condition demanded such. The beneficial result of this treatment was soon noticeable, in that, the people were gradually built up to a



FIG. 12. People tending to a ground oven (*amai*) at Nayedh, Bau village, Mabuyag, 1921. Photographed by Frank Hurley (National Library of Australia: pic-vn3314129-v).



FIG. 13. Water supply for Bau village, Mabuyag, June 1931 (Queensland State Archives, Digital Image ID 5819).

physical standard which enabled them to resist, later, mild epidemics of influenza' (Annual Report, 1938: 8, 12).

COMMUNITY HOSPITALS

The idea of placing small hospital wards on the main islands was apparently first mooted by the local protector in 1915 (Annual Report, 1915: 11) and again in 1917:

It would be of advantage if small hospitals were erected close to each teacher's residence, so that all cases of sickness could be under their close observation; also if each teacher could attend a certain course of lectures and demonstrations, to be

given by the medical practitioner at Thursday Island, which probably could be arranged at small expense (Annual Report, 1917: 7).

Nothing came of the idea, presumably because of expense, until 1929, when the first cottage hospital was erected on Erub for the treatment of minor complaints and accidents and to halt the spread of infections (Annual Report, 1929: 8). There was a proposal to arrange periodical medical inspections and train Islanders in first aid. Mrs Frith, wife of the government teacher and not a trained nurse, had charge of a small building on Mabuyag in 1937 that became the medical aid post (Anon., 1953).⁴¹ All serious cases were sent to the hospital on Thursday Island

but Islanders generally were poorly served by a health service plagued by transport and communications problems. One example involved the death of an infant of 7 months, who died in the Thursday Island Hospital on 9 February 1939 as a result of an accidental blow to the head. His mother gave evidence that, as he became more feverish, his condition was reported to the policeman at Mabuyag, who in turn reported it to the government teacher. Frith arranged to have the baby taken to Thursday Island but the parents had to wait at Badu for four days to catch another boat into Thursday Island. (Queensland Department of Justice, 1939).

There is little documentation of Islanders' health during World War II. However, the incidence of tuberculosis, once rare among Torres Strait Islanders, is known to have increased, probably because of the scarcity of fresh fruit and vegetables and the reliance on 'tinned foodstuffs, polished rice and flour, and the somewhat congested housing conditions brought about by the war' (*The Carpentarian*, 1 January 1942: 81; Curtis, 1943; Mollison, 1949: 200).

POPULATION FIGURES

Pre-federation population figures for Mabuyag are not reliable, although attempts were made after federation to conduct an accurate census of the Queensland Indigenous population (see Appendix 4). Douglas (1901b) distributed census papers among the islands in March 1901, the first census at which Queensland Aboriginal people were enumerated. There had already been several outflows of population. Mabuyag Islanders are said to have settled Badu in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth centuries (Laade, 1968: 148-149, 151) and in the early 1890s they were joined by more families. Mauare Eseli's father told her that the Samoan pastor, who arrived in August 1892,

planted coconuts throughout the island [attested in his report for 1892-3 at Douglas' direction] so that there was not enough room to build houses and people had to move to other islands. This was when 'Peram and his tribe' went to Yam (Mauare Eseli, pers. comm., 1995). According to Jennie Rich (pers. comm., 1997) people moved because of a shortage of water and the general situation on Mabuyag. Another exodus occurred at the end of 1905 and by 1908 most of the Pacific Islander-headed families had shifted to Wag on Mua, which became the St Paul's Mission for Pacific Islanders. The original population of Wag was thought to be 'about 25 persons in all', all former residents of Mabuyag (Schomberg, 1928). By 1908 there were eight families and about 60 residents at Wag, the majority from Mabuyag, chiefly members of the Futuna, Gela, Levi, Lifu, Marou, Namok, Ware and Waugh families (Shnukal, 2008: 260-261).

The first commonwealth census taken for the night between 2-3 April 1911 excluded 'full-blooded Aboriginals' and so includes no figures for Mabuyag. However, with increasingly stringent regulations and government control of Islander movements from 1912, a need was felt for a more accurate enumeration of the population. In 1914 the first complete census of the Torres Strait Islanders was taken, with fairly reliable statistics for the 19 population centres. The Mabuyag population was 252, almost 11% of the total of 2,314 (Annual Report, 1914: 10). There was a steady increase until just before World War II but wartime figures are unreliable and, in any case, skewed by the absence of some 80 Mabuyag men serving in the defence forces.

After the war emigration restrictions began to be lifted and by the mid-1960s half the Islander population had emigrated to mainland Australia. Mabuyag's population fell from an immediate pre-war figure of 395



FIG. 14. Looking west towards Bau village, Mabuyag, 1952-1953 (Barbara Stevenson Collection, Queensland Museum: EH-7469-0).

