

**Coming of Age in Samoa:  
A Psychological Study of Primitive Youth for Western Civilization**

by Margaret Mead; American Museum of Natural History, 1973

**Preface 1973 Edition**

THIS BOOK is a record of my first field trip, work done when I was twenty-three years old, almost fifty years ago. Between the time that I sailed from Pago Pago in 1926 to return to the Western world and try to set down what I had learned and November 1971, when I stepped off a plane in a blaze of TV lights, the world had gone through enormous changes. The young people who will read this book have lived their lives on the other side of the generation gap; the little girls whom I studied are buxom grandmothers still dancing lightfooted as Samoan matrons do. The young Samoans in universities throughout the United States often find this account of how their ancestresses lived as embarrassing as all of us find the clothes our mothers wore when we were young. And I, instead of being a dutiful granddaughter writing letters home so that my grandmother might experience some of the Samoan joy in life, am now a grandmother delighting in a dancing grandchild.

This is the fourth time that I have written a preface to a different edition of this book, published originally in 1928. Each one was dated carefully, 1939, 1949, 1953, 1961. In each preface I discussed how long ago the book was written and how different the world of readers was for whom it would again be published. But in the contemporary world I find that readers pay little attention to dates, and some even read this account of a bygone style of life as if it were, indeed, an account of life in the more bustling and vastly more complicated Samoa of today, and fail to take account of the differences. Others read my strictures on the way in which Americans are brought up--denied all firsthand knowledge of birth and love and death, harried by a society which will not let adolescents grow up at their own pace, imprisoned, in the small, fragile, nuclear family from which there is no escape and in which there is little security--and think that I am indeed writing for today's world, so little have we altered the way in which young people are reared. It seems more than ever necessary to stress, shout as loud as I can, this is about the Samoa and the United States of 1926--1928. When you read it, remember this. Do not confuse yourselves and the Samoan people by expecting to find life in the Manu'an Islands of American Samoa as I found it. Remember that it is your grandparents and great-grandparents I am writing about when they were young and carefree in Samoa or plagued by our expectations from adolescents in the United States.

Some young critics have even asked me when am I going to revise this book and look unbelieving and angry when I say that to revise it would be impossible. It must remain, as all anthropological works must remain, exactly as it was written, true to what I saw in Samoa and what I was able to convey of what I saw; true to the state of our knowledge of human behavior as it was in the mid-1920's; true to our hopes and fears for the future of the world. I can write new prefaces as I am doing now. I can stress how little we knew then, before film and tape and

elaborate methods of recording human behavior were available to fieldworkers. I can emphasize that this was the first piece of anthropological fieldwork which was written without the paraphernalia of scholarship designed to mystify the lay reader and confound one's colleagues. It seemed to me then--and it still does--that if our studies of the way of life of other peoples are to be meaningful to the peoples of the industrialized world, they must be written for them and not wrapped up in technical jargon for specialists. As this book was about adolescents, I tried to couch it in language that would-be communicative to those who had most to do with adolescents-- teachers, parents, and soon-to-be parents. I did not write it as a popular book, but only with the hope that it would be intelligible to those who might make the best use of its theme, that adolescence need not be the time of stress and strain which Western society made it; that growing up could be freer and easier and less complicated; and also that there were prices to pay for the very lack of complication I found in Samoa--less intensity, less individuality, less involvement with life.

When this book was written, the very idea of culture was new to the literate world. The idea that our every thought and movement was a product not of race, not of instinct, but derived from the society within which an individual was reared, was new and unfamiliar. In earlier prefaces I have stressed why I did this and have written as if culture were becoming better understood today. But the renaissance of racism among some scientists and the pleas for a harsh, manipulative behavioralism among some psychologists make me wonder whether the modern world understands much more about the significance of culture--the interplay between individual endowment and cultural style, the limits set by biology and the way in which human imagination can transcend those limits--than was known in 1928. So I do not apologize for the emphasis. Although it seemed hopefully less appropriate in 1949, in the Year of Our Lord 1972 it is still, alas, very necessary, when learned behavior is either attributed to race or skin color or sex, and psychologists dream of substituting conditioning for cultural transmission, just as the crudest behaviorists did in the 1920's and the apostles of despair do when told that our planet is in danger and we must take steps to save it, retreating into elaborate and sophisticated nonsense which can be summed up in the words of itinerant lecturers in the Chautauqua tents of 1916, insisting raucously that "you can't change human nature." I wrote this book as a contribution to our knowledge of how much human character and human capacities and human well-being of young people depend on what they learn and on the social arrangements of the society within which they are born and reared. This is still something that we need to know if we are to change our present social institutions in time to prevent disaster. In 1928, the disaster we faced was a coming war; in 1949 the disaster, was a possible worldwide nuclear war; today there is also the environmental, technical, and population crisis which threatens our existence. The usefulness of this account of how life could be, on one small group of faraway islands, is still, and perhaps more urgently, relevant.

