

G.M. Chantier (Chagos)

COPY

THE 'ILOIS' COMMUNITY

AND

THE 'ILOIS' WOMEN

1980



BY

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CONTENTS

	Pagos
Acknowledgements	1
Introduction	2-3
Some Geography	4
Chapter I History of Chagos	5-7
Chapter II Life in the Chagos Archipelagos	8-11
Chapter III Beliefs and Culture of the Ilois Community	12-17
Chapter IV When small nations paid the cost for game of great powers	18-21
Chapter V Women in Chagos Archipelagos	22-23
Chapter VI Ilois Community in Mauritius	24-37
Chapter VII Ilois women when they reached Mauritius in 1965	38-39
Chapter VIII Problems facing Ilois women in a Mauritian society	40-42
Chapter IX Recommendations and Conclusions about the present study	43-51
Bibliography	52

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+ Soc. worker
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I am fully conscious that there are limitations in a study undertaken during a few months. Though I have tried to be sincere in my research, I still crave for the indulgence of the reader because I know that some additional informations are available only in such archives as the Secret Department of Bombay Secretariat, Record Office or the Commonwealth Foreign Office. } ←

INTRODUCTION

In 1975, it was the first time that a friend of mine and I had a conversation about the Uprooted Community of Diego. I was so interested that I spent the whole evening questioning him to know more. One would be tempted to say "women are curious and you are no exception". In fact I don't know if I am but what had stricken me, was that this particular group of human beings were living in a very destituted conditions and most of them are women and they are very often the sole bread-winners of the family.

Later, while I was a teacher of the Diego School, I went to visit these families and had the opportunity of acting as a Social Worker and each time I have found that my help was not enough and I must try and do more for them, this is why even if to-day officially I am not supposed to care about them, I still do.

That community has a majority of female and my attention had been drawn to the fact that these women used to decide about family life and affairs alone and it is so, for many reasons, the first one is that very often there is no legal marriage in that community both the man and the woman when you asked for a reason will say (no bizin saye so caractère) "I must try to know his or her behaviour". (It is funny to note that in fact "Mariage à l'essai" is not so a new fashion). That situation give rise to the fragmented family where the mother had a predominant role because it happened that the mother's partner vanished or that she decided to have another one. Another reason was that in the old days the Chagos used to be a place where all the lepers of Mauritius were sent and it has seemed that males were more vulnerable than females, it resulted in a larger female population, the outcome was that their sex lives has a very particular style. There was a social convention that when a husband went fishing at night there was someone else who came for sex affairs with his wife, in the community, they will say that the husband went "beau soir" while in fact it was the lover who had a "nice night". This situation was at times a source of quarrel. Men in that community are often hard wine-drinkers or "bacca" drinkers and they cannot take charge of the family. Another factor is that often the mother of the wife live with the family and she helps a lot to bring up the children.

With all these factors one can see that the life of the community was in fact centred around the women and to-day even here it has kept many of its characteristics.

In Mauritius, never had our women undertaken a "starving strike" but these Ilois women with the help of some Mauritian decided to go on strike in September 1978 when they found themselves pulled out of the "ghettos" where they were living because the owners of these slums found in the compensation of the Ilois as the "Peron" and they tried to have most of the money. One of these women was so weak that she was taken to the hospital even if their action did not lead to anything, it has been a fact that these women are more daring than Mauritian women.

(2)

SOME GEOGRAPHY

Let us go on our discovery of Chagos Archipelagos bank, situated some 1,200 miles north-north-east of Mauritius. These islets of the Chagos cover a surface of 95 miles length and some 65 miles width, it is of an irregular oval form. It lies between $4^{\circ}44$ and $7^{\circ}39$ South of the Equator and between meridian lines $70^{\circ}50$ and $72^{\circ}44$ East. In the West are situated the "Three Brothers", Eagle Island, Six Islands and also Isle of Danger, in the North there are Peros Banhos and the Salomon Group and in the East is Diego Garcia. The ship travelling from Mauritius to Chagos took 15 days.

Diego Garcia's position on world map latitude $7^{\circ}20$ South and $72^{\circ}25$ East, a big atoll which length is 13 miles and the largest part in the North is 6 miles. A belt of coral on the internal as well as the external part which break only by 1 main pass between Majaz Island and Middle Island. The main residential area was East Point but in the good old days there was another residential area at Marianne Point where only some 5 or 6 labourer's houses were left. Diego Garcia, the most important island of Chagos used to have a population of 500 souls Diego's coolest temperature is 76° F and its hottest is 82° F. It has an annual rainfall of 80" yearly.

Peros Banhos: The second in importance after Diego Garcia, it is situated some 120 miles in the North North-West of the big bank, it lies between latitudes $5^{\circ}21$ South and longitude $71^{\circ}58$ East.

Peros Banhos has some 30 to 31 islets surrounded by corals, there are some passes in the North between Mousby isles and Diamant Island, in the West between "Two Sisters Islands" and "Hen Island", in the South by "Cow Island" and "Fouquet Island". The main occupation was at "Coin Island" situated in the South-West of the group of islets.

Salomon Groups: The third important residential group was Salomon. Salomon Group lies between $5^{\circ}20$ South and $72^{\circ}19$ longitude East. It comprised of 5 or 6 islets and only Boddam was inhabited. Boddam is situated some 26 miles East of Peros Banhos.

One of the name given to the Chagos was "Ziles là-haut" which means "Islands above", this name was given by the people of Agalega not because they were able to read a map (they were all illiterate) and they had discovered that it was in fact above their islands. Only because they know that from Agalega to the Chagos it took some more days to go further upward to these islands.

CHAPTER I

HISTORY OF CHAGOS

The first visitors of the Chagos, were Malaysians, Arabs, and Portuguese in 1743. Later in January 1745, Diego Garcia was visited by the English ship "Pelham", in June 1755 by another English ship "Mary". The first merchants visitors were M. Fontaine and Grenier in 1770. At that time they found on the islands Coconuts, woods, bois blanc and also tortoises, birds of the sea, wild hens and water was obtained only from a big hole dug in the sand.

In 1784, the Englishmen tried to settle down, they brought with them seeds and soil from Bombay to cultivate but all the seeds and soil were washed out by rain water, the Englishmen were so discouraged that they went away. A Frenchman, living in Mauritius, Vicomte de Souillac was informed about the English attempt to settle in the Chagos, he sent a ship "Le Minerve" there, but the seamen did not meet any Englishmen and they put a stone showing that the islands had been captured by the French people.

In 1773, the Chagos through the "Concessionnaires" Act was given to some colonisers of "Isle de France" who settled there in 1776. The first "Concessionnaires" man to settle at Diego Garcia was Mr. M. Lenormand and together with Mr. Dauguet they established a fishing company. In that "Concessionnaire Act" it was stipulated that Mr. M. Lenormand can enjoy the facilities of the islands but he had in return to accept all the lepers from "Isle de France". It became a Lepers Colony because of the suitable climate.

Diego Garcia owned its name from the sailors who used to travel round the Cape of Good Hope, through "Isle de France" to India and it happened that during cyclonic seasons, they had a hard time at sea and Diego Garcia was a protected port from storms and they used to say "Gratia" or "Graciosa" meaning providence when they reached there. In 1776 onwards, the Copra products of Diego were carried to "Isle de France" for the production of oil, using the Indian method. There was also the export of tortoise, wood, sea birds and salted fish. Around 1785, the establishment of the "Traité de Madagascar" gave rise to the transport of slaves to the Chagos from Madagascar and Africa through "Isle de France".

Peros Banhos was discovered on the 16th June 1744 by Captain Picault on board of a ship called "Elizabeth". On the 13th July 1813, the 22 islets of Peros were given to M. Majaster through a "Concessionnaire" Act, he brought with him one hundred of black slaves.

Salomon Islands: In 1823, the eleven islets of Salomon were given to Mr. Stone through a "Concessionnaire" Act.

In 1791, Mr. M. Lenormand went mad and put fire to the whole estate, burning nearly everything. In 1799, a new administrator Mr. Ducléon decided to begin the Copra oil industry in "Six Islands" and from that period onwards the Chagos became the main supplier of oil from the other islands of the Indian Ocean, even Madagascar. (?)

One can realise the importance of Chagos in these days only from 1773 to 1810 there were some 81 journeys from Mauritius to Chagos and back. The ships from Mauritius were bringing slaves, rice and beefs and on its journey back, it was carrying Copra oil. Rodrigues during that same period had only 30 visits from Mauritius. ← (?)

Some more interesting historical facts were that in the 1830's Commander Moresby introduced in Diego Garcia the cultivation of breadfruit which will later be much appreciated by the Ilois. From 1792, there was a superstition attached to Chagos as a "Colony of Lepers" and in 1838 Judge Anderson saw that sending lepers and punished labourers to the Chagos had created an indolent and idle community and also some kind of diseases were common among the community. Judge Anderson decided about the abolition of sending off lepers from Mauritius to Chagos.

From History, one learns that it is not only to-day that Chagos, particularly Diego Garcia is of strategically great importance. In August 1914, Diego Garcia was visited by the famous German Cruiser "Eunden" and the Captain showed much kindness to the Ilois and administrative population. He asked the administrators if they were aware about the death of Pope Pie X as the answer was negative, he concluded, were not aware of the beginning of World War I hostility. He repaired their (Ilois) boats and left Diego Garcia without mentioning any news about the war. But only 2 days later Diego Garcia received the visit of an English Cruiser which did mentionned to them the declaration of hostility between these two forces. In 1945, during the Second World War, the British troops in the Indian Ocean together with the Americans had a workshop to repair the damaged ships from the Suez Canal and around. During these years of World War II, Diego Garcia

was nearly occupied and it happened during that time that a provisioned ship called "Zambesia" was prevented on its way to Diego Garcia to reach there. As ships were visiting these islands only 3 times yearly, the whole population of Chagos went without food for nearly six months. The administrators of that time ordered that the young coconuts be eaten as foodstuff together with sea-tortoises for the adult population. The babies and young children were fed on pork soup and the fruits of palm-tree also were used as soup. After that another Rogers ship was sent and the Ilois were much deceived when Captain D'Hotman explained to them that Mauritians were eating maize and they also would have to do the same. He even taught them how to ground the maize in small maize mills which he did bring along with him.