to 227 (Annual Report, 1962: 12, 1964: 15) (Figure 14). By the beginning of the 1970s Mabuyag Islanders were working in the canefields of north Queensland and the Kuri Bay pearl culture farms in Western Australia but most had jobs in the industries allied to the northern Australian minerals boom. They made a significant contribution to building the Queensland and Western Australian inland railways. The department's annual report for 1971 makes mention of other major projects employing Islanders: 'the open cut coal mine at Blackwater, the Gladstone Alumina production, Bauxite mining at Weipa, coastal merchant shipping and railway construction or maintenance. Numbers are also employed in the Brisbane City Council's sewerage installation programme' (Annual Report, 1971: 16). Recognizing the greater opportunities for themselves and their children, the men began to send for their families. Initially living in

poor conditions in the railway camps, many of them eventually settled permanently in Queensland coastal towns, where they could boat and fish in surroundings that recalled their island homes. The majority of diaspora Islanders still live in Queensland but the young people are leaving the smaller towns for Brisbane, Cairns, Mackay, Rockhampton and Townsville, which have large Islander populations. The flow has not been entirely one-way. Families also move between the islands and the mainland depending on the demand for low-skilled labour. In 1975 Mabuyag had a population of 128; in 1983 it was 142 (including ten non-Islanders). Economic downturns on mainland Australia in the 1970s and 1980s saw families returning, at least temporarily, and by 1985 the population had risen slightly to 160. During the period of native title negotiations there was a minor boost to the resident Torres Strait population as older people returned to

their home islands to oversee claims to their ancestral lands. Fewer would have done so without the greatly improved services and infrastructure provided from the 1980s. By 1996 Mabuyag had 446 inhabitants, partly through natural increase, greater economic opportunity and the return of people who had retired and were anxious not to lose their land to the council. Table 3 gives population counts that, while generally estimates, indicate clear overall trends.

CONCLUSION

Maintaining law and order, mediating disputes and punishing offenders in the Torres Strait islands demanded creative and flexible solutions from colonial officials. The exercise of colonial power was negotiated through the 'Mamoose' system, instituted in the late 1870s, which maintained and reinforced traditional authority structures; these were consolidated by the appointment of local police and local courts. Haddon's view of the institution of the Mamoose and its usefulness to colonial authorities illustrates the way in which continuity and change in Torres Strait governance were brokered by compromise:

When the Queensland Government took over the charge of the Torres Straits Islanders, the lack of a definite central authority was felt to be unsatisfactory for administration purposes and so the Resident Magistrate, as occasion required, caused the men of an island to meet together and select one of their number who should be acknowledged by themselves as the chief of the island. If there was no obvious reason to the contrary this choice was accepted by the magistrate and he formally appointed the nominee as chief (Haddon, 1904: 265-266).

A generation later this system had mutated into a system of locally-elected councils, which provided low-cost administration overseen by Queensland government authorities. Generally accounted a success, it was adopted with minor modifications in some New Guinea, Northern Territory and Cape York communities.

Government education on Mabuyag began in 1900 after almost 30 years of missionary schooling. The European teacher advised the Mamoose and/or council, acted as registrar and recorder in the island courts and provided medical care during the many epidemic illnesses so prevalent in those early years. With more stringent regulation of Islander conduct from 1912, the government teachers were designated as 'superintendents' and given control over all local matters. The subsequent loss of freedoms led in part to the maritime strike of 1936, which in turn brought concessions from the state government and a 'modified form of home rule'.

Despite financial stringencies, the inter-war years were a time of community consolidation and public infrastructure construction, with new stores, churches, schools, wells, water tanks, roads and jetties being funded by Islanders' earnings. Islanders also began to build better homes. Modern housing, together with modern sanitary arrangements, medical treatment and the draining of swamps, improved overall health and halted the decline in Islander population. Mabuyag returned to pre-contact numbers just before World War II, when its population was enumerated as 395. Disease and emigration kept the figures fairly stable but the island lost a considerable proportion of its post-war population to the mainland from the 1960s onwards, although emigration has to some extent been reversed in more recent times.

There is little awareness of how close the Torres Strait Islanders came to extinction as a people following their incorporation into colonial Queensland from the early 1870s. They were fortunate in having early administrators who were largely sympathetic to their traditional culture and sought to preserve its strengths, while eliminating practices they viewed as inimical to incorporation into the wider world. One could argue that even the era of protectionism, repressive and humiliating as it was, minimised the effects of disease, stabilised and then increased the birthrate, preserved the Islanders from the most noxious forms of contact with outsiders and allowed them space and time to adjust in their own way to the demands of the new order. Mabuyag Islanders, like other Torres Strait Islanders, are justly proud of the way they have adapted to the extraordinary social, economic, political, and demographic transformations of the past 140 years. They continue to increase numerically, have profoundly influenced the course of Indigenous affairs and a growing number are achieving educational and professional success in mainstream Australian society. A less resilient or pragmatic people might have been overwhelmed by the changes imposed on them. Islanders, without compromising their core cultural values, have retained their commitment to their heritage and

have fashioned shared modes of conduct and ceremony which remain distinctive, vital, enduring and firmly anchored in their ancestral lands.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My deepest thanks to Crossfield Ah Mat, Sanawai Lee Aragu, Ambrose (Binji) Bin Juda, Christine Coutts, Mauare Eseli, Elizabeth Townson Fa'Aoso, Frances Annie Rooney Frith, Jeremy Hodes, Kalingo Bani Joseph, Florence Savage Kennedy, Kemuel Kiwat, Wasie Kiwat Tardent, Gerry Langevad, David Lawrence, Margaret Lawrie, Noel Loos, Getano Belford Lui Snr, Philip MacFarlane, Rodney Mitchell, Clive Moore, George Mye, Satrick Neliman, Karl Neuenfeldt, Harry Oroki, Kame Paipai, Sam Passi, Wabu Matthew Phineasa, Cygnet Repu, Jenny Rich, John Scott, Nonie Sharp, Colin Sheehan and Ada Ware Tillett. Some of these people are now deceased. I am also grateful to Margaret Reid and Kathy Frankland for allowing me to examine departmental files held at the Queensland State Archives. I also thank the staff of the Queensland State Archives, John Oxley Library and Bishop Anthony Hall-Matthews for allowing me access to Church of England records then held in the John Oxley Library.