But there are two things about the original book which need comment. One is my expectation that Samoan life would change even more than it has. I feared that the grace and zest and gaiety of the Samoans, carried only by them as a people, without the kind of art and literature and architecture which has left us something of Greece and Egypt after their civilizations were gone, would disappear altogether, transmuted beyond recognition by the diffusion of Euro-American

culture around the world. The other is my failure to include Samoan young people themselves as possible readers and so address the book to them also, as well as to the readers of the Western world. These two miscalculations are linked. Samoans were very literate--in Samoan --in 1928, but only a very few of them read English, and only a very few English-speaking people could read Samoan. I protected the identity of my informants and of the big girls and the little girls whom I was studying, carefully changing their names, occasionally giving one person two names or two identities, so that no one would ever embarrass them by quoting what I said about them. These protective devices were so thorough that later fieldworkers have been unable to decode them and, baffled, have even accused me of falsification. I did not include Samoan young people as possible readers for two reasons, one because those about whom I wrote, although they themselves wrote letters in Samoan, read no books, and second, because I was discussing their own lives, lives which they themselves were living. I did not have to tell them what life was like in the villages Of Manu'a; the young Manu'ans knew. And I was writing then for the contemporary world, not for fifty years hence. And I did not know then, could not know then, how extraordinarily persistent Samoan culture would prove, and how fifty years later the grace that I had attempted to record as something that was surely going to vanish would still be there. I could not have prophesied that forty-seven years later there would be over 20,000 American Samoans living in the United States; that an American Samoan would be chosen for a first experiment in a new kind of educational TV; that there would be a community college on Tutuila, and yet that I would be greeted on my arrival with flower leis even more beautiful than the garlands of 1928, and farewelled with shell garlands--as botanical objects are forbidden on airplanes--and a plastic bag to carry them in when the plane touched down. In the years between I met many Samoans who came to the United States; I saw how effortlessly they put on and put off American clothes, American speech, and American manners, without losing their Samoan distinctiveness. But I had to return to Samoa, to a Samoa hopeful and optimistic and exuberant, a Samoa which made my return into a festival where ceremonies which very few living people had ever seen were brought out for the occasion to solve a typical Samoan problem how to arrange precedence as between their governor, John Haydon, to whom they were devoted, and "Makelita," returning after so many years, returning to dedicate the new museum and participate in the opening of the first power plant in Manu'a.

In the changed climate of opinion of the post- World War II world, where identity is being sought and kept by thousands of small, recently pro-literate and exotic peoples, the Samoans are taking a proud place, a place so proud and happy that they are overflowing their small islands, and what Westernization threatened before overpopulation threatens today. If so many Samoans are born now, there may be no room for those who might have been born later. But today they dance with unabated delight in life.

Inevitably, young Samoans who read this book will feel somehow not included, because this account of young people two generations ago was written about them, but not for them, as I would write such a book today. But to the students who have the strange experience of having a book about how their ancestors lived on the reading lists of their introductory courses at Cornell or the University of Hawaii, I can only say that neither their grandmothers nor I guessed where we would be today.

The appendices remain impersonal, cast in the mold of a technical book. For the scholarly reader, there is a new edition ( 1969) of *The Social Organization of Manu'a*, published by the Bishop Museum in Honolulu, revised in the light of contemporary ethnographic theory. But in this book, all persons are living persons as they were known to me and to their friends and relatives, human in their lives and loves, and I hope their grandchildren's generation will find this to ring true.