Some important events in the life of Chagos before World War II; on the 20th June 1935, a ship called "Diego", which used to travel from Mauritius to Chagos was destroyed by bad weather between the Isle of Danger and the Isle of Eagle, some 30 persons were on board and a man from Isle of Eagle, Arthur Tallat dared risk his life at night on board of a boat and more than once after much struggle he succeeded in bringing the passengers to the Isle of Eagle. There was a serious threat of starvation due to lack of food stuff. The ship completely wrecked and the news were sent to Mauritius by a T.S.F. (Telephone Sans Fil) which had been fixed in Boddam in the year 1934 at that same period a small sawmill which was operating by the help of a dynamo, this dynamo had also given electricity to the administrative staff of Boddam. Later the electrical facilities were built up in the other islands, only for the administrative staff.

In October 1936, the Chagos received the first Bishop's visit, it was Mgr. Leen at that time Bishop of Mauritius who went to Chagos accompanied by another priest R. Dussercle. When in 1935 the rescues of the "Diego" ship had reached Mauritius on board of another ship the Hatiapana and the Colonial Council was informed about A. Tallat braveners and they informed England about it. In 1935, A. Tallat was called at Port-Louis in the room of the throne at Government House, he did receive a medal from the hands of the acting governor. But some months later, A. Tallat was back in his country when another medal from London reached Mauritius for him. It was at Peros Banhos islands on 1st November 1936 in presence of all the other Ilois who had witnessed the rescue operation that Tallat received the other silver medal from the hands of Bishop Leen. On that medal was written on the first side "ship wrecked fishermen and Mariners - Royal Benevolent Society" on the second face it was written "Provided for Heroic Exertions in Saving Life from drowning - England expects every man will do his duty".

LIFE IN THE CHAGOS ARCHIPELAGOS

In the beginning of the 20th century, there were in the Chagos a floating population of about 426 families of which 60% were of African and Malagasy origin and 40% were of Indian origin especially "Tamoulo". At that time, the Chagos was under the management of the "Diego Company Limited" were the owner but very often they had chosen Seychellois Managers to be on the islands. There were some 60 children for every 100 adults.

The majority of that population was native of the place but they kept moving because there was a dog's life condition in these islands. The main reason was that they were away from all social and technological facilities. These populations were living in a barter system society and a small amount of money was allocated to them every week but this money was kept in a bank account and when the wealth was big enough they made some tourism from 3 months to 1 year and during these visits they bought many things such as beds, new kitchen utensils, the newly fashioned sewing materials, etc... In the barter system, Ilois men were receiving $10\frac{1}{2}$ lbs of rice, a bottle of oil and some milk each, the women were receiving the same things only for the rice which were 8 lbs each. In the Chagos islands whenever the visit of the ships were delayed they had a scarcity of spices, milk, rice and grains.

In the "Oil Islands" of Chagos, men were working as labourers in the Copra fields, they were cultivating and plucking the coconuts from trees but the women were peeling the coconuts which were then exposed on grills of a hot-air stove known there as "Calorifère" so that the rest of the peeling is done through heat, it also preserved it for exportation. Both men and women woke up at 5.30 a.m. by the sound of a bell, they did their home occupations and they had to call for attendance in front of their respective supervisors at 6.00 a.m. and they all started work by 7.00 a.m., but men worked till 6.00 p.m. while the women's work at 10.00 or 11.00 a.m. At the beginning of the century, there were some very shrewd administrators and they imposed on all Ilois, the "corvée", the duty of working every sunday mornings till noon, cleaning the various places. In 1936, on the visit of Bishop Leen, he asked for the cancellation of such practice and it was done.

About the copra, it is worthwhile mentioning that in the early 20th century, the copras were sent to Europe where they made soaps or "glycerinos". Around 1930's, there was a small oil mill which was operating by the help of 4 to 5 donkeys. The rest of the copra after extraction of oil is called "Epoonak" and it was used as food for the livestock.

The livestock composed of pigs and horses which belonged to the administrators and supervisors (états majors). The Ilois were breeding, for their own consumption chickens and ducks. Very often, the Ilois had small kitchen gardens which were fenced with coco leaves for protection against thieves or "la main longue" in the local dialect. In their gardens, they used to cultivate pumpkin, "brède malabar", tomatoes, chillies and aubergines. These gardens were at the back of the Ilois cottages. The small cottage occupied by the Ilois was of a three-rooms thatched roof with an opened verandah. All the cottages were standing in a symetric line on the inner side of the island which Ilois called "bord endans" and the kitchens, water closets and bathrooms were by the sea-side which they called "bords dehors". The water closets were utensils put in a closed space which were collected when full as the custom used to be in Mauritius, this work was done by Mauritian prisoners and disobedient Ilois. After the closure of the islands in 1965, there were pits dug to replace these utensils. These cottages were called "camp" and the administrative staff which comprised of the Manager, Assistant Manager, an accountant, supervisors and also teachers and meteorological officers were occupying another area (not to mix with the Ilois) because most of them were Seychellois and Mauritians.

On small islands next to the residing island, were kept all the men and women who did not have a husband or wife and who were making open troubles within the community, if even one of them had a love affair with someone on the main residing island and he or she was secret about it, no problem. The other buildings on the islands were mechanical workshops, joinery workshops, the bakery, the sheds for the boats, piggeries, the chapels, hospitals, small prisons and provisions shop. In East island, there was the most modern workshop of all the islands, it was equipped with excellent modern plant, fully capable of maintaining generators, motor launches, lorries, jeeps and the light tractors which were used for the transport of materials. There were some artisan workshops in each island

and the mechanics, about 6 per island, were mostly Mauritians, but the 7 or 8 joiners per island were all Ilois. There was also a baker in each main island. Whenever an Ilois wanted a furniture he just had to have his name put on a waiting list and there were enough timber on the islands for making furniture. The furniture was provided by the administrator and payment was effected by instalment. All the artisans were directly employed by the company. As I have mentioned that there were teachers in these islands, it is astonishing to see that the whole Ilois population is illiterate. I believed that it is due to the fact that the only school in the Chagos was opened by the Roman Catholic Authority in September 1951 at Coin Island, it was directed by Miss E. Moranjee who was assisted in her task by Miss M.T. Falck in May 1952. The classes were run in the chapel first and only at the end of 1952 was a school building ready in Diego Garcia.

On the arrival of any ship visiting the Island, the first man who saw it, was rewarded with some bottles of wine by the Administrator. Very often another man seeing the one who had seen the ship running, he knew it was about the arrival of the ship and that there was a reward for it, he tried to get at the "Grande Case", the Administrator's house and snatched the reward under the nose of his friend, it resulted in a quarrel between these two men.

Whenever the ship arrived in the islands, it was a particular period of the life of the people, men worked till very late at night to disembark all the materials and to put copras and copra oil on board. By the ship visit the islands were rich of wine and the last night of these hard days work was spent into a big sega night where both men and women in their respective teams had their fulfill of wine. Some facts about the ship travel, Ilois were travelling on the gangway and as in the islands there were the boatmen called "canotiers" who used to sing the rowing songs "santé z'avirons" (which will be explained later in chapter about culture) but whenever there was the news of a near relative of an Ilois of that particular island who was dead in Mauritius or Seychelles, the rowing men came back silently and that silence made the whole community anxious because they all knew the significance of that silence and everyone was afraid that the news was for him or her.

Very often, at the visits of ship it brought then epidemic influenza which at times spread among the population and lasted for some weeks. But even to-day if the Chagos are shut, some Ilois had relatives, others only had acquaintances at Agaña. Whenever there is a ship from there, nearly the whole Ilois population will be absent from work. I mean from children to adult and they will go at quay to watch the arrival of their friends, for no it is a clear sign of nostalgia of their islands.

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CHAPTER III

BELIEFS AND CULTURE OF THE ILOIS COMMUNITY

Belief is more or less a clear concept when anyone talk about it, because it is the belief in something or person. But culture is somewhat a difficult concept to deal with.

What is culture ?

In mid 19th century, an English anthropologist Sir Edward B. Tylor defined it as being "the complex whole of ideas and things produced by men in their historical experience". In 1910, American anthropologists were using the term "culture" to refer to distinctive groups of traits characterizing particular tribal societies. For Ruth Benedict "culture" is a pattern of thinking and doing that runs through the activities of a people and distinguishes them from all other people. Technically, it describes an organised group of people interacting in a structural system and carrying out the activities necessary to produce and sustain life. It also refers to ideas, sentiments, values, objects, action and tendencies.

Culture in the islands were a mixture of some habits of "Grande Terre" as they say, African and also some modes of life as there are in Mauritius. We cannot talk about culture without talking about religion. The official religion of the islands was Roman Catholic but there are two other cults, one was the "Tamoule" rituals and the other is the ritual from Africa and Madagascar. From the birth of a new child, he was undulated by the administrator. Later on, the visit of a priest, some 40 children were baptized together. The community refused to have something simple, they wanted to have sugar almonds. If it happened otherwise, they would call it "Baptême lérat" rats baptism. But in the "Tamoule" community, the mother of a new born observed a lent of 40 days followed by some rituals. Sometimes when the children were nearly young adults, they had their first holy communion. They would have been prepared by the administrators wives for many years and on the yearly visit of the priest, the ceremony is carried out.

There was no mass on Sundays in the Chapels, only some prayers done by the administrators, the teachers or one of the managing staff. Marriage was not a common thing in the islands. There were many "raccommodage" (patched marriages) on the visits of the priest. More often the brides and the grooms were dressed in any colourful dress because it was a "raccommodage". For the rare case of marriage, the future bride made a command at the shop of the island and the white

material for her dress was ordered from Mauritius. For a "bon mariage" true wedding, the party began on the eve with the civil marriage ceremony. On the very day of the wedding there is a big "salle verte" (a big hall made of leaves ordinarily built in front of a house). The parents of the bride and bridegroom would on both side kill a pig and many hens for the big banquet. The guests would spend the whole night drinking and dancing but the brides would leave by mid-night. On the next day the mother of the bridegroom came to see, if the girl was still a virgin. If ever that was not the case, the bride should have already explained to the mother-in-law with full details about the past accident. If the bride tried to hide that fact she is repudiated on the discovery of such a fact. It is interesting to note that civil marriages were done by the Administrator acting as a civil status officer. On the yearly visit of the Magistrate, he countersigned on the civil status register, to give the weddings an official acknowledgment.