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APPENDIX 1:
TEACHERS AND YEARLY ENROLMENTS AT MABUYAG PRIMARY SCHOOL, 1900-1945

The following figures are incomplete but fairly constant, declining in 1906 and 1908 with the departure of families to Mua and again in 1912 after the dysentery epidemic.

Year	Head Teacher	Enrolment	Year	Head Teacher	Enrolment
1900	E.R.F. Muston	75	1901	A. Huddy	72
1902	A. Huddy	c.75	1903	A. Huddy	70
1904	A.S. Cairns	104	1905	A.S. Cairns	96
1906	A.S. Cairns	73*	1907	A.S. Cairns	74
1908	A.S. Cairns	74	1909	W.C. Minniss	56*
1910	W.C. Minniss	c.60	1911	W.C. Minniss	74
1912	W.C. Minniss	61*	1913	W.C. Minniss	58
1914	W.C. Minniss	60	1915	W.C. Minniss	c.55
1916	W.C. Minniss		1917	W.C. Minniss	
1918	W.C. Minniss		1919	W.C. Minniss	
1920	W.C. Minniss		1921	W.C. Minniss	
1922	W.C. Minniss		1923	W.C. Minniss	
1924	W.C. Minniss	72	1925	G. Agnew	85
1926	G. Agnew		1927	G. Agnew	92
1928	W. Miller		1929	W. Miller	75
1930	P.R. Frith		1931	P.R. Frith	96
1932	P.R. Frith	92	1933	P.R. Frith	85
1934	J. Tamwoy	95	1935	P.R. Frith	105
1936	P.R. Frith	87	1937	P.R. Frith	
1938	P.R. Frith		1939	P.R. Frith	
1940	C.W.V. Turner	97	1941	C.W.V. Turner	
1942	W. Matthew		1943	N. Tekelu	
1944	W. Matthew		1945	C.W.V. Turner	

*Enrolments decline after the departure of Pacific Islander-headed families for Mua in 1906 and 1908 and the dysentery outbreak of 1911.

Sources: Douglas 1900a, 1901d; Bennett 1903; Cairns 1/4/1906; MacGregor 1911; Annual Reports of the Chief Protector of Aborigines 1915-1940; Island School-teachers, 1926 (QSA A/69432); Reports of inspection 1927-1935 (QSA A/15994); Reports of Inspection 1932-1934 (QSA A/15994); Reports of inspection 1936-1938 (QSA A/15999); School returns - Mabuiag Island - 1932-1980 (QSA SRS 505 Box 1010 13A/28); Portley 1938; Furniture inventory - teachers quarters - Mabuiag Island 1936-1967 (QSA SRS 505 Box 781 9B/7)

**APPENDIX 2:
MABUYAG STATE SCHOOL ADMISSION REGISTER, 1939-1973**

The admission register for Mabuyag school from 1939 to 1973 is held in the Queensland State Archives as A/43677 (microfilm Z1491). It is incomplete and in some cases incorrect but it gives an insight into the families living on Mabuyag during those years, including visitors. A handwritten note at the beginning of the register states: 'This register was written 1945 by C.J. Burge. The old register a mass of rat eaten, torn and coverless pages. Much information was missing but the best possible has been done under the circumstances to collect information.' Because it is a public document and of interest to the people of Mabuyag, it is included here as Appendix 3. I have made a few changes, reconfiguring the entries to reflect pupils' birth order and omitting people born after 1950, but I have retained the original spellings with an occasional correction in square brackets.

Emamia [Emaima] Bageri b. 9/10/1934, admitted 1940; parent Peter Bageri
 Cygnet Johnny b. 21/3/1934, admitted 1939; grandfather Johnny Malakula
 Wiatt Luffman b. 9/4/1934, admitted 1939; parent Missionary [Misimam] Luffman, seaman
 Sicko Joe Amber b. 22/5/1934, admitted 1939; guardian Geni Amber
 Wariba Bagai b. 12/7/1934, admitted 1939; parent Johnny Bagai
 Joe Magala b. 30/7/1934, admitted 1939; father Maki Magala, gardener
 Colin Paipai b. 2/9/1934, admitted 1940, parent Kame Paipai
 Hilda Banasa b. 22/9/1934, admitted 1940; mother Gaiba Yellub
 Samson Frank b. 30/9/1934, admitted 1940; mother Magi [Nagi] Frank
 Mary Namok b. 1/2/1935, admitted 1940; parent Com [Tom] Jack Namok
 Kamui Au b. 25/2/1935, admitted 1940; parent Kamui Au
 Solema Repu b. 19/3/1935, admitted 1940; grandfather Dugui Repu
 Walter Warrior b. 18/9/1935, admitted 1940; parent Obadiah Warrior
 Balu Paipai b. 9/2/1936, admitted 1940; guardian Kame Paipai
 Seluia Johnny b. 24/2/1936, admitted 1940; parent Johnny Malacula
 Imarie Mooka b. 1/2/1936, admitted 1941; parent Imarie (Iona) Mooka
 Balu Paipai b. 9/2/1936, admitted 1940; guardian Kame Paipai
 Seluia Johnny b. 24/2/1936, admitted 1941; parent Johnny Malacula
 Zachariah Waria b. 19/10/1936, admitted 1941; guardian Wiatt Ibigan
 Sepoima Luffman b. 25/11/1936, admitted 1941, parent Jimmy Luffman
 Pilly Amber b. 5/12/1936, admitted 1941; guardian Geni Amber
 Polly Tekelu b. 13/12/1936, admitted 1951; guardian Aziku Paiwan
 Sepelu Satrick b. 28/12/1936, admitted ?1943; mother Seluia Satrick
 Marie Bageri b. 26/3/1937, admitted 1941, parent Peter Bageri
 Patterson Bani b. 17/5/1937, admitted 1950; parent Uropi Bani
 Johnwill Gizu b. 17/9/1937, admitted 1941; parent Aiaba Gizu
 Mudulphua John b. 4/10/1937, admitted 1941; grandfather Johnny Malacula
 Aaron Hankin b. 23/3/1938, admitted 1943; parent Charlie Hankin
 Janace Mooka b. 6/4/1938; admitted 1947; parent Imarie Mooka