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## **1. Introduction**

DURING the last hundred years parents and teachers have ceased to take childhood and adolescence for granted. They have attempted to fit education to the needs of the child, rather than to press the child into an inflexible educational mould. To this new task they have been spurred by two forces, the growth of the science of psychology, and the difficulties and maladjustments of youth. Psychology suggested that much might be gained by a knowledge of the way in which children developed, of the stages through which they passed, of what the adult world might reasonably expect of the baby of two months or the child of two years. And the fulminations of the pulpit, the loudly voiced laments of the conservative social philosopher, the records of juvenile courts and social agencies all suggested that something must be done with the period which science had named adolescence. The spectacle of a younger generation diverging ever more widely from the standards and ideals of the past, cut adrift without the anchorage of respected home standards or group religious values, terrified the cautious reactionary, tempted the radical propagandist to missionary crusades among the defenseless youth, and worried the least thoughtful among us.

In American civilisation, with its many immigrant strains, its dozens of conflicting standards of conduct, its hundreds of religious sects, its shifting economic conditions, this unsettled, disturbed status, of youth was more apparent than in the older, more settled civilisation of Europe.

American conditions challenged the psychologist, the educator, the social philosopher, to offer acceptable explanations of the growing children's plight. As to-day in post-war Germany, where the younger generation has even more difficult adjustments to make than have our own children, a great mass of theorising about adolescence is flooding the book shops; so the psychologist in America tried to account for the restlessness of youth. The result was works like that of Stanley Hall on "Adolescence," which ascribed to the period through which the children were passing, the causes of their conflict and distress. Adolescence was characterised as the period in which idealism flowered and rebellion against authority waxed strong, a period during which difficulties and conflicts were absolutely inevitable.

The careful child psychologist who relied upon experiment for his conclusions did not subscribe to these theories. He said, "We have no data. We know only a little about the first few months of a child's life. We are only just learning when a baby's eyes will first follow a light. How can we give definite answers to questions of how a developed personality, about which we know nothing, will respond to religion?" But the negative cautions of science are never popular. If the

experimentalist would not commit himself, the social philosopher, the preacher and the pedagogue tried the harder to give a short-cut answer. They observed the behaviour of adolescents in our society, noted down the omnipresent and obvious symptoms of unrest, and announced these as characteristics of the period. Mothers were warned that "daughters in their teens" present special problems. This, said the theorists, is a difficult period. The physical changes which are going on in the bodies of your boys and girls have their definite psychological accompaniments. You can no more evade one than you can the other; as your daughter's body changes from the body of a child to the body of a woman, so inevitably will her spirit change, and that stormily. The theorists looked about them again at the adolescents in our civilisation and repeated with great conviction, "Yes, stormily."

Such a view, though unsanctioned by the cautious experimentalist, gained wide currency, influenced our, educational policy, paralysed our parental efforts. Just as the mother must brace herself against the baby's crying when it cuts its first tooth, so she must fortify herself and bear with what equanimity she might the unlovely, turbulent manifestations of the "awkward age." If there was nothing to blame the child for, neither was there any programme except endurance which might be urged upon the teacher. The theorist continued to observe the behaviour of American adolescents and each year lent new justification to his hypothesis, as the difficulties of youth were illustrated and documented in the records of schools and juvenile courts.

But meanwhile another way of studying human development had been gaining ground, the approach of the anthropologist, the student of man in all of his most diverse social settings. The anthropologist, as he pondered his growing body of material upon the customs of primitive people, grew to realise the tremendous role played in an individual's life by the social environment in which each is born and reared. One by one, aspects of behaviour which we had been accustomed to consider invariable complements of our humanity were found to be merely a result of civilisation, present in the inhabitants of one country, absent in another country, and this without a change of race. He learned that neither race nor common humanity can be held responsible for many of the forms which even such basic human emotions as love and fear and anger take under different social conditions.

So the anthropologist, arguing from his observations of the behaviour of adult human beings in other civilisations, reaches many of the same conclusions which the behaviourist reaches in his work upon human babies who have as yet no civilisation to shape their malleable humanity.