After the birth, the wedding, the third great event, in a person's own existence, is his death. This great departure is marked in a very special way. When the community knew that someone had died some professionnal mourners known as "commères" would go and weep as to demonstrate how sorry everyone felt about the loss of someone. The men first activity would be to raise money for the funeral. To-day in our Mauritian society it continues to be the same. With the money collected, a small amount will be used to buy tea, sugar and cigarettes but most of the money will be spent to buy wine for the mortuary night attendance. Some women will do prayers by the side of the corpse. When the men had the top of wine, they would begin to "pounce name" (make the soul of the deceased person leave the place). All the men would start singing, as the songs grow louder and louder, the seeker of the "name" spirit would intensify his movements to look for it. The songs were very often incomprehensible. It were said to be songs from the "Grande Terre" Africa or Madagascar. The seeker used leaves of coconut trees as a broom or a rammer to thrust out the spirit. The seeker sometimes seized the corpse and threw it away to make the spirit fly. Among the singers, some will do the music by using sticks and tins and wash-hand basins. In this night attendance, both men and women drank wine "bacca" and "calou" (these two terms will be explained later). The Ilois men also played cards and it often ended in several knife strokes.

In these night attendances, there was the seeker of the spirit and also some story-tellers would pretend to be an insect which pestered the assistance. The assistance would all pursue that

horrible insect. They would play drums and listen to the insect before attacking it. The insect would be thrown outside, when the assistance judge that he has reached the end of his story.

Before the exile of the Ilois Community from Chagos, some administrators had forbidden, the practice of the spirit seeker and the story-tellers on the advice of the priests. On the 8th day of the death of the late person, there used to be a bigger party, operating on the same system. But some practices remain even in Mauritius, the weeping women will be present on the 8th day. There will be a "Chapelle Ardente" (a table where they will put all the pictures of the Christian Saints, with flowers and candles). There will be prayers till mid-night, then they will turn back the sacred pictures and put all the flowers outside. By putting these flowers outside, they will tell you that they are putting the spirit outside.

Another practice is that, on the very day of the person's death, when the house is swept, all the rubbish will be kept in a corner inside. Only on the 9th day after that the wife or any women in that home will collect all the rubbish in a "vanne" (a large rounded tray used to clean the rice) and throw it very far away from the place. It is done to put out the spirit from the place. It appeared to be some kind of an African habit. The woman who has to throw away the rubbish, is usually accompanied by a big group of neighbouring women. On their way back home, no one will look back, for if they look back, the spirit will haunt the one who looks back.

If you talk about the culture, you cannot ignore the way of eating of the people because it is part and parcel of what they are.

Though the "Ilois" eat rice and vegetables as we, Mauritians do, there are special Ilois dishes. The two best known and much appreciated dishes of the Ilois Community is the "Ceraz poisson" and the "Carangaiy tortue". The "Ceraz poisson" is a dish which is prepared with fresh fish, some oil and a bottle of coconut juice for a fish of 1½ lb. It will cook for nearly one hour on a soft fire, some chilly will be added and the "Ceraz poisson" is ready. What seems more delicious to be use is the "Carangaiy tortue", one takes a sea tortoise, clean it for a 3 lbs of tortoise, one will put 1½ hottle of water, some spices like onions and let it boil for 2 hours. When the water will have dried up, the tortoise will be browned in the fat of the tortoise. It should be eaten hot, usually with rice. One can see that the Ilois Community in our Mauritian society cannot afford to buy fresh fish,

sea tortoise and less the many coconuts need to obtain the juice. ^{begin to}
To-day the Ilois culinary specialities are forced to disappear.

When one thinks of eating, one also thinks of drinking.
 The two beverages specialities of the "Ilois" are the "bacca" and the "calou". The "bacca" is prepared with black lentils, rice or rarely with another cereal, water. Sometimes before consumption the "bacca" is put into bottles and kept under ground for some days. It is known to be a strong drink.

The "calou" which is also famous in Seychelles another coconut archipelago, is a stronger drink than the "bacca". For the "calou", the Ilois used a big knife and pricked the main stem of the coconut trees and the liquid which came out of it is the "calou". When we know that talking about "bacca" and "calou", the Ilois will say "zaffaires-là chanzé..." (things are changing...). They mean that it brings in an atmosphere of rejoice.

Let us discover the songs and dances of the "Ilois". There were the "çantés zavirons", "çantés bomb", "séga cordéon", "séga tambour", "séga misik laguèle", "dansés français" and the "ségas enfants".

What is "çanté zavirons" ?

It is the "rowing songs". It is sung by the sea-men when they are rowing from one island to another. Its' musical notes are difficult to read on paper but it can easily be sang when one is using an oar in the sea. It gave strength to the sea-men, usually one man began to sing which they called "causer" and the other will do the chorus which they called "réponne". These songs related the news of the islands.

"Çanté bomb" - this is the name given to a song which used a particular instrument, a lyre with one chord. It is of African origin. The French name was "bobre" which the Ilois had turned into "bomb" it reflects a bit the hot-blood character of that community. The wooden arc of the "bobre" is taken from a young mango tree, it is 2 metres long. It is bended into an arc by a wire-rope. One half of an empty coconut is placed approximately 1/6 length on the arc on which the head of the empty coconut is tied on the convex side with a string, which is also linked with the wire-rope. There is the "zig" which is the central dry fibre of the coconut leaf. It is used on the "bobre" like a violin to produce the sound. To play the "bobre",

the men usually have to lift up his shirt, he will put one foot up. He will then put the half-empty coconut on his navel and begin to play, the sounds will be like complaints and lamentations. Another little instrument called the "carwen", it is a small bag made of a dry coconut leaf which is halfly full of raw rice. It is in a pyramid form of 10 to 15 cms. The "carwen" is kept in the same hand as the "zig". The "bomb" is used to accompany the "çanté foutant", it relates a story in which someone will recognize himself. It also accompanies love songs and other feelings expressed in these complaints. This instrument is not used for the "séga" itself.

"Séga Cordéon" is the "séga" accordion. A "séga" is a song which is supposed to come from the "Tscheiga or Chéga", an African Mozambique dance. In that song a "ravanne" which is a big piece of animal skin put on a circle of wood, is used. There is usually a fire made of the branches of dry coconut leaves, it is used to heat the "ravanne". In one corner will be the musicians, in another a dozen of dancing couple, the rest of the spectators will make a chorus. In the "séga cordéon", the accordion is used as a prominent instrument.

The most popular "séga" is the "séga tambour" in which the "ravanne" and "maravanne" are used. Many "ravannes" are usually accompanying the "séga".

The "séga mizik laguèle" - it is the "séga" where harmonica is used and there are still some specialists to play the "séga misik laguèle".

The "dansés français" were the French songs and music they used to dance the "polka", "mazurka" and other French dances. The last but not least was the "séga zenfants" because children are of great importance in the Ilois Community. The "séga zenfants" is sang to amuse the children. Sometimes it is done to relate a moral or a bad experience where children are victims. It was usually sang by adults. They wingled all types of instrument when they sang it.

We could have talked about nothing concerning culture if we forget to talk about language. The Ilois Community talk a "kreol" which resembles ours, I mean a language which has more or less French words as roots. It differs by the way, it is spoken, the Ilois like the "Seychellois" talk with the first sound coming from the noses and all the "r's" are missing. Apart from that the Ilois had

some expressions or proverbs which are typical of their culture.

Here is one which I have really appreciated "galoupé koïyné, marsé
pas empêche arrivé" (when someone runs, he may tumble down but if he
walks, nothing will prevent him to reach destination).

CHAPTER IV

WHEN SMALL NATIONS PAID THE COST FOR GAME OF GREAT POWERS

By mid 1960's, Mauritius was in negotiation to have its independence and Mauritius through the times had been a strategic point in the Indian Ocean. It is a secret to no one that before the move for independence there was in Mauritius an English Navy Base and if one did take the pain to back through our history, it will be seen that sugar cane plantation developed as a mean to support the military garrison of the British Empire in the island. If the English force is to leave Mauritius and the Soviet Union was around, it had seemed that the United States and Britain decided to maintain their presence in the Indian Ocean. It has been said that the only condition for Mauritius to have its independence had been to give Diego Garcia to the British.

As mentioned in previous chapters since World War I Diego Garcia had been seen as a strategic point. In 1965, some 1 year before Mauritius acceding to Independence, the British Government concluded a treaty "From master to servant" on the 7th November 1965 in London, with Mauritius. It was considered as a transfer from Mauritius to Britain. A sum of £3 millions was offered as compensation to Mauritius to entice her into giving up sovereignty over the islands.

From August 1965, the 332 families were being removed from Diego Garcia, the owners of Copra plantation. "The Diego Garcia Company Limited" was paid £1 million to close the plantation and the Ilois faced with unemployment and they did not have any boat to go fishing, the Ilois were forced to go to the neighbouring island of Salomon in 1971 and the last Ilo was deported in 1973 nearly by force and with the result that they refused to disembark when they reached Mauritius, they were already aware of the destituted conditions in which their compatriots were living.]]

In 1966, the British Government leased Diego Garcia to the United States of America who waved a debt of £4 million for a Polaris missile deal. America asked the lease of Diego Garcia officially for "an austere communication facility and not a base" but there was already the project of having 352 bombers on the enlarged runway base way of Diego Garcia. At that same period Diego Garcia which is situated some 1,000 miles from Iran and Saudi Arabia, the Americans at that time

had an air-navy base Chah Bahai, in Iran where the U.S. knew that they could not stay for very long, so Diego Garcia was the ideal place for Uncle Sam to maintain his presence in that part of the Globe.

As from November 1965, the Chagos Archipelagos was known as the British Indian Ocean territory; in 1967 the British Government completed the purchase of the lease of Copra from the "Chagos and Agaloga Company" and Mr. Paul Houlinier of Seychelles was the last Manager who left Diego Garcia some years later.

In the early 1970's in Mauritius as in Western Europe, some people expressed concern about the Exiles of Diego Garcia. From London in November 1970, John Herrall wrote "The defence experts had always had their eyes on Diego Garcia... already the Mauritians say that some of the islanders are being moved". Contrary to what I have seen in the history of Chagos where the first black slaves reached there in 1735 and even if they did come back to Mauritius or Seychelles they had always felt that their homeland to be the Chagos. In 1970's a document of the congress of America wrote "there are residents on rotating contract personnel" implying they were living on a temporary basis. In 1969, answering the questions set by journalists in Western Europe, the Pentagon statement said "when the United Kingdom and the United States were considering the possibility of a communications facility the population of Diego Garcia, 360 men, women and children mostly of Mauritian and Seychelles descent. Those born on Diego Garcia were children of contract labourers who had brought in their wives."