Kedie Bana Luff b. 27/4/1938, admitted ?1943; parent Cula [Tuta] Luffman
Laura Paipai b. 1/8/1938, admitted 1943; guardian Kame Paipai
Sakawai Misi b. 2/11/1938, admitted 1943, parent Supia Misi
Eliza Waria b. 20/11/1938, admitted 1943; guardian Waiatt Ibigan
Matatia Waria b. 4/6/1939, admitted 1945; parent Obadiah Warrior
Rim Johnny b. 6/6/1939, admitted 1945; parent Jimmy Maua [Maira] Kris
Daina Gizu b. 8/11/1939, admitted 1945; parent Elisara Gizu
Ina Misi b. 22/3/1940, admitted 1945; parent Willie Misi
Elliot Luffman b. 31/3/1940, admitted 1945; grandmother Pauna Luffman
Boston Bagai b. 7/5/1940, admitted 1945, parent Johnny Bagai
Freddie Satrick b. 7/5/1940, admitted 1945; mother Seluia Satrick
Maia Au b. 29/8/1940, admitted 1945; parent Kamui Au
Boaza Hankin b. 21/10/1940, admitted 1945; parent Billy Hankin
Mary Johnny b. 24/10/1940, admitted 1945; parent Arona Kris
Jean Charlie no age or date of birth given, admitted 1950; parent Sana Charlie of Cowal Creek
Pelisa Gizu b. 23/9/1941, admitted 1945; parent Elisara Gizu
Scotty Misi b. 19/10/1941, admitted 1943 [?1946]; parent Supia Misi
Bitie Andrew Warrior b. 1/2/1942, admitted 1949; parent Cissie Warrior
Pereri [Petharie] Misi b. 5/2/1942, admitted 1945; parent Maia Misi
Missiman Kris b. 8/5/1942, admitted 1949; mother Irad Johnny; guardian Johnny Malacula
Waia Kup Luffman b. 4/6/1942, admitted 1949; parent Tuta Luffman
Leila Edna Whap b. 11/6/1942, admitted 1955; mother Kelam Whap
Charlie Hankin b. 11/7/1942, admitted 1949; mother Jane Hankin; guardian Joe Dorrick
Towa Frank b. 13/9/1942, admitted 1949; parent Gabai Frank
Edie Kila Mara b. 5/1/1943, admitted 1955; parent George Mara, Episcopalian Church deacon
Manesa [Manase] Eseli b. 28/5/1943, admitted 1950; mother Maurie Eseli, school teacher
Hazel Mooka b. 30/5/1943, admitted 1949; parent Imarie Mooka
Sarai Luffman b. 28/1/1945, admitted 1950; parent Tuta Luffman
Patrine Misi b. 15/3/1945, admitted 1951; guardian Willie Misi
Akabu Sagigi b. 29/3/1945, admitted 1957; parent Eselie Sagigi, Badu Island
Macfarlane Misi b. 29/3/1945, admitted 1951; parent Supia Misi
Stephen Ray Phenasio b. 23/5/1945, admitted 1955 [?1956]; parent Tom Lomark Phenasio, Chairman
N.S. [Nadap Stephen] George Misi b. 11/6/1945, admitted 1951; parent Moran Misi, Branch Manager
Tabitiai Joseph b. 5/7/1945, admitted 1951; guardian Miriam Joseph
Winnie Mapa b. 17/7/1945, admitted 1955; parent Akoo Mapa, Murray Island
Olive Mapa b. 17/7/1945, admitted 1955; parent Akoo Mapa, Murray Island
James Mooka (Freddy Mooka) b. 24/7/1945, admitted 1951; parent Imarie Mooka
Cornwell Pearson b. 10/1/1946, admitted 1961; guardian Frank Pearson, Branch Manager
Ata Margaret Paiwan b. 1/4/1946, admitted 1952; parent Amosa Paiwan
Amarama Kris b. 26/4/1946, admitted 1952; parent Arona Kris, janitor
Goomitari Gaulai (Goomitari Bagai) b. 25/5/1946, admitted 1952; parent Wamaea Bagai