With such an attitude towards human nature the anthropologist listened to the current comment upon adolescence. He heard attitudes which seemed to him dependent upon social environment--such as rebellion against authority, philosophical perplexities, the flowering of idealism, conflict and struggle --ascribed to a period of physical development. And on the basis of his knowledge of the determinism of culture, of the plasticity of human beings, he doubted. Were these difficulties due to being adolescent or to being adolescent in America?

For the biologist who doubts an old hypothesis or wishes to test out a new one, there is the biological laboratory. There, under conditions over which he can exercise the most rigid control, he can vary the light, the air, the food, which his plants or his animals receive, from the moment

of birth throughout their lifetime. Keeping all the conditions but one constant, he can make accurate measurement of the effect of the one. This is the ideal method of science, the method of the controlled experiment, through which all hypotheses may be submitted to a strict objective test.

Even the student of infant psychology can only partially reproduce these ideal laboratory conditions. He cannot control the pre-natal environment of the child whom he will later subject to objective measurement. He can, however, control the early environment of the child, the first few days of its existence, and decide what sounds and sights and smells and tastes are to impinge upon it. But for the student of the adolescent there is no such simplicity of working conditions. What we wish to test is no less than the effect of civilisation upon a developing human being at the age of puberty. To test it most rigorously we would have to construct various sorts of different civilisations and subject large numbers of adolescent children to these different environments. We would list the influences the effects of which we wished to study. If we wished to study the influence of the size of the family, we would construct a series of civilisations alike in every respect except in family organisation. Then if we found differences in the behaviour of our adolescents we could say with assurance that size of family had caused the difference, that, for instance, the only child had a more troubled adolescence than the child who was a member of a large family. And so we might proceed through a dozen possible situations--early or late sex knowledge, early or late sex-experience, pressure towards precocious development, discouragement of precocious development, segregation of the sexes or coeducation from infancy, division of labour between the sexes or common tasks for both, pressure to make religious choices young or the lack of such pressure. We would vary one factor, while the others remained quite constant, and analyse which, if any, of the aspects of our civilisation were responsible for the difficulties of our children at adolescence.

Unfortunately, such ideal methods of experiment are denied to us when our materials are humanity and the whole fabric of a social order. The test colony of Herodotus, in which babies were to be isolated and the results recorded, is not a possible approach. Neither is the method of selecting from our own civilisation groups of children who meet one requirement or another. Such a method would be to select five hundred adolescents from small families and five hundred from large families, and try to discover which had experienced the greatest difficulties of adjustment at adolescence. But we could not know what were the other influences brought to bear upon these children, what effect their knowledge of sex or their neighbourhood environment may have had upon their adolescent development.

What method then is open to us who wish to conduct a human experiment but who lack the power either to construct the experimental conditions or to find controlled examples of those conditions here and there throughout our own civilisation? The only method is that of the anthropologist, to go to a different civilisation and make a study of human beings under different cultural conditions in some other part of the world. For such studies the anthropologist chooses quite simple peoples, primitive peoples, whose society has never attained the complexity of our own. In this choice of primitive peoples like the Eskimo, the Australian, the South Sea islander,

or the Pueblo Indian, the anthropologist is guided by the knowledge that the analysis of a simpler civilisation is more possible of attainment.

In complicated civilisations like those of Europe, or the higher civilisations of the East, years of study are necessary before the student can begin to understand the forces at work within them. A study of the French family alone would involve a preliminary study of French history, of French law, of the Catholic and Protestant attitudes towards sex and personal relations. A primitive people without a written language present a much less elaborate problem and a trained student can master the fundamental structure of a primitive society in a few months.

Furthermore, we do not choose a simple peasant community in Europe or an isolated, group of mountain whites in the American South, for these people's ways of life, though simple, belong essentially to the historical tradition to which the complex parts of European or American civilisation belong. Instead, we choose primitive groups who have had thousands of years of historical development along completely different lines from our own, whose language does not possess our Indo-European categories, whose religious ideas are of a different nature, whose social organisation is not only simpler but very different from our own. From these contrasts, which are vivid enough to startle, and enlighten those accustomed to our own way of life and simple enough to be grasped quickly, it is possible to learn many things about the effect of a civilisation upon the individuals within it.