Questions were set on the problems of Diego Garcia, in the congress and on the 6th March 1974, the Congressman Hamilton's sub-committee was told that... "the nature of the island itself, which is a rather small piece of land, is also fortuitous that it has no local population whatsoever, so we have a minimal degree of the sort of political problem.. Diego Garcia has a number of uniquely attractive features... no significant local population and no prying newsmen."

To-day in the early 1980's the Iran "regime" of the Shah had collapsed, with an islamic government. There is no place for a U.S. military base there and recently the Soviet Union invasion of Afghanistan had made Diego Garcia the most cherished military base of the United States and some more

billions of dollars will be invested to guarantee the U.S. power in that part of the Globe. Robert Marwning was right when he reported from Washington in October 1974 "if congress gives the Pentagon the green light for Diego Garcia... it may become the touchstone of Great Power rivalry in the area..."

What about the dwarfs in a giant's game ?

All the countries bordering the Indian Ocean such as Seychelles, Madagascar, India, the East African countries, even some Arab States were shouting against that military base of Diego Garcia but can the dwarfs be heard in a giant's game. In the name of the non-aligned countries in November 1977, Mr. Moruji Dasai, Prime Minister of India at that time declared in New Delhi "There should be a time-bound plan to reduce big power rivalry in the Indian Ocean."

In "The Guardian" of 13th September 1975 reported that the Prime Minister of Mauritius, Sir S. Ramgoolam is to visit London in later September to talk with the British Government. Sir V. Ringadoo declared in that same paper "I attended the original talks with Britain on Diego Garcia and we were all given the impression that there would be only a simple communication facility". If it was so one can conclude that Britain as well as the United States did not show all their cards in the game of having Diego Garcia, who should care, if tomorrow, there was hostility between the Soviet Union and the United States, in the Indian Ocean ? Are their populations not living miles and miles away from the B52 bombers and nuclear things ?

On the National level the "Organisation Fraternelle" a group who sympathized with the opposition party the "Mouvement Militant Mauricien" had tried many times to organise manifestations and the "M.M." had openly declared in the Legislative Assembly that Diego Garcia can be reconstituted to Mauritius. In the "Mauricien" of the Friday 8th February the Chairman of the Actual Political party in power, the Labour Party had said that Mauritius should go in international court to claim back Diego Garcia to Mauritius. In England, Mr. C. Champion, together with some compatriots had created the "Diogen in Exile Group" which is in close link with the "Organisation Fraternelle". On the other hand there is an English lawyer who was plodding

for the "Dilemmas" compensation before the British Government and the conditions attached for further compensation from the British Government had been that the "Ilois" give up all claims on Diego Garcia. According to article 9 of the Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations which reads as such "No one shall be subject to arbitrary exile..." maybe if tomorrow Mauritius will decide to make itself heard in the United Nations assembly, for our Indian Ocean to be kept a zone of peace, in a convincing way, even if dwarfs cannot play against giants, let us hope that peace will be maintained in the Indian Ocean.

~~The human problem of the 323 families uprooted from 1965 to 1973~~ was taken up by Senator Edward Kennedy on the 14th September 1975 in the congress where he had asked from the British High Commissioner in Port-Louis for a full report, on how the compensation to the Ilois was used. In January 1976, the British Government sent Mr. Prosser, an Advisor of Social Department to make a report on the living conditions of the Ilois in Mauritius, it is needless to say that before his visit many English and American newspaper men had reported in the press the shabby living conditions of the Ilois. It is to be noted that the offer of £3 millions had been eroded by inflation and when later it came to be shared, it is a pity to imagine the use that was made of a small amount for resettlement.

CHAPTER V

WOMEN IN CHAGOS ARCHIPELAGOS

In "Zilos là-haut" ("Zilos là-haut" are the names the Ilois had given to the Chagos when they travelled from Mauritius to Chagos), women had a different life style from that of Mauritian women. As more than 50% of this Ilois community is female, one cannot talk about the community and leave the women aside. Women are very often breadwinners of patriarchal families. (2) d.f. from explain?

In "Zilos là-haut" civil marriage is not a predominant norm. Both men and women preferred free unions. For the women, free-unions guarantee the liberty and independence of the women in the household. Women are used to occupy a position of authority in such business. In Chagos Archipelagos, the barter system society was a so small organization and women were used to hard work in such work "décoquage" (they used a big knife, to break the coconut shells). Much physical strength was needed to do such a work. So Ilois women do not have any complex of physical strength when they have to work beside their males companions.

In these circumstances, women had developed a patriarchal society. Some more explanations are needed, to make it clear. As there is no civil marriage between the two partners, very often the chosen partner come to live at the mother's place of the female partner or in the near vicinity. This is so, for many practical reasons, for example whenever the partnership turned to be a failure, the "husband" left and the children born in such a partnership is kept by the female partner. She would be helped in the upbringing of the children by her mother or some other female relatives. But when the male partner is in the home, everyone in that society will regard him as the husband. Civil marriages are not significant to the Ilois, only to-day some are discovering it. Of those who are civilly married, more than half per cent got married when they were already living in Mauritius. 7

Ilois women were so used to independence that they spent their leisure time (Saturday afternoon and Sunday afternoon) drinking among females or both males and females together. Ilois women also sometimes did have violent quarrels after they were drunk. Another leisure activity, which they used to do as their

male partners, is fishing. The Chagos Archipelagos are known to be rich in fishery and sea-fruits.

Contrary to the Mauritian women, there is something which seems natural to the Ilois women that is authority. (Authority inside and outside her home). Through my interviews, I tried to know more about the reason it is thus. Most of the women told me, that men in the islands worked whole day. When they reached home after 6.00 p.m. in the afternoon, the only two things, which interested them, were drinking and fishing. As women finished work at 11.00 a.m. or 12.00 a.m., they had plenty of time to look after the daily life of the home.

Ilois women are so strong that in the Isles, they worked till the last day of their pregnancy. They resumed work after 2 weeks of maternity leave. They were still having plenty of time to feed their babies. Authority and control over the children were not problems which Ilois women had to face in Chagos Archipelagos.

One of the other main difference, which existed between the Ilois women and the "Creole" Mauritian women, was the way of dressing. The typical "Ilois" woman's dressing is a large puckered colourful printed flowers skirt with a scarf which ran over the ears and knotted behind the head. This scarf is often done, in the same material as the skirt. The main reason of the wearing of the scarf was that in "Ziles lè-haut", the sun is so prickling and most of the time women had to work under it, the scarf acts as a protector. To-day in Port-Louis, whenever you see a women of "African origin" with her beautiful dress and a scarf knotted in that special way, with some more observations, you will immediately know that she is a "creole des ziles" as the "Ilois" liked to be heard themselves called.

ILOIS COMMUNITY IN MAURITIUS

As mentioned earlier, the exodus of the "Ilois" from Chagos to Mauritius, took place from 1965 up to 1973. Some 332 families were displaced but the official number is 426 families taking into account those who left before the Chagos was leased. When "Ilois" used to come on holidays, they were occupying houses around Port-Louis area among which place they knew more. The deported Ilois, when they reached Mauritius faced a crucial problem of housing, so they shared the houses of those who had arrived here before them. It happened that because of this reason and their fear of the unknown, they tried to accomodate themselves around Port-Louis. I can say, that the local authority did not help the "Ilois" except for a starving-dole of some Rs 15. The settling down of the Ilois Community around Port-Louis had created tremendous problems, in an already difficult situation.

The scattered community is to be found in Pailles, Pointe aux Sables, La Cure, Dockers' Flats, Petite Rivière, Grande Rivière North West, Tombeau Bay, Sainte Croix, Roche Bois, Les Salines, Casais, Beau-Bassin and Port-Louis.

Present Residing Areas Years of Arrival in Mauritius

	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	Total
Pointe aux Sables	1	5	4	2	—	—	—	—	1	13
La Cure	1	—	—	6	—	1	—	—	8	16
Dockers Flats	2	—	—	1	—	1	1	1	21	27
Pailles	—	2	5	2	—	—	1	1	3	14
Petite Rivière	1	2	3	—	—	—	2	—	1	9
Grand River N.W.	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	2
Port-Louis	—	—	—	1	—	—	1	—	1	3
Other Regions	1	1	2	—	1	—	—	1	—	6
Tombeau Bay	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Beau-Bassin	—	1	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	2
Le Rochet	—	2	—	1	—	—	1	—	—	4
Sainte Croix	3	2	4	3	—	1	—	1	—	14
Casais	10	9	11	21	3	3	—	3	7	67
Salines	2	3	11	6	—	4	1	—	1	28
Roche Bois	30	10	27	24	2	10	9	5	9	126
Total No. of Families	51	37	68	69	6	20	17	12	52	332

Before one examines the family structure of the Ilois, it will be good to analyse the population according to Age-group and to their residential areas. The most problematic group is the group aged between 5 yrs and 18 yrs and most of them are living in the sub-urban areas. They are having all the problems of sub-urban culture. (??)

Areas	No. of families	under 5	5 - 12	12 - 18	Adult	Over 60yrs
Tombeau Bay	1	1	1	-	2	-
Beau-Bassin	2	1	2	5	3	1
Pôintes-aux Sables	13	8	14	6	26	-
La Cure	16	15	20	8	51	2
Dockers Flats	27	21	31	15	43	3
Pailles	14	12	6	6	15	1
Petite Rivière	9	5	10	12	23	4
G.R.N.W	2	1	2	2	5	-
Port-Louis	3	2	6	-	6	-
Other Regions	6	9	14	9	20	1
Le Hochet	4	1	2	6	5	-
Ste Croix	14	9	5	6	16	1
Cassis	67	51	(61)	30	(138)	12
Salines	28	32	21	7	42	5
Roche Bois	126	62	(100)	(60)	(129)	29
Total	332	230	295	172	524	59

The transition from a barter system society to an industrialising society had been and is still something very harsh for the Ilois. The latest comers relied on those who were here before them to have help. Many of the Ilois had been exploited by their very compatriots. Two examples: The Ilois who were here in 1965 or before arranged with merchants in Port-Louis market or with lorry-drivers, for their compatriots to work as loaders. But the money was not paid directly to the loaders, it was given to the intermediates. The intermediates took most of the money and gave to the loaders many small coins. The poor loaders could not have a real idea of its value. When they went shopping, they were surprised that they could not buy much with it.

Some of the Ilois families had been living on the dele for a long time and others still are. Before really talking about employment for the Ilois families, One must know that very often it is not the man who is the bread winner let us look at the figures concerning the structure of Ilois families.