Panau Luffman b. 14/9/1946, admitted 1952; parent Lizzie Luffman
Ethel Sagigi b. [c.1947], admitted 1958; parent Eselie Sagigi, Badu Island
Amber Dorrick b. 11/3/1947, admitted 1953; parent Salmui Dorrick
Saku Misi b. 20/3/1947, admitted 1952; parent Supia Misi, seaman
Mau [May] Au b. 26/3/1947, admitted 1952; parent Kamui Au
Sam Wallie Kris b. 30/3/1947, admitted 1952; parent Jimmy Maira Kris, seaman
Ned Warrior Motlop b. 20/5/1947, admitted 1952; parent Alexson Motlop, seaman
Smith Motlop (Grainger Motlop) b. 20/5/1947, admitted 1953; parent Kawani Motlop, seaman
Eccles Mara b. 14/6/1947, admitted 1955; parent George Mara, Episcopalian Church deacon
Gordon Mandi b. 28/6/1947, admitted 1952; parent Kwiur [Kuiur] Mandi, seaman
Yalla Phenasio b. 17/8/1947, admitted 1955 [?1956]; parent Tom Lomark Phenasio, Chairman
Lizzie Mooka b. 5/11/1947, admitted 1952; parent Imarie Mooka
Morris (Roland) Hankin b. 18/11/1947, admitted 1955; parent Jack Hankin, teacher
Harriet Ober b. ? [c.1948], admitted 1960; parent Wakay Ober, Saibai Island
Gabai Min b. 24/3/1948, admitted 1953; parent William Min, theological student
Trent O'Brien Bani b. 3/6/1948, admitted 1955; guardian Uropi Bani
Kesia Mary Whap b. 23/9/1948, admitted 1956; parent Dulwa Whap, labourer, Thursday Island
Mavis Hankin b. 29/10/1948, admitted 1955; guardian George Hankin, pensioner
George Drummond b. 2/11/1948, admitted 1961; guardian Charlie Hankin, Sergeant of Police
Pauline Amber b. 21/11/1948, admitted 1953; parent James Amber, seaman
Kelam Peggy Phineasa b. 11/5/1949, admitted 1955 [?1956]; parent Tom Lomark Phenasio, Chairman
Charlie Paiwan b. 27/7/1949, admitted 1955; parent Amosa Paiwan, seaman
John Ray Hankin b. 5/8/1949, admitted 1955; parent Jack Hankin, teacher
Annie Hankin b. 8/9/1949, admitted 1955; guardian Ruth Hankin
Iopili Motlop b. 10/9/1949, admitted 1955; parent Kawane Motlop, seaman
Emily Paiwan (Yellub) b. 3/12/1949, admitted 1956; parent Lameko Paiwan, seaman
Wanake Mooka b. 31/12/1949, admitted 1955; father David Mooka, seaman
Kalapa Johnny (Kris) b. 16/3/1950, admitted 1955; parent Rim Johnny, seaman
Lydia Mooka b. 29/3/1950, admitted 1955; mother Suzie Mooka
Sanawai Lee b. 6/4/1950, admitted 1955; parent Balgub Lee, seaman
Cornwill Mooka b. 9/4/1950, admitted 1960; parent Imarie Mooka, labourer
Nagi Misi b. 30/6/1950, admitted 1956; parent Supia Misi, seaman
Waba Kiwami Waigana b. 3/8/1950, admitted 1956; parent Imasu Waigana, Branch Manager
Elisara Gaulai b. 9/10/1950, admitted 1956; parent Gib Gaulai, seaman
Salopi Whap b. 9/10/1950, admitted 1956; parent Maitui Whap, seaman
Ruth Mara b. 12/1950, admitted 1960; parent George Mara, Episcopalian priest

**APPENDIX 3:
MABUYAG DYSENTERY PATIENTS, 1911**

The following is a list of the 26 Mabuyag patients admitted to hospital during the dysentery epidemic of 1911 with their admission and discharge dates and their length of stay. Neither surnames nor ages were recorded at the time. Spellings have been regularised and surnames added where possible.

Name	Date of admission	Date of discharge	No of days
Epanisa	28.3.1911	15.4.1911	19
Fasia	28.3.1911	15.4.1911	19
Pilgil [Pulgil]	28.3.1911	15.4.1911	19
Willie	28.3.1911	15.4.1911	19
Banasa	28.3.1911	15.4.1911	19
Tom	28.3.1911	15.4.1911	19 (died)
Mabuiag	29.3.1911	15.4.1911	18
Scola	29.3.1911	15.4.1911	18
Harold	29.3.1911	15.4.1911	18
Saepa [Sepa]	23.4.1911	8.5.1911	16
*Wyunga	23.4.1911	23.4.1911	1 (died)
Enuka	23.4.1911	8.5.1911	16
Gabai	23.4.1911	8.5.1911	16
Gowrie	23.4.1911	18.5.1911	26
Alta	23.4.1911	30.4.1911	8
*Gada	23.4.1911	26.4.1911	4 (died)
*Rosa	23.4.1911	4.5.1911	12 (died)
Wepa	23.4.1911	1.5.1911	9
Aganie~Agaue	23.4.1911	27.4.1911	5
Carokasan [Karakasoma]	23.4.1911	1.5.1911	9
Mokis [?Ngukis]	23.4.1911	27.4.1911	5
Pyurue [?Paiwain]	23.4.1911	27.4.1911	5
Wooloot [Uludh]	23.4.1911	8.5.1911	16
Pakia [?Paikai]	25.4.1911	1.5.1911	7
Myosa	10.4.1911	15.4.1911	6
Gada	4.6.1911	11.6.1911	8
Tom	4.6.1911	11.6.1911	8
Charlie	4.6.1911	12.6.1911	9
*Mengoi	4.6.1911	12.6.1911	9 (died)

*Death registers show that Wyunga, male aged 2, Gada, female aged 13, Mengoi, male aged 15 and Rosa, female aged 10, were all buried in the Thursday Island cemetery.

Source: Hennessey (1911).