So, in order to investigate the particular problem, I chose to go not to Germany or to Russia, but to Samoa, a South Sea island about thirteen degrees from the Equator, inhabited by a brown Polynesian people. Because I was a woman and could hope for greater intimacy in working with girls rather than with boys, and because owing to a paucity of women ethnologists our knowledge of primitive girls is far slighter than our knowledge of boys, I chose to concentrate upon the adolescent girl in Samoa.

But in concentrating, I did something very different from what I would do if I concentrated upon a study of the adolescent girl in Kokomo, Indiana. In such a study, I would go right to the crux of the problem; I would not have to linger long over the Indiana language, the table manners or sleeping habits of my subjects, or make an exhaustive study of how they learned to dress themselves, to use the telephone, or what the concept of conscience meant in Kokomo. All these things are the general fabric of American life, known to me as investigator, known to you as readers.

But with this new experiment on the primitive adolescent girl the matter was quite otherwise. She spoke a language the very sounds of which were strange, a language in which nouns became verbs and verbs nouns in the most sleight-of-hand fashion. All of her habits of life were different. She sat cross-legged on the ground, and to sit upon a chair made her stiff and miserable. She ate with her fingers from a woven plate; she slept upon the floor. Her house was a mere circle of pillars, roofed by a cone of thatch, carpeted with water-worn coral fragments. Her whole material environment was different. Coconut palm, breadfruit, and mango trees swayed above her village. She had never seen a horse, knew no animals except the pig, dog and rat. Her food was taro, breadfruit and bananas, fish and wild pigeon and half-roasted pork, and land crabs. And just

as it was necessary to understand this physical environment, this routine of life which was so different from ours, so her social environment in its attitudes towards children, towards sex, towards personality, presented as strong a contrast to the social environment of the American girl.

I concentrated upon the girls of the community. I spent the greater part of my time with them. I studied most closely the households in which adolescent girls lived. I spent more time in the games of children than in the councils of their elders. Speaking their language, eating their food, sitting barefoot and cross-legged upon the pebbly floor, I did my best to minimise the differences between us and to learn to know and understand all the girls of three little villages on the coast of the little island of Tau, in the Manu'a Archipelago.

Through the nine months which I spent in Samoa, I gathered many detailed facts about these girls, the size of their families, the position and wealth of their parents, the number of their brothers and sisters, the amount of sex experience which they had had. All of these routine facts are summarised in table in the appendix. They are only the barest skeleton, hardly the raw materials for a study of family situations and sex relations, standards of friendship, of loyalty, of personal responsibility, all those impalpable storm centres of disturbances in the lives of our adolescent girls. And because these less measurable parts of their-lives were so similar, because one girl's life was so much like another's, in an uncomplex, uniform culture like Samoa, I feel justified in generalising although I studied only fifty girls in three small neighbouring villages.

In the following chapters I have described the lives of these girls, the lives of their younger sisters who will soon be adolescent, of their brothers with whom a strict taboo forbids them to speak, of their older sisters who have left puberty behind them, of their elders, the mothers and fathers whose attitudes towards life determine the attitudes of their children. And through this description I have tried to answer the question which sent me to Samoa: Are the disturbances which vex our adolescents due to the nature of adolescence itself or to the civilisation? Under different conditions does adolescence present a different picture?

Also, by the nature of the problem, because of the unfamiliarity of this simple life on a small Pacific island, I have had to give a picture of the whole social life of Samoa, the details being selected always with a view to illuminating the problem of adolescence. Matters of political organisation which neither interest nor influence the young girl are not included. Minutiae of relationship systems or ancestor cults, genealogies and mythology, which are of interest only to the specialist, will be published in another place. But I have tried to present to the reader the Samoan girl in her social setting, to describe the course of her life from birth until death, the problems she will have to solve, the values which will guide her in her solutions, the pains and pleasures of her human lot cast on a South Sea island.