STRUCTURES OF FAMILIES

Ilois women civilly married	111	33.5%
Unmarried Ilois women	30	9%
Free-Union "Ménages"	133	40%
Women separated from Husband	24	7.2%
Unmarried Ilois men	10	3.1%
Ilois married to Mauritian Women	24	7.2%
Total	332	100%

only 16.2%
 ♀ alone

Some Characteristics of the Ilois Community

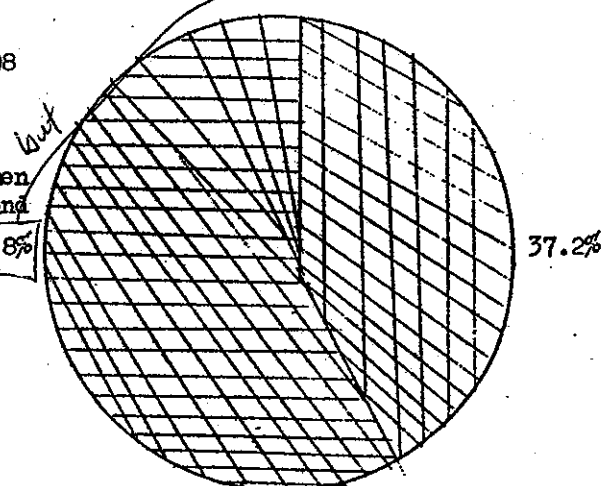
The total number of families amount to 332. The Ilois families are very often fragmented. In an Ilois family, very often the woman is not officially married and she many have 2 or 3 different group of children from different fathers. The result is that some children of different fathers cannot live together, some will go at aunties' or grand-mother's place. There is always a great mobility within Ilois families. The various members of the family do not stay together for long. I have reached such observation from the survey I had carried about the Ilois community.

Ilois Women Population = 298

Unmarried Iloise women
seperated from husband

Women = 62.8%

Civilly married
Ilois Women = 37.2%



Ilois women have a particular role in the Ilois community. As it is shown in the pie-chart 62.8% women are not legally tied to any man. Ilois men had not always feel the importance of their role.

A woman may already be the mother of 2 children and then she has another child from her actual husband. The husband will not feel responsible as a father towards the two first children. The Ilois man is well aware that the Ilois wife does not like to feel herself tied up. In that free-style family, the woman is used to assume nearly the whole responsibility of the family. In interviews whenever I have tried to discuss family internal organisation, the Ilois husbands simply confide that all the financial business of the family, is in the wives' hands. Ilois women are most of the time bread winners of their family, they know that it is their responsibility to feed the children they have got from the various beds. But to-day most Ilois mothers are wishing that their daughters have the security of civil marriage because they are realising that the trend of life is different in Mauritius.

The Ilois community has a minimum organisation at social, political and economic level for both voluntary and governmental services. The Ilois community has been transplanted to a new society. They are illeterate and in their previous society, there was no use for political, social and economic organisation. In that new society, the Ilois community consider both the voluntary and government help with much suspicion.

The Ilois community in a foreign society, is living in mere poverty. Since their arrival, they had been cheated by their earlier compatriots and Mauritians. When the Ilois had tried to earn a living, they did not received much money and to-day also in the unemployed or underemployed situation the whole Ilois community is living in a poor cash economy. They are being discriminated by Mauritians living next to them. They are very afraid of being exploited by the Mauritians. The Ilois community tends to be apathic in that society which seems too big for them.

The economic situation of the Ilois community is pictured by low wages, unemployment, underemployment of an unskilled labour. There is no room for saving in such an economic picture.

Employment of Male Population at the beginning of 1980

Employed		Underemployed		Total
Carpenter	3	Lorry helper	49	
Mason	7	Fishermen	22	
Watchmen	16	Working now & then	34	
Daymen		Dockers *	71	
Dock Mechanic	3			
Total	29 14.2%		176 85.8%	100%

Male Population: 205

Through my inquiries and home visits, I have collected these datas. Some 85.8% of the Ilois male population is underemployed.*

The dockers since my survey, I have considered them as underemployed, they had not been permanently employed for the last 15 years. Only these dockers having more than 15 years of continuous service will be given a pension. The Ilois Dockers would be among the first to be dismissed by the introduction of the "vrac" in July 1980. ②

It is useless to talk about savings in the Ilois community, they had suffered from mal-adaptation and much of their money is spent in drinking.

The Ilois, who used to work as labourers in the copra fields are unskilled and in the Mauritian context, they remained an unskilled population. I have put fishermen on the list of the underemployed because very often these people work for 3 to 6 months on board of a ship and there is no guarantee that they will be re-employed when the ship will leave the port.

In that community, where women are very often the bread-winners of the family, it will be good to look at their occupations and their financial situation.

Ilois Women and Employment

Maidservants	90	30.2%
Labourers	7	2.4%
Industries	16	5.3%
Washerwomen	28	9.4%
Unemployed	138	46.3%
Other Jobs	19	6.4%
Total	298	100 %

underemployed?

In that community 53.8% of women work for the maintenance of the family. Some 88 families are on the dole because the family has no official father or there had been abandonments. With the dismissal of the 71 dockers, in some months to come, many more Ilois families will be in the deepest poverty.

Another characteristic of that community is its
low level of literacy and education

Even if the Chagos had been inhabited since 1776, it was only in September 1951 that the first school was opened there. There was another school at Coin island at Peros Banhos. In 1965, all the schools were closed. For the short periods, where it was possible for children to go to school, two teachers worked there under contract for one or two years. At 10 years old, children were already working in the copra fields. It is easy to understand that this population, through unfavorable circumstances, is not educated.

Another hard lot of the Ilois community is the poor housing conditions in the sub-urban slums of Port-Louis.

In the housing crisis situation which is a national problem for Mauritius, the Ilois is not better housed. They, also are not used to pay rents, find it more difficult to adapt themselves. Very often, they are occupying a house where two married women, with their children and the grand-mothers live together. They are living in the sub-urbans of Port-Louis at Cassis, Roche-Bois, Les salines, Tombeau-Bay, Dockers Flats, Pailles, La Cure and Ste Croix.

ILOIS HOUSING CONDITIONS

	Paying Rent	Not Paying Rent	Owner	Total
Pointe aux Sables	3	10	—	13
La Cure	16	—	—	16
Dockers	5	22	—	27
Pailles	12	2	—	14
Petite Rivière	7	2	—	9
G.R.N. Ouest	2	—	—	2
Port-Louis	3	—	—	3
Other Regions	6	—	—	6
Tonbeau Bay	1	—	—	1
Beau-Bassin	2	—	—	2
Le Hochet	3	—	1	4
Ste Croix	14	—	—	14
Cassis	57	10	—	67
Salines	19	9	—	28
Roche Bois	86	40	—	126
Total	236	95	1	332

82.8% of the Ilois are living in a two or three rooms rental houses in the suburbs. They are paying some Rs 70 to Rs 150 per month for these hovels. There are two or three families living together and some share the bill for the rent, while others do not help the one who is responsible to pay and that for many reasons for example poverty or irresponsibility. Those families living at Cité La Cure and some 10 families at Roche Bois are renting C.H.A. houses at a relatively reasonable price.

It is interesting to note that the only family which I have succeeded to help realising the importance of owning a house, do not really live in a true sub-urban area. All the adult children shares together with the mother's compensation had manage to gather the sum required to buy a plot of land with two small houses covered with iron sheets. There are absence of food reserves in home and chronic shortage of cash (frequent buying of food in a day). In Chagos, the Ilois used to go to the store twice a week where the quota of ration of food for each worker was given to them. For the vegetables, they used to cultivate and they could go fishing. In Mauritius, they have to buy food with money and I received a group reaction at Cité La Cure when I was putting questions about it. (Ici nou travay et tous l'arzen alle pou chinois, là-bas nou travay, nou gagne nou manzé, ok nou éna l'arzen pou viné promené Maurice). "Here we work and all our money is spent to buy food, it goes to the shopkeeper but in the islands, we worked, we had our food and the money that we receive was used for our visits to Mauritius". It is really difficult for people who are not used to cash economy to buy and make food or cash reserves. They also earn very small amount of money. They are illiterate and they are easily cheated in that highly inflated trade.

In the Ilois community "pawning" is a way of life for many of them to have some money for physical survival. Most of the Ilois population is around 18 years old. Through my inquiries, I have noted the confidence of some mothers who told me how their young men and sometimes even girls take objects in the home and pawned them. For many young men, the pawning of these objects, give them money for drugs and also to travel from places to places. For the girls, it allowed them to buy the dresses and shoes which the other friends have access to.

In the sub-urban areas of Port-Louis there are many money lenders at rates interest from 15 to 25%. Many of the abandoned Ilois women with children, who are on dolo give their pension cards to these money lenders and they are always being kept deeply indebted towards the lenders because of the high rate interests.

Even, the Old Age pension earners very often have the same fate because they live with their daughters who have many children to bring up and the old age pensioners try to help through pawning of the pension card.

(When the Ilois reached Mauritius, they could not bring along their furniture which were too cumbersome for the ship. With all the inconveniences of a cash economy, it is very difficult for that community to buy clothes. The second hand clothing is most welcomed for children and even the women where they are the sole bread winners of the family.)

The Ilois are present time oriented, they avoid formal marriage and divorce. There are free unions and consensual marriage. Women prefer to keep certain freedom and not to give to their husband the legal father's role.

Through my interviews many women talk about marriage as something good and also about how some administrators in the Chagos used to compel them to get married when they were living in free-unions. Only 40.7% of the Ilois community is civilly married.

There is an early initiation to sex life and free unions. While the Ilois community was still in Chagos, the Saturday night "séga" used to end at 2.00 a.m. and all through the party each one while dancing would have chosen a partner. Very often, the young people aged 12 or 13 years for the girls and 16 or 17 years for the young men began their sexual experiences. If in Mauritius, the Ilois "séga" nights are not so common, the young people choose partners early among their neighbours in their own community. Very often partners are so young that they do not bother about marriage and the parents also do not encourage them. They live in free unions.

In that community 62.8% of Ilois women do not have a

husband officially. It is not rare for them to choose partners. There is a matrifocal family style and very often the women's mothers live with them and help them to bring up the children. The mothers being the breadwinners of the families in most cases, the children are left to themselves. They suffer early maternal deprivation with all its consequences. These children on their way to adulthood, have anti-social behaviours. They do not easily communicate to other people. They are aggressive. In the Mauritian context very often, these Ilois women complain to me how difficult, it is for them to upbringing their children alone here (ici quand ou corrize zot, zot kit lacaze zot allé, pays trop grand, là-bas, pa ti éan tou sala, pa ti éna la drogue, zot pas ti tombe dan la vie désordre couna Maurice). "In Mauritius, we cannot punish the children, they escape from home, the country is too big, in Chagos, we did not have problems of drugs, girls were not in prostitution as here". The elderly women talked much about the importance of family and relatives but the young cousins and siblings are very often at daggers drawn.