APPENDIX 4: POPULATION FIGURES FOR MABUYAG (INCOMPLETE)

Year	Mabuyag	Total Torres Strait Islanders
1864	250	3500-3800 (pre-contact estimation)
1871	114 males	
1872	c.300	
1874	c.300 ⁴²	
1875		1700 (after measles epidemic)
1879	257	
1882	250	
1884	c.400	
1885	c.300	
1889	194	
1891	195	1473 ⁴³
1897	100	c.1230
1899	250	
1901	216	
1902	'over 300' ⁴⁴	
1903	300	
1904	342 ⁴⁵	
1905	c.300	
1906	c.250	c.1800
1907	355	
1908	267	c.1700
1909	245 ⁴⁶	
1910	265	
1911	253	2024 ⁴⁷
1912	250	
1913	252	2258
1914	252	2314
1916	280	c.2400
1920		2444
1925	229	3040
1930	285	3192
1931	279	3199
1932	299	3208
1933	318	3312
1934	332	3442
1935	334	3803
1936	339	3846
1937	352	4145
1938	348	4103
1939	395	3487

Year	Mabuyag	Total Torres Strait Islanders
1940	366	3508 ⁴⁸
1945		3660 (estimate)
1949	320	5000 (estimate)
1953	261	5150
1957	182	6084
1960	c.250	7368
1969	230 ⁴⁹	c.5400
1975	128	c.8000
1981	118	10732
1983	142 ⁵⁰	
1984	150	
1985	132	6053 (residing in Torres Strait)
1994	180	6245 (residing in Torres Strait)
1996	446	

Sources: Figures are based on various official sources, including Commonwealth census figures, annual reports of the Government Resident at Thursday Island, Chief Protector of Aboriginals, the Queensland Year Book and departmental community profiles, supplemented by information from LMS correspondence and reports, Year Books of the Diocese of Carpentaria, 1947-1966, *The Carpentarian* and *The A.B.M. Review*; see also Jardine, 1864; Chester, 1871; Murray, 1872; Pennefather, 1879a, 1882b; McFarlane, 1884: 7; Strachan, 1885-1886: 76; Pearse, 1889; Chalmers, 1891; Parry-Okeden, 1897: 12; Tomkins, 1901; Douglas, 1903c: 33-34; Butcher, 1907; MacGregor, 1911; *A.B.M. Review*, 1 January 1915: 183; Done, 1917; Bleakley, 1925; Simpson, 1933: 11; Wilson, 1944; Beattie, 1944; Peel, 1947: 95; Queensland Irrigation and Water Supply Commission, 1949; MacFarlane, 1953; Winterbotham, 1961; Lawrie, 1970: xix; *A.B.M. Review*, August/October 1973: 25; Duncan, 1974: 3; Caldwell *et al.*, 1975: 3; Passi, 1986: 25; Done, 1987: viii, 19; Johannes & MacFarlane, 1991: 179; Langevad, 1991; Mullins, 1992, 1994: 172, 234; Horton, 1994: 1291.

□ ENDNOTES

1. For a discussion of traditional and early post-contact authority on Mabuyag see particularly Haddon (1904); for the changing nature of post-contact administration in Torres Strait see Beckett (1987) and Sheehan (1987). The most extensive accounts of missionary and government education in the strait are those of Langbridge (1977) and Williamson (1994). For some difficulties in assessing estimates of Torres Strait Islander populations see Mullins (1992) and Shnukal (2002). Readers interested in other publications dealing with the topics of this paper are invited to search under 'Politics & Government', 'Education' and 'Population & Health' in Shnukal (2003).

Reports of the Government Resident, Thursday Island, and the Northern Protector of Aboriginals are cited under their names; annual reports of the Queensland Chief Protector of Aboriginals and his successors are cited as 'Annual Report' for the year in question.
2. According to Lawrie (1973) these two clans were 'one people', who perpetuated their connection through adoption: 'One child of a Dangal [Dugong] family had to go to Kaigas [Shovel-nosed shark]. This child (probably the first child) might be male or female.'
3. In 1898 Wilkin was told: 'Suppose I die my child all same me, he take my place' (Haddon, 1904: 286). While the comment was made in connection with land inheritance on Mabuyag, it expresses a general principle of Torres Strait kinship.
4. This man may also have been called Gizu and Kebesu.
5. The Torres Strait model of administration and policing was deemed so successful that it was adopted in New Guinea. As early as 1888 the Hon. John Douglas, then special commissioner for British New Guinea, advocating adopting in New Guinea '[t]he system of appointing a few policemen at each place, one which I have found work well in the islands of Torres Straits' (Douglas, 1889: 17). Two generations later, at Koriomoro, Frank Clune and his party were greeted by 'four grave-looking gentlemen of weight, clad in blue lap-laps and jerseys' with the word 'Councillor' embroidered in red letters two inches high across the chest. They were elected by the villagers and supplied with government uniforms. The administrator, Sir Hubert Murray, 'was very proud of his Village Councils; he claimed it was a method of "indirect rule". His main desire was to avoid "undue interference by the Government with the social side of Papuan life", and he declared that "the guiding principle of indirect rule is the preservation of native customs"' (Clune, 1942: 143).
6. 'The inhabitants of these Torres Straits islands ... have been taught by the pearl-shelliers, who have been politic in respecting their rights during the eight or nine years of the existence of the fishery, to know the value of friendly intercourse' (Moresby, 1876: 25).
7. McFarlane and the Rev. Archibald Wright Murray gave 'some tomahawks and trade to the chiefs to propitiate them, and purchase the ground on which the teachers were to build their huts' (Moresby, 1876: 35).
8. Ganaia of the Dugong clan of Mabuyag, son of Newa and Kasangai, was the senior clan leader and adopted father of Ned Waria, who later became Mamoose of Mabuyag and was one of the chief informants of the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to Torres Strait in 1898 (Eseli, 1998: 94-95).
9. Pennefather (1879b) reported that in 1879 the chief was Bageri; Ephraim Bani told Ambrose Bin Juda (pers. comm., 2006) that Bageri was leader of Mabuyag at the same time as Sagigi was leader of Badu.
10. In 1888 'the chief of Mabuia, a man well advanced in years, exchanged names with the young Badu man who was married to a Mabuia widow with one child, during my visit; thus the chief of Mabuia is no long "Nomor" [Nomoa] by name, but "Mauga" ...' (Haddon, 1890: 405).
11. Nomoa (c.1860-1933) is attested as Mamoose on several occasions during the 1880s and 1890s. He made complaints about the pearler and trader James Doyle of Mabuyag in early 1903 and soon afterwards moved to Badu (Douglas, 1903a). Many years later, when an elderly man, destitute and almost blind, Nomoa was awarded a pension from the island fund of £1 per month (Davidson, 1921).
12. The date is recorded by Waria's clansman, Gaulai (n.d.), who was appointed as head feast organizer.
13. The spellings are Gaulai's own and follow the conventions of the LMS missionaries, who taught him to read and write. Margaret Lawrie, who deposited the manuscript of Gaulai's notebook in the Fryer library, provided an interlinear gloss in her notes, although the final translation is the author's.
14. Beckett (1987: 45) states that Douglas instituted elected councils in 1899.
15. Ada may be the daughter of a Loyalty Island seaman, Albert Kathei, and thus related to the Ware family from