Such a description seeks to do more than illuminate this particular problem. It should also give the reader some conception of a different and contrasting civilisation, another way of life, which other members of the human race have found satisfactory and gracious. We know that our subtlest perceptions, our highest values, are all based upon contrast; that light without darkness or beauty without ugliness would lose the qualities which they now appear to us to have. And



similarly if we would appreciate our own civilisation, this elaborate pattern of life which we have made for ourselves as a people and which we are at such pains to pass on to our children, we must set our civilisation over against other very different ones. The traveller in Europe returns to America, sensitive to nuances in his own manners and philosophies which have hitherto gone unremarked, yet Europe and America are parts of one civilisation. It is with variations within one great pattern that the student of Europe to-day or the student of our own history sharpens his sense of appreciation. But if we step outside the stream of Indo-European culture, the appreciation which we can accord our civilisation is even more enhanced. Here in remote parts of the world, under historical conditions very different from those which made Greece and Rome flourish and fall, groups of human beings have worked out patterns of life so different from our own that we cannot venture any guess that they would ever have arrived at our solutions. Each primitive people has selected one set of human gifts, one set of human values, and fashioned for themselves an art, a social organisation, a religion, which is their unique contribution to the history of the human spirit.

Samoa is only one of these diverse and gracious patterns, but as the traveller who has been once from home is wiser than he who has never left his own door step, so a knowledge of one other culture should sharpen our ability to scrutinise more steadily, to appreciate more lovingly, our own.

And, because of the particular problem which we set out to answer, this tale of another way of life is mainly concerned with education, with the process by which the baby, arrived cultureless upon the human scene, becomes a full-fledged adult member of his or her society. The strongest light will fall upon the ways in which Samoan education, in its broadest sense, differs from our own. And from this contrast we may be able to turn, made newly and vividly self-conscious and self-critical, to judge anew and perhaps fashion differently the education we give our children.

## **2. A Day in Samoa**

The life of the day begins at dawn, or if the moon has shown until daylight, the shouts of the young men may be heard before dawn from the hillside. Uneasy in the night, populous with ghosts, they shout lustily to one another as they hasten with their work. As the dawn begins to fall among the soft brown roofs and the slender palm trees stand out against a colourless, gleaming sea, lovers slip home from trysts beneath the palm trees or in the shadow of beached canoes, that the light may find each sleeper in his appointed place. Cocks crow, negligently, and a shrill-voiced bird cries from the breadfruit trees. The insistent roar of the reef seems muted to an undertone for the sounds of a waking village. Babies cry, a few short wails before sleepy mothers give them the breast. Restless little children roll out of their sheets and wander drowsily down to the beach to freshen their faces in the sea. Boys, bent upon an early fishing, start collecting their tackle and go to rouse their more laggard companions. Fires are lit, here and there, the white smoke hardly visible against the paleness of the dawn. The whole village, sheeted and frowsy, stirs, rubs its eyes, and stumbles towards the beach. 'Talofa!' 'Talofa!' 'Will the journey start today?' 'Is it bonito fishing your lordship is going?' Girls stop to giggle over

some young ne'er-do-well who escaped during the night from an angry father's pursuit and to venture a shrewd guess that the daughter knew more about his presence than she told. The boy who is taunted by another, who has succeeded him in his sweetheart's favour, grapples with his rival, his foot slipping in the wet sand. From the other end of the village comes a long-drawn-out, piercing wail. A messenger has just brought word of the death of some relative in another village. Half-clad, unhurried women, with babies at their breasts or astride their hips, pause in their tale of Losa's outraged departure from her father's house to the greater kindness in the home of her uncle, to wonder who is dead. Poor relatives whisper their requests to rich relatives, men make plans to set a fish-trap together, a woman begs a bit of yellow dye from a kinswoman, and through the village sounds the rhythmic tattoo which calls the young men together. They gather from all parts of the village, diggingsticks in hand, ready to start inland to the plantation. The older men set off upon their more lonely occupations, and each household, reassembled under its peaked roof, settles down to the routine of the morning. Little children, too hungry to wait for the late breakfast, beg lumps of cold taro which they munch greedily. Women carry piles of washing to the sea or to the spring at the far end of the village, or set off inland after weaving materials. The older girls go fishing on the reef, or perhaps set themselves to weaving a new set of Venetian blinds.