It is easy to imagine that Ilois men in our society of rapid evolution tend to change partners more often than in the islands. Abandonment of kids and wives is common. Even if they do not physically abandon their wives and children, they become a burden for them. They become hard alcoholic and they spend all their wages in card games. Very often, the Ilois men become of these ties very dependent, they live a marginal life.

Through my daily work and a special survey done for this particular study, I have traced all these problems. Oscar Lewis did a study of a Mexican suburb, in that context, he called it a "Culture of Poverty" - a "sub-culture" in relation to the main culture. The Ilois community who had been uprooted from another country cannot be exactly defined as having a "Culture of Poverty" because their culture differ from the general "Mauritian Culture", for example, the Ilois family structure, composed of a woman as head of family with children, grand-mother and an occasional partner or husband, very often not civilly married. But in the day to day reality, it seems that the Ilois community bringing in the inheritance of their own culture, is sharing some characteristics of the "Culture of Poverty" in sub-urban areas where it seems to exist.

What had been done for the Ilois since their arrival to help them to solve their problems ?

The Institute for Development and Progress, a social organisation of the Catholic Diocese of Port-Louis, had been after the Government, the first group to be interested in the Ilois fate.

When the Ilois landed in Mauritius all of them had received a survival pension of Rs 20 per family from the Government. The last batch of Ilois were housed here and there in the C.H.A. estates.

I.D.P. employed a full time Social Worker in the name of Miss Holone Siophe to carry a complete survey on their material situation. The result was brought to the Mauritius Council of Social Services by I.D.P. representative. Some immediate aids were given by various organisations. Later, Mr. Hervé Silva, a primary school teacher and voluntary social worker came to help. This teacher, together with Miss Siophe and Miss Nancy Robinson, a social worker of the Church World Service began to work out certain projects. They undertook the necessary proceeding for a special school to be opened for the children and adolescents of the Ilois community. After much pain, they obtained in August 1975, the opening of a "Diego Special Class" at St Francis Xavier, Port-Louis.

Through various inquiries, the teacher, Mr. Hervé Silva got 35 children registered, they were aged between 7 years old and 17 years old. The teacher was helped by his wife to carry out classes from Standard one to six. In 1976, some 25 pupils were in attendance. The pupils were coming from all around Port-Louis to attend this class. On the departure of Mr. and Mrs. Silva to Agaléga, I was called by the R.C.S.A. Secretary to replace them. I was glad to serve this project both as a teacher and a voluntary social worker. I began to know those very aggressive young persons and I also tried to understand, why they were behaving thus. In 1977, some 20 pupils were still in attendance but there were regular absences among them.

I paid visits to parents to know why there was such a situation. I discovered the destituted living conditions in which they were. Though the Church World Service organisation was paying the daily bus fares of the children, they could not be in attendance. There was no strong parental control over the children, the mothers were working. Other children were always

moving from the aunties' place to the grand-mother's place. They never had a fixed address. Those around the age of 16 or 17 years old were already in drug addiction. Among the girls two eloped with boys when they were around 15 years old.

In spite of all these problems, some pupils were making real progress and the "Diego Special Class" was an approved project for 2 years. I realised that some pupils would be able to sit as candidate in the Standard VI examination in 1 year's time. I approached the Ministry of Education and the Church World Service for allocation of 1 more academic year. It was approved by 1978, I was asked by the Ministry of Social Security to work as Social Worker with the Ilois. I left the school in the hands of two colleagues. Only 2 pupils out of 5 candidates who succeeded at the Primary Leaving School Certificate examination. One of the successful candidate had been admitted to Bhujoharry College following the request, I made to the P.S.S.A., because that pupil was already 17 years old.

On the closure of the school, I had made contacts with private workshops to take some 12 boys as apprentices. Some were accepted by the workshop of Foyer Père Laval, others at a mechanical workshop at Tranquebar and some at a joinery workshop at Roche-Bois. Some of these young boys left sometimes after because their friends who were working for money, influenced them to look for more lucrative occupations. Some 6 boys are still learning, the craft they had chosen.

In 1975, the Church World Service representative decided to launch a chicken and rabbit breeding project, after she had carried out a survey. The breeding project turned out to be miscarried due to lack of organisation among the Ilois breeders themselves. Sometimes after, I.D.P. and Mr. Silva launched two needle-work and craft courses for the Ilois women, one was done at Roche-Bois Dockers' Flat and another at Foyer de l'Anitié for the others.

The women were not attending classes regularly but in the end they succeeded, with the help of the voluntary social workers, to have an exhibition. Many of the Ilois crafts, they used to do in the islands were shown. Through my daily visits to the Ilois community I learned about their problems to embark in administrative proceedings to obtain important papers such as birth certificates. One of the aspirations of the community, particularly at Roche-Bois Dockers' Flat was to learn to read and

write. I contacted some voluntary teachers to whom I have tried to give some notions of Adult Education. I also asked the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Funds Association of Dockers' Flats to have access to the hall of that association, three times a week. After three months of intense preparation, I started the project with the material help of the Mauritius Council of Social Service. We started with a group of 30 adults out of which 25 were women. The men's participation was lacking to the fact that they had to work late in the afternoons. Some men were not interested, they preferred to spend that time drinking. The project went on for 6 months with 3 voluntary teachers. The group was taught some arithmetic, French, both reading and writing and some oral English.

At the end of the project, there was 15 adults and 3 of them could read newspapers and many other women could make their own bill for shopping.

One of the grandiose thing that was done for the Ilois since their arrival in Mauritius had been the visit of Mr. P. Prosser, Advisor of Social Department of Britain. He was sent by the British Government to evaluate the living conditions and to make formal propositions to the British Government.

He visited Mauritius from 24th January to 2nd February 1976. He contacted the social worker of I.D.P. and the social worker of Church World Service. These two persons had already, by then, worked in the fields to gather informations. Mr. Prosser's work had been to make an analysis of their reports and to what he thought was good. He made his own propositions. His statistics were 426 families taking into account even those Ilois who in the past had chosen freely to settle in Mauritius. In his report, he proposed the Central Housing Authority, housing scheme of 2 types to be built for an Ilois estate at Pointe aux Sables. The land would have been given by the government. The houses of type A was of 351 square feet and it amounted to Rs 16,000, for type B, it was 663 square feet and it costed Rs 30,000.

Some years later, the ideas of having an housing scheme for the Ilois was abandoned by the British Government. In this same year, a British lawyer, Mr. B. Sheridan contacted some of the Ilois and proposed that he was to defend their case in the British Court. I.D.P., since the beginning of its work with the

Ilois had settled down an Ilois representatives committee. Each Ilois residential area was represented. I.D.P. discussed the fate of the Ilois with them, then their propositions were sent to the Mauritius Council of Social Services through the I.D.P. representative. After 1 year, a Select Committee was put up by the Prime Minister's Office with the P.A.S. of representatives of various Ministries, such as Social Security, Housing, Labour, etc.. The Ilois spokesman was the representative of I.D.P. This committee was looking into the various possible form of integration of the Ilois community in Mauritius. On the second visit of the British lawyer, the Ilois committee was officially convened to discuss their problems. In the meantime, in March 1978, after much struggle, the Ilois community was given a compensation of Rs 7,590 for an adult and Rs 1,500 for a child under 17 years old.

The opposition party, the "Mouvement Militant Mauricien" and an affiliated group to it, "Organisation Fraternelle" organised the Ilois on regional basis. They put on an Ilois committee together with some Mauritians, it was called the "Comité de Soutien Ilois". This group was in contact with another group in England under the chairmanship of Mr. G. Champion. The other group is called "The Diegan in Exile Group", this group had voiced the Ilois situation in the British press. For the "Organisation Fraternelle", I only knew of the various public manifestations, they organised to protest against the innocent Ilois situation. The "Diegan in Exile Group" had collected some money for the Ilois after cyclone "Claudette" and it was sent to the community through the "Organisation Fraternelle".

Mr. Shoridan, the British lawyer, who said that he had fought for the first compensation paid to the Ilois, visited the community twice. On the first time, he discussed with the "Ilois Committee" about their needs. The basic need turned out to be a house. The lawyer visited various slums where Ilois were living. He took pictures and declared himself disheartened by these living conditions. He promised to the community that he would try his best to have an housing scheme. The Ilois representatives even declared that the community was ready to pay 2/3 of the project on a loan scheme. After 1 year, Mr. Shoridan came back with a proposition of 20 million rupees as a last compensation and in return the Ilois would have to give up further claims on Chagos. There was an official paper of the British Court which was like a disclaimed contract.

Mr. Sheridan was carrying this operation, explaining to the Ilois that they were giving up their rights in exchange of the 20 millions rupees. Many Ilois were ready to sign the contract, the only thing that meant something to them in our cash economy, was more money would be available to them.

But some Ilois contacted the opposition political party and one lawyer dropped in the office of Mr. Sheridan. He stopped the whole operation.

Since that incident, there is no great news from Mr. Sheridan and the money propositions. In the Prosser report among his propositions there was one concerned about the recruitment of a social worker to help for the integration of the Ilois, for a period of at least 3 years. I have been employed to do the job from March 1978 to August 1979, it is only a single example of how good had the Prosser report been implemented.

The Ilois community is still hoping for a better fate. They are very afraid of being betrayed by any person or organisation who will try to help them.

CHAPTER VII

ILOIS WOMEN WHEN THEY REACHED MAURITIUS IN 1965

It was more difficult for Ilois women to adapt themselves when they reached Mauritius. Ilois men seemed to be less affected by the displacement in a new society and this can be explained in many ways. In Chagos Archipelagos, women were the leaders of families, though the men brought in their material contribution to the home.

Ilois women felt stranded in reaching Mauritius, same as our poor Mauritian emigrants when they reached the big European cities. Ilois women, who were used to the simple organisation of family lives in "ziles là-haut", they found it hard to cope with the machinery of our highly stratified and organised society. The first problem had been a housing problem. Those who reached Mauritius first had tried to help by sharing their two rooms with the new comers. But most of the first comers were in the suburbs of Port-Louis. Port-Louis is a port as any other ports, I mean with all the dubious transactions by day and by night. The Ilois community as a whole had suffered from it but particularly the women. On their first contact with Mauritians, they had a linguistic problem. Though, they speak nearly the same creole, it was more nasal dialect which had much in common with Seychelles islands in the way they hummed. Mauritians were aware of the fact that they had to do with an illiterate and less developed community.