- Mabuyag/St Paul's (Ada Ware Tillett, pers. comm., 2005). If so, she was born c.1887 at Erub, the daughter of Rosie from Mua, daughter of Muyam and Kodau, and married Tommy Ah Fat from Normanton in 1913.
16. Chester sentenced Scanlan to two months and Tanna to three months with hard labour in the Thursday Island gaol. Details can be found in the deposition and minute book of the Thursday Island court of petty sessions entry for 26 January 1881. Scanlan married Tina Taum from Mabuyag, eldest daughter of Wame (Captain Joe) and Imu, in 1907 at Erub. Her daughter, Annie Alice Toto Wigness told Teske. (1991: 16) that Tina was adopted by the Samoan, James Mills, of Nagi.
 17. O'Brien's account continues: 'The system is briefly referred to in (1) [Douglas's] Annual Report dated 4.5.92, page 5 "The Islands of the Straits" 1st paragraph, also in (2) his Annual Report dated 6.3.94 page 7 "The Islands of the Straits" 4th paragraph, also on page 8 latter part of second paragraph and third paragraph, and in (3) Report on the North Queensland Aborigines and Native Police 1897 by Mr. W.E. Parry-Okeden dated 19.2.97, page 12 paragraphs 1, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8, also page 16 last two lines of 3rd paragraph. Some of the minor details there described have been since modified or altered, but the system remains practically the same' (O'Brien, 1906c).
 18. An exception was made in the late 1890s for the police at Saibai, who were given Snider carbines and ammunition to defend themselves against Tugeri raids (Parry-Okeden, 1897: 12).
 19. John Moody Costin was appointed as a clerk in the office of the chief protector of Aborigines in November 1905 and in October 1907 to the positions of shipping master, inspector of pearl-shell fisheries and protector of Aborigines at Thursday Island.
 20. After Butcher's complaint to the Home Secretary about Costin's disdain for and interference in the work of the LMS, in which he pointed out the educational and moral improvements the society had provided for the government since 1871 and deplored the antagonism that now existed, an internal enquiry was held. Costin was relieved of his position on 27 August 1908 and on the same day Hugh Miles Milman was appointed acting protector of Aborigines in his place (*Queensland Government Gazette*, 25 November 1905, 29 August 1908; Annual Report, 1907; Butcher, 1908).
 21. An obituary for Milman, the nephew of a prominent Anglican clergyman and himself a strong churchman, characterises him as 'a man of strong individuality of character and keen intellectual interests. A somewhat brusque manner covered a kind heart and a remarkable thoughtfulness for the weak and unprotected... Straight and honourable in public life and generous in his private hospitality, he will be much missed in Thursday Island both civilly and ecclesiastically' (*The Carpenterian*, 1 January 1912: 361).
 22. These are among the names of the councillors recorded on an official plaque at Masig unveiled on 26 January 1955, which continues: 'These men were greatly respected for their firm stand against the Queensland Department of Native Affairs and for achieving many of the benefits demanded by the Islanders during the 1936 maritime strike.' The plaque gives the conference dates as 23-25 August 1937, as does Bleakley (1937), but O'Leary (1937), who delivered the opening address and explained various procedures, gives 24-26 August.
 23. This may be Arona but I cannot identify him uniquely. He is probably Arona from the Shovel-nosed shark clan, listed by Gaulai (n.d.) on 31 March 1900, for whom Arona Kris, born c.1898, may have been named.
 24. Dick Tanna was a ni-Vanuatu ex-pearl diver; Frank is probably Maikari, also known as Apelu Frank, Frank Kanai and Pilloon Frank, the son of Gizu and Panau. He was a former pearl diver, married first to Mesepa and then to Nagi.
 25. In 1921 the local protector objected to the long-standing practice of recording fines but not dog and gun licences in the court book and the potential for loss of revenue. He therefore 'drafted forms of returns to be submitted quarterly to this office, copies of which are enclosed for your information and have sent supplies to each teacher'. He also required the teachers to 'issue official receipts for all monies received and should keep a small Cash Book. These could be audited by the Protector when visiting and could be sent in here in April of each year for audit by the Government Auditor' (Holmes, 1921b).
 26. The first school in Torres Strait was opened on Erub on 24 August 1873 (Murray, 1876: 486).
 27. Unless otherwise stated, data on the Mabuyag school and its inspections come from departmental reports and the following Queensland State Archives files: Reports of Inspection 1927-1935, 1932-1934 (A/15994); Reports of inspection 1936-1938 (A/15999); Furniture inventory – teachers quarters – Mabuag Island 1936-1967 (SRS 505 Box 781 9B/7); School returns – Mabuag Island – 1932-1980 (SRS 505 Box 1010 13A/28). For correspondence regarding William Caid Minniss see HOM/J546/1925/1779.
 28. The others were Saibai, Yam, Erub and Badu.