In the houses, where the pebbly floors have been swept bare with a stiff, long-handled broom, the women great with child and the nursing mothers sit and gossip with one another. Old men sit apart, unceasingly twisting palm husk on their bare thighs and muttering old tales under their breath. The carpenters begin work on the new house, while the owner bustles about trying to keep them in a good humour. Families who will cook today are hard at work; the taro, yams, and bananas have already been brought from inland; the children are scuttling back and forth, fetching sea water, or leaves to stuff the pig. As the sun rises higher in the sky, the shadows deepen under the thatched roofs, the sand is burning to the touch, the hibiscus flowers wilt on the hedges, and little children bid the smaller ones, 'Come out of the sun.' Those whose excursions have been short return to the village, the women with strings of crimson jellyfish, or baskets of shellfish, the men with coconuts, carried in baskets slung on a shoulder-pole. The women and children eat their breakfast, just hot from the oven, if this is cook day, and the young men work swiftly in the midday heat, preparing the noon feast for their elders.

It is high noon. The sand burns the feet of the little children, who leave their palm-leaf balls and their pinwheels of frangipani blossoms to wither in the sun, as they creep into the shade of the houses. The women who must go abroad carry great banana leaves as sunshades or wind wet cloths about their heads. Lowering a few blinds against the slanting sun all who are left in the village wrap their heads in sheets and go to sleep. Only a few adventurous children may slip away for a swim in the shadow of a high rock, some industrious woman continues with her weaving, or a close little group of women bend anxiously over a woman in labour. The village is dazzling and dead; any sound seems oddly loud and out of place. Words have to cut through the solid heat slowly. And then the sun gradually sinks over the sea.

A second time the sleeping people stir, roused perhaps by the cry of 'A boat!' resounding through the village. The fishermen beach their canoes, weary and spent from the heat, in spite of the

slaked lime on their heads, with which they have sought to cool their brains and redden their hair. The brightly coloured fishes are spread out on the floor, or piled in front of the houses until the women pour water over them to free them from taboo. Regretfully, the young fishermen separate out the 'taboo fish', which must be sent to the chief, or proudly they pack the little palm-leaf baskets with offerings offish to take to their sweethearts. Men come home from the bush, grimy and heavy laden, shouting as they come, greeted in a sonorous rising cadence by those who have remained at home. They gather in the guest house for their evening kava drinking. The soft clapping of hands, the highpitched intoning of the talking chief who serves the kava echo through the village. Girls gather flowers to weave into necklaces; children, lusty from their naps and bound to no particular task, play circular games in the half shade of the late afternoon. Finally the sun sets, in a flame which stretches from the mountain behind to the horizon on the sea; the last bather comes up from the beach, children straggle home, dark little figures etched against the sky; lights shine in the houses, and each household gathers for its evening meal. The suitor humbly presents his offering, the children have been summoned from their noisy play, perhaps there is an honoured guest who must be served first, after the soft, barbaric singing of Christian hymns and the brief and graceful evening prayer. In front of a house at the end of the village, a father cries out the birth of a son. In some family circles a face is missing, in others little runaways have found a haven. Again quiet settles upon the village, as first the head of the household, then the women and children, and last of all the patient boys, eat their supper.

After supper the old people and the little children are bundled off to bed. If the young people have guests, the front of the house is yielded to them. For day is the time for the councils of old men and the labours of youth, and night is the time for lighter things. Two kinsmen, or a chief and his councillor, sit and gossip over the day's events or make plans for the morrow. Outside a crier goes through the village announcing that the communal breadfruit pit will be opened in the morning, or that the village will make a great fish-trap. If it is moonlight, groups of young men, women by twos and threes, wander through the village, and crowds of children hunt for land crabs or chase each other among the breadfruit trees. Half the village may go fishing by torchlight, and the curving reef will gleam with wavering lights and echo with shouts of triumph or disappointment, teasing words or smothered cries of outraged modesty. Or a group of youths may dance for the pleasure of some visiting maiden.

Many of those who have retired to sleep, drawn by the merry music, will wrap their sheets about them and set out to find the dancing. A white-clad, ghostly throng will gather in a circle about the gaily lit house, a circle from which every now and then a few will detach themselves and wander away among the trees. Sometimes sleep will not descend upon the village until long past midnight; then at last there is only the mellow thunder of the reef and the whisper of lovers, as the village rests until dawn.