The Mauritian Government, at that time, had decided to give a meagre allowance of Rs 15 a month to help the families. In most families, there were no official husbands or on reaching Mauritius, the partner had gone to Seychelles or St Brandon. The Ilois woman was alone with her children, she had to get the allowance. Through their inquiries some public assistance officers had discovered that these women were easily accessible for sex-matters and some looked really disoriented. Not only did some officers took advantage of it but they pointed out that to friends of theirs. Some Mauritian men who pretended to help, were looking for other benefits. It had took Ilois women some years to realize that sex is not so free in Mauritian society and they were being looked down by the rest of the community. But as the family allowance received for the maintenance was not enough for survival, the Ilois women were not used to buy things in shop for money, even the shopkeeper cheated them. Some Ilois women

Q * [accepted the Mauritian men as partners now and then only to feed their numerous children.

Some women courageously turned to look out for a job. There were not many jobs left to them in our Mauritian context, because they were illiterate. Many of the industries could not take them and they were not aware of such employment. They know that they could be employed as maid-servants but as they had got a language problem, the Ilois who were in Mauritius for a long time ago or some Mauritians proposed to make arrangements for them to have a job as maid-servant or washerwoman. These "intermediates" explained to the employers, that those Ilois women are not used to money and some money could be given to the intermediates from the salary of that poor maid-servant or washerwoman. These Mauritian employers preferred to engage the Ilois women because they did not know about labour law and the employers had only to exchange a Rs 10 note into many coins to make the employees believe that it was much money. Through these years, things had evolved, even if to-day most of the Ilois women are still illiterate, they have become very aggressive in their relation to Mauritians. They have discovered how they were being cheated. Many had left their jobs, when in my survey, I have asked for the reasons in 95% of cases, there were two reasons: (1) they saw that they were being exploited by the meagre salary, they were receiving; (2) they could not accept that vigorous control and the ill-treatment, they had to endure by the Mauritian employers.

(Empl)

In that precarious financial situation, the Ilois woman could not very often keep her numerous children with her, so some were living with the father, others with aunties or grand-mothers.

Some women were aware of the physical strength and they knew that the main agricultural crop was sugar-cane. Some tried to work as labourer but they could not do it for long.

CHAPTER VIII

PROBLEMS FACING ILOIS WOMEN IN A MAURITIAN SOCIETY

In our highly organized society, daily life is real struggle for the illiterate Ilois women. They are not used to institutions such as school and other social and welfare services. In my daily social work visit, I have discovered that it is difficult for the Ilois woman to find a school for her children or to locate an office in the city of Port-Louis. The fact that the Ilois woman is not educated, make things worse for her.

The financial expenses of the Ilois family is so high in our Mauritian society that the Ilois women has a greater need of her husband's or partner's wages to enable her to feed her whole family. When some of the Ilois men who are dockers had been dismissed from their jobs, it had been a more acute problem for the women. They told me, that when the dockers were working most of the money were spent on drink but a little amount was left for the family. To-day even if the ex-docker partner or husband works for two or three days, here and there the whole amount is spent to pay his drinking debts or to pay alcoholic drinks for himself and for his friends. When they were in "ziles là-haut" men had never taken great share in the responsibility of the household and now they just continue in the same way.

For the children, most Ilois mothers felt that they did not have the same control over the children. They themselves felt insecure at times because as they said "pays trop grand, nou na pas habitié ek tou sa ban zaffaire drole, ki passé autour nou" (the country is too vast and we are not used to all these dubious things which are happening around us). When in my questionnaire, I asked the mothers about their expectations for their children, they answered that they are aware that life will be difficult for their children. They would like the children to go to school and even to start secondary education, but they prefer that by 15 years old the boys learn a craft and some want their daughters to learn needlecraft. Ilois women are well aware that their male children who will be responsible for the future families and as such they need to learn a craft.

Talking about the family, I have also asked them about the family planning methods. Most Ilois women had realised

that life is too difficult in Mauritius for them to continue to expand their families. More than 80% of the Ilois women are following family planning methods. 49% of the Ilois women are on pills, 23% are doing "contraceptive" injections, 8% are following methods as the French case or the "sterilet". Some women did fall pregnant, they told me that in some cases, they did not have the money to keep up the method employed or they did not find time to do the injection or to take the pills.

Since we are talking about the brooding habit of Ilois women, it is appropriate to say something about their sexual morality. Currently there are 23 Ilois women who are in prostitutions. Some of them are in organised prostitution. All these "Ilois women" who are in organised prostitution, are working under the directive of an Ilois man at Roche Bois. Through my daily visits to Ilois families, I have discovered such facts.

I have done a separate interview for one Ilois women living as a prostitute. I know that she was doing it when I asked her for the interview she wanted to know why. But when I have explained to her that only the facts and her name will not be mentioned, she became friendly as she was before my proposition. I arranged to meet her at the place of another Ilois woman who is a friend of hers. She told me that in Diego Garcia she was married to a man and they had three children, two girls and one boy. Since they were in Chagos, the husband used to batter her and they separated for some times and they came back again. This had continued till they had reached Mauritius. As in "zilos la-haut" whenever a woman had a "sex affair" with a man, the woman was not paid, prostitution as a trade did not exist. But the old generations used to say, that "Bon Dié ine donne ou ène latore, ou capave servi li pou nourri ou, si ou bisin" (God had given to women their sex to use it to enable them to feed themselves). So a man who had a "sex-affair" with a woman was bringing some fish or other edible things to the woman.

In Mauritius, that "Ilois" prostitute, had realised that here she could not give herself to have foods in return but she can have money. As she got a strong brother, they had decided together that she will get into that profession. She told me that she had tried to work as maid-servant before doing her actual job but she could not bear to be ill-treated

prostitution
(note to)

by the employer. She is living in Roche Bois with her three children and her brother, but she also had another room in vicinity where she received her clientèle. She considered that clientèle to be the poor one, she also worked in hotels at Pointe aux Sables. Once a client had invited her to go with him to Reunion island and she told me that she had a nice week-end there. I questioned her if she is not afraid of venereal diseases, she answered that once she had got it but she had immediately been to the doctor and now she is making herself regularly examined. She is working on her own. What strike me about her was her cleanliness. She told me that for her it is the only way, she had found to help her to have the necessary finance to bring up her children.

Most of the Ilois prostitutes are between the age of 18 and 35, but most of them, did not really care about themselves, some are already seriously affected by venereal diseases. Contrary to the Mauritian prostitutes, the Ilois prostitutes still pay visit to the rest of their relatives, When I questioned the relatives, they answered that they do not approve that life because it did not exist in their country but these persons are still their relatives and they cannot abandon them.

prostitution

Housing problem is a crucial one for the Ilois women. They had felt it is so desperately that when some of them were thrown on the pavements with the families, they decided to go on strike. In September 1978 seven women between the ages of 25 and 73 years made a starving strike at Bains des Dames, Cassis. They were helped by an organisation called the "Organisation Fraternelle" in which building the strike took place. Never would have Mauritian women dared such a thing. These women wanted to attract the attention of the authority to the fact that when they were displaced from the Chagos a house was promised to each family and they wanted to have a place where they will not in some times to come be pulled out again.

CHAPTER IX

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS ABOUT THE PRESENT STUDY

Since the arrival of that community in Mauritius not much had been done to help them. One cannot dare to make any recommendation about the Ilois, without making a kind of analysis.

That community had moved from a barter system economy to a mono-crop agricultural and a newly industrialising country. When the Ilois used to come on short visits to Mauritius, they used to hire some houses in the slums of Port-Louis, the only places really known to them. When in 1965 and onwards, the community had reached Mauritius, without any planning or provision by the local authority to welcome them, they had tried to settle in these poor areas known to them. For many reasons, these areas seemed to be the less convenient places for the re-settlement of Ilois in Mauritius.

In the Chagos islands, life activities used to be less rapid and also not much organisation was needed. This population used to live by the sea-side where they could easily get access to the sea for fishing. We all know, how different is life in a fishing village of Mauritius (a small community where everyone is known to everyone, where poverty and mutual aid are housed together) compared to life in the suburbs of Port-Louis. Port-Louis is not only the capital but also our port and in every harbour, life is harsh.

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The Ilois community is an unskilled and illiterate community and as such they are vulnerable to exploitation in areas such as Port-Louis. They are unemployed or underemployed but now that they are used to such habits, as spending all their time and the small amount of money they got in drinking, playing cards and going to the cinema. It will be hard for them to give up such habits. All the new leisure activities attract them and now it will be nearly impossible to advise the large majority of the population to move to rural fishing areas.

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Employment

Mauritius is going through a crisis of unemployment from the university degree holders down to the unskilled workers. Job creation is scarce because our economy is collapsing. I personally feel, that it should not have been the responsibility of the Mauritian Government to aggravate its problem of unemployment by having to work out a job creation scheme for the Ilois. To quote the "New Internationalist" newspaper of January 1979 "will Britain help the exiles, it created?" I think that the Ilois, both men and women need to be trained in some trades. We all know that training needs finance, why should not the United States and Britain finance such a project. The next question will be, training is needed, but in what trade... the answer will be to consider the potential skill of the Ilois which can be developed. The Ilois adult population is illiterate but they have great physical strength which they used to display in the copra fields. But the mentality of the Ilois has been hampered, as far as work is concerned. They also had been swept by the Mauritian present problem about lack of professional conscience. These Ilois need to be motivated to see work with new eyes. They are not used to our agricultural methods and only some Ilois would be really interested to be trained as labourers. Many Ilois women have confided in my survey that they would have been interested in the rearing of goats, cows, rabbits and poultry, etc... Unfortunately this is not possible because the environmental condition of the slums which does not allow the growth of such projects. Another factor is that in the highly organised Mauritian society, the investment in such projects need to be carried on a scientific basis. I mean that the Ilois women should learn about the necessary brooding conditions, the necessary preventive methods in case of illness of the animals. The marketing of their products should be organized, some leaders will have to be trained to safeguard their interest in such a field. Some Ilois will have to be given some literary education, to carry the paper work.

Such a project can be carried out only if a co-operative spirit is created and some 15 to 20 Ilois families living in the same vicinity in a rural area. If in my survey, I have taken into consideration the working aspirations of the women because they are often bread-winners of the families.