29. The wife of the Thursday Island vicar, Mrs Edith Emily Jones was a former member of the Council Education Committee for Stoke-on-Trent, England, principal of the Pupil Teachers School, Stoke-on-Trent, England, and a member of the Board of Education in England (Milman, 1905b). For her biography see Paisley (2005).
30. This is probably Athalia Frank (1905-1979), daughter of Maikari and Mesepa, who later married Jimmy Luffman.
31. I cannot identify Cauni but the most likely candidate seems to be Jimmy Kanai Baira (1904-1982), the son of Baira and Nobi. Bisikup is Bisikup Bani (1911-1959), the daughter of Bani Mabua and his second wife, Raba.
32. While in Torres Strait, McKenna held discussions with the Rev. William Harold MacFarlane and the bishop about the education of the Islanders and necessary reforms, including the preparation of more suitable readers (Annual Report, 1927: 4-5). They would be illustrated 'and should be of ethnological as well as educational value'; the costs of preparation (£100) and illustration (£50) were paid on 19 and 24 April 1928 respectively (QSA HOM/J697/1929/215). McKenna (1927) suggested that the new readers should be based on the first two of 'the Phillippino Readers compiled by the American Education Authorities for use among the native Phillippinos'. Karl Neuenfeldt (pers. comm., 2011) informs me that they are the source of the iconic Torres Strait Creole song, *Mangki ene total (Monkey and turtle)*. Its origin was an 'imagination' story, 'The turtle and the monkey', which, along with 'Dawai the dirty boy', found their way into Islander folklore (Williamson, 1994: 108).
33. The others were Joseph Lui from Erub, Poey Passi from Mer and Atuelu Bawia from Badu. Lui and Passi were ordained as the first Torres Strait Islander priests in 1925.
34. Mauare Eseli (pers. comm., 1995) did so well in all her exams that Frith said he could not teach her any more and she should become a teacher. Despite her father's initial reluctance, Frith persuaded him to agree. That year (1936) teachers came from all the islands for a refresher course under Frith and took an exam. Although she had cut her finger that morning and there was a lot of blood and she had to hold the pencil with three other fingers, Mauare's dictation test result was 100%. At the end of her training she was assigned to Erub, where she taught from 1937 to 1939. After the war she and other teachers were sent to Brisbane for further training and she went on to teach for 49 years in Torres Strait schools until her retirement. There is a photograph of Mauare Eseli, taken on Mabuyag in October 1967 in Lawrie (1970) 'indicating Kuiam's footprint at Panai after his return from New Guinea'.
35. Getano Belford Lui (1913-1998) was the son of the Rev. Joseph Lui and grandson of Lui Getano Lui from Lifu, the first LMS missionary at Yam. Born on Mabuyag, while his father was studying with the Rev. Thomas Oliver Harries in 1913, he became a longtime teacher and chairman of Yam Island (Getano Belford Lui Snr pers. comm., 1982).
36. Turner was awarded an O.A.M. for service in the field of Aboriginal welfare in 1978 and died in 1982 at Thursday Island.
37. Few wartime records of the Mabuyag school exist and this brief section is based on the following files held in the Queensland State Archives: School returns – Mabuag Island – 30/9/1932 to 25/8/1980 (SRS 505 Box 1010 13A/28); and Furniture inventory – teachers quarters – Mabuag Island 3/6/1936-16/8/1967 (QS 505 Box 781 9B/7).
38. The others were Etikai Pau from Erub, Namai Pabai from Boigu and Francis Abai from Saibai.
39. 'The population [of Mabuyag] is 202, there are 68 Church members and the ordinance is administered every month' (Chalmers, 1891).
40. This would equate to over two million deaths in Australia in 2011.
41. Mrs Frith became matron of the Badu cottage hospital when her husband was transferred there in 1946. 'Mrs Frith has never taken a nursing examination and yet she enjoys a reputation for skill and ingenuity in taking care of sick people' (Anon., 1953: 36).
42. Of these only about 100 were Mabuyag Islanders, the rest being from other Torres Strait or Pacific islands and a small number of Europeans.
43. These figures come from the official 1891 census (Chalmers, 1891).
44. 'The population is over 300, and not decreasing' (White, 1903).
45. This figure, counted just before the pearling crash of 1905, includes 23 Europeans and 29 Pacific Islanders as well as 290 Torres Strait Islanders (Milman, 1905a: 12). The drop in 1905 is explained by the departure of the European shellers, their families and foreign workers during the pearling industry depression and the

exodus of most Pacific Islander-headed families to Mua.

46. This was after another exodus of population to St Paul's, Mua.
47. Figure from the first commonwealth census, which enumerated only 'half-castes'.
48. A separate census for Islanders was conducted under the *Torres Strait Islanders Act* 1939.
49. Figures from Director of Aboriginal and Island Affairs, June 1969 (Lawrie, 1970: xix).
50. This included ten non-Islander residents.