They had also voiced their feelings about our working facilities for women of their categories in a Mauritian context. They know that there are only two doors opened to them for work, they can go into manufactured industries or as maid-servants. In the first case, they are not used to work on industrial machines and even if they are trained, they find it hard to leave their homes for so many hours. They will not have anyone to look after their children. They refuse the idea of staying for so many hours outside their homes. Maybe some young women will dare take the chance of going to the industries.

The men, in the islets of the Chagos, used to spend their leisure time fishing. This was done on a very "amateur" basis. In Mauritius some Ilois had tried to get themselves employed as fisherman, and a few days ago, one Ilois fisherman told me that he and some 9 other Ilois had been relieved of their responsibilities on board of "La Porle III" because this ship has been put out of service. It would have been possible for the Ilois male population to be converted into fishermen. But as our Mauritian fishermen do not have good working-facilities, the "Ilois fishing" projects should be done in a professional way. The fishing project should be fishing done in deep waters. For such a project, big ships, an expert in deep sea fishing and finance are needed and to make it possible, the answer to me seems to be "will Britain help the exiles, it created?"

The proper trend of life for the whole Ilois community would have been the rural areas of Mauritius. Some 6 Ilois families had settled in a fishing village of the south "Rivière des Galets". The men are all fishermen, they are faced with the only main problem of having a little alimony on the poor weather days. Life in such an area, where vegetables are cheaper and many survival stuffs are easily available is less harsh. They spend less money in leisure activities compared to their urban compatriots.

Money

Most of the adult Ilois population do not truly know how to use the small amount of money they are earning. As money is something on which everyone feels touchy to receive advice. I would suggest that no formal

advice could be given for such a subject. A well-trained social worker can do it in personal contacts, working with single individuals or in small groups of Ilois who are friendly to one another and having the same financial conditions. The observations of the social worker about the habits of using money in such groups will be important, he will have to keep in mind the value of acceptance and will propose the possible change little by little. For example, the financial institutions had been practically unknown to the large majority of the "Ilois" population, I mean the banks and other caritative financial agency.

Family

One cannot talk about financial conditions of adults without taking into account the family structures in which they live. In our society where money is scarce, the share of the partner or husband earnings are needed for the survival of the family. For the men to assume that financial responsibility, they will have to feel their share of responsibility in the family. Some importance should be given to them as an adult figure of the family. A social worker will have to work with the women and men separately to make them realise that essential co-operation in the family. That co-operation is not important only on a financial basis but also for the upbringing of the children. In the present society, the Ilois women are swept by the evolution of their young adolescents, the male partners will be of much help. Once again we come back to that wrong environment in which the Ilois is living. Their young adults are lured by the sink of iniquities. A social worker will have to exert his professional experience to advise both the Ilois parents and the young adults to get out of such situations. The social worker will also have to work with other professionals such as doctors, Probation officers and teachers.

Education

At all level in that community, one can see the need of education to equip them to fight for a living. We all know, that nothing concrete can be done, when one's stomach is empty. It is also true for the Ilois community also, they have to be fed decently before any real educational programme be carried out. Informal and formal adult education should be initiated. My own experience, as a social worker to the Ilois

had pointed out that the planning of any formal adult education programme should take into account the present trend of life of the Ilois, the amount of time that the Ilois will be prepared to give for such programmes. An intensive motivational campaign will have to be layed down. The entire educational work with the Ilois is still to be done.

Ilois Youth

The large majority of the Ilois population is young. They will be more opened for resettlement activities, contrary to the adult population who still aspire to back to Chagos. The modern facilities of the Mauritian society exert real powers on this youth, living in the suburban areas, they are taking the false values to be the real value. I mean to say that they see people around them trying to earn some money at any cost, through pawning, prostitution even robbing. What appear to be more important to them is not to be properly fed but to be well-dressed "dans pop" as they are so happy to say. No one is guiding them to plan for their future, their parents are not enough equipped to do it, and this youth is living a day to day life. This youth does not see any importance for academic education. Being under the false values, they all want to earn money and the greatest amount possible. They are ready to go for any type of job for this. As a social worker I have tried hard to make some young men realised the importance of sacrificing money for the sake of a proper training in a trade. It is really difficult to inculcate such true values in an slum environment which gives the opposite image.

Housing and Residential

The wrong start of the settling down of Ilois in Mauritius has been that they had been left to themselves to live in the choice of residential areas. In the Chagos Archipelagos the Ilois were used a simple 2 rooms and a verondah, a small kitchen, all these built with straw and iron-sheets and a small garden. In Mauritius such houses are not reliable because of the frequent visits of cyclones. The Ilois should have been guided to settle in many rural villages by groups of 15 to 20 families, in semi-concrete houses (financed by the British and the United States). If the whole community is to be settled in only one area, there will be not integration and the

Mauritian community will look down upon them. In rural areas Mauritians are more ready to accept strangers than the urban ones. Housing is a crisis in our society. The Ilois are not in a position to handle big amount of money allowing them to have a decent little house. Even if adult education say that things should not be done for the people but with the people. In the case of the Ilois, a housing scheme project will have to be carried mostly by experts and professionals. They are not in a position to bring in much of their mind but only their physical strength (the Ilois are not used to such high organisations and it will take years to make them realise the full and efficient participation in decision-making of such an urgent matter).

Everyday in the local and international press we, Mauritians are moved by the injustices and sufferings of the people from other parts of the world, people undergoing war conditions or are bound to fly to escape death. But in our native land, there is a small population who had been displaced without any alternative, they have to share our miseries in a bitter way than we do.

My attempt to put on paper, what the Ilois community and the Ilois women are, has not been an easy one. To define the "Ilois community" is a complex problem. I personally feel that the "Ilois community" is those who had been uprooted from the Chagos from 1965 and onwards. But whenever the Ilois community is to organise itself for any demand many other claimants are the first present themselves. The other claimants are those, who before 1965 had chosen freely to leave that less organised society of Chagos to settle in Mauritius. These people had got their children. To-day both their children and themselves will shout for their share of compensation in money. Their arguments are "our ancestors or parents had worked hard in these islands, to-day that the lands of our ancestors or parents had been sold, we should have our share of money" (la tor nou gran dinoune fino travaille innou wandé, nou bisin gagne nou part coura tous les otos, nou oulé l'arzent). They had been the ones who had lead the "uprooted Ilois community" to choose money. In fact the first plan of the British resettlement project, was on the advice of M. Prosser and local social workers to give a house to every family and some kind of projects to help the maintenance of a decent living.

The Mauritians of Ilois origins or those Ilois who had voluntarily integrated our society, know that if they were to let the "uprooted ones" be helped by the initial plan, they would have been left out. These people had proposed themselves as leaders and with the collaboration of political parties, they had diverged the attention of all authorities concerned about the real need of that uprooted community.

In the part of the authorities concerned, the initial amount of money proposed for the resettlement of Ilois in Mauritius, had been eroded by the inflations through the years, before any concrete project was undertaken for the resettlement.

Should some of the suggestions I have made in the previous chapter must be taken into consideration, all these thusters, who claimed their share in the resettlement project will have been discarded. From the experience, I have got during my work with the Ilois community and the survey I did on the community, no one can jump at rapid proposed solutions for their resettlement in Mauritius. Our Mauritian society itself is evolving into a rapid and complex society, the Ilois will have to be truly helped to adjust themselves.

I would like at the end of the present attempt of study of the "Ilois community and the Ilois women" throw some lights of my feelings. For me the Ilois problem is a national and international one (will Britain help the exiles it created?) and my attempt had been to let people know who the Ilois community is. All the days I have spent to do the research work will still remain only a paper work. I mean to say that not much concern will be felt about the tragic human fate which is the lot of the Ilois.

Could all the authorities concerned try to think seriously on the possible ways of helping that community, things would have evolved in a positive way for them. To-day the Ilois problem seems to be nobody's concern. My last word will be that no real conclusion or definite recommendation can be made about this present study because the Ilois community's future depend on any possible evolution that their problem may have under some authorities decision (be it at national or international level).

Already collected Names, Address, Occupation (both), Civil Status of Woman, Age, Children, those informations for the whole community.

Specific Questionnaire on Women

1. Names - Husband (mari) _____ Age: _____
 Wife (Femme) _____ Age: _____
 If legally married -- Yes/No Si marié civil - Oui/Non
 Occupation husband (mari): _____
 wife (femme) : _____
 Address: _____
 No of children (nombre d'enfants): _____
 (Addressed to women alone)
2. Were you working in the islets ? Yes/No
 Ou ti pé travail dans ziles ? Oui/Non

3. Are you happy with your present job ?
 Ou content ok travail ou pé faïro ?

4. You are not working outside, why ?
 Ou pas travail en dehors, ki faïro ?

- 4.(b) What kind of work will you like to do ? Why ?

5. Who is keeping the purse at home ?
 Ki séna ki okippe z'affaire casse dans laçaze ?

6. Was it difficult at the beginning for you to do your shopping ?
 Eski li ti difficil pou ou pou acheté ki chose au korrnenen ?

7. Who does the shopping now ?
 Ki séna ki faïre bazar, ok ration ?

- 7.(b) How did you feel when you were to leave Diogo Garcia ?
Ki ou ti senti kan ou ti éan pou kitte Diogo Garcia ?
-
8. What were the difficulties you were facing when you reached Mauritius ? How did you get through ?
Ki difficulté ou ti gagné, kan ti foc vine Maurice ?
Coura ou ti sorti là-dans ?
-
-
-
9. What are the activities you do, outside your household ?
Ki les autres z'affaires ou faire en dehors louvraze lacaze ?
-
-
10. Had you ever participated in manifestations for the resettlement of Ilois ?
Eski ou fine déjà participe dan manifestation pou zot compensation ?
-
-
11. Are you using any methods of family planning ?
Eski ou servi ènè mètòdè kontrol de naissance ?
-
- 11.(a) Who are your friends, Mauritians/Iloise ?
Ki ou camarade Mauricienno/Iloise ?
12. Do you encourage your children to defend himself against aggression ?
Eski ou dire ou z enfants defend zot si lèzot batte zot ?
13. Who has got authority over the children, you/your husband ?
Ki sèna éna plis pouvoir lors z enfants dans lacaze ?
14. Have you a drinking habit ?
15. Now that you are in Mauritius, what are you expecting for you and your children ?
Astère ki ou dan Maurice, ki ou pé souhaité pou ou ok ou z enfants ?
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