



no quarter pamphlet series

Visit Port Watson!

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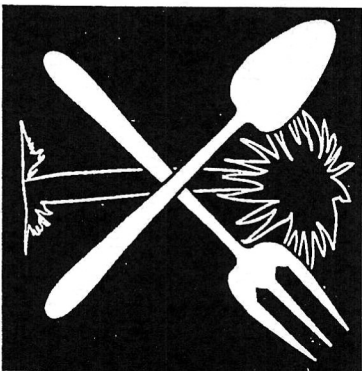
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A stylized illustration of a spoon and a fork crossed over a sunburst. The spoon is positioned diagonally from the bottom left to the top right, and the fork is positioned diagonally from the top left to the bottom right. They are set against a background of a sunburst or starburst pattern. The entire illustration is rendered in a high-contrast, black and white style.

Our original Invitational Letter for this anthology called for—among other things—"radical utopian vision." And yet, as the reader will have noticed, nearly every piece in the book is dystopian. Most of our authors have fallen out of love with future history, are dissatisfied with the present, and full of hate for the past.

Paradoxically, to find some positive utopian text, we were forced to look beyond fiction. What we found seems to be journalism, or some banal brand of travel-guide writing. This article originally appeared in the first (and only?) issue of a micro-zine called LIBERTARIAN HORIZONS: A JOURNAL FOR THE FREE TRAVELER, along with other pieces on Pago-Pago, Yap, Ponape and a "Note on Nicaragua." The magazine was allegedly published in Belleville, Ohio, in 1985, but our request to reprint the piece came back marked "Addressee Unknown." The anonymous author thus remains nameless to us, and the magazine's editors appear to be unknown in libertarian/anarchist circles.

The island of Sonsorol does actually exist—we found it in our BRITANNICA ATLAS right where it's supposed to be—but no reference work or travel guide known to us speaks of it as an independent nation. Perhaps we failed to look far and hard enough.... Perhaps we prefer to believe....

Visit Port Watson!

Anonymous

1. Geography and Physical Description



The Pacific island of Sonsorol, an extinct volcano surrounded by coral reefs, lies at 5° above the Equator at 132° longitude; about 400 miles east of the southeastern tip of the Philippines and 300 miles north of the Dampier Straits in New Guinea. It is approximately ten miles in diameter and about ninety square miles in area.

The climate is typical for the region: steady balmy temperatures (60° — 70° year-round), occasional violent typhoons, monsoons from September to February, sea breezes along the coast, steamy stifling rainforest on the lower slopes of Mount Sonsorol (especially dense on the island's northern side, exposed to the trade winds); nearer to the summit the weather is almost permanently cloudy, cool and misty, and the jungle thins into a "cloud forest" — moss, small trees shrouded in epiphytic

that one can offer valuable skills or services to the community. Recent successful proposals came from an oceanographer from Boston; an Italian woman who studied puppetry in Indonesia; an extremely good-looking youth of twenty from Belize; the crew of a small sloop who arrived with a cargo of electronic gear all the way from California; some Malay sailors who decided to jump ship and cultivate pineapples; an Irish poet who impressed the Synod by improvising in *terza rima* on themes suggested by the audience; and a fourteen-year-old American boy who ran away from his family on Guam and said he wanted to study sorcery.

To live outside the Free Enclave one must in theory become a citizen of the Republic of Sonsorol (although this "law" is not very strictly enforced). All citizens automatically become Shareholders. Papers are granted without question to anyone who is accepted into some Sonsorolan clan or commune, or who is hired specifically to work for the government (doctors, teachers, etc.), or is accepted as a student by the Academies at the Sultan's Mosque. Otherwise one must apply to the Legislature rather than a Random Synod, and not all applications are accepted. Papers are sometimes granted in return for an amusing or eloquent speech, but rumor has it that connections at Court can count for more than a pleasing personality.

Except for a few hard-baked Christians, Sonsorolans and Watsonians live in what appears to be perfect harmony. Inter-marriage has become common (often without benefit of clergy or state), and the youngest generation has all the beauty and vitality of a new breed.

The Way of Sonsorol may be possible only on a tropical island, and some argue that this brand of libertarian utopianism cannot be transplanted to the outside world. However, others believe otherwise. In an editorial (in the *Court Gazette*, March 10, 1985), the Sultan himself wrote, "No one who loves freedom can hear of Sonsorol without longing, without envy, without nostalgia for something unknown but deeply desired... Sonsorol could be created anywhere — nothing stands in the way but false consciousness and the grim power of those rulers who feast on false consciousness like vampires. We call for a network of Port Watsons to encircle the Earth: one, two, many, an infinite number of Port Watsons! Let those who envy us transmute their frustration into anger and insurrection, into a determination to enjoy utopia *now*, not in some neverneverland after death or after the Revolution. We reach out to those who yearn for us in the poverty-ridden 'third world,' the ideology-choked 'second world,' and the illusion-riddled 'West' — and we whisper across thousands of miles to tell them, 'Don't despair: Port Watson exists *within* you, and you can make it real'."



Aside from the cultural life of the Palace and Mosque, nothing much ever happens. Those who want "action" live in Port Watson — those who prefer "non-action" in Sonsorol City — and those who like both drift back and forth from one to the other, as the mood strikes them.

11. Other Excursions



Across the *Garuda Bridge* from Sonsorol City are the ruins of the *Spanish Fort*, and a rather picturesque little fishing village that goes by the same name.

The three coral atolls which lie within a few miles of Sonsorol can be visited by hired boat or canoe from either Port Watson or Sonsorol City. *Ngemelan* is inhabited only seasonally, but *Ngesaba* and *Garap* have small anarchist communities (including a hunter/gatherer "tribe" and a nudist colony!) Snorkeling, swimming, fishing and other tropical pleasures abound, and many people prefer the white coral beaches to Sonsorol's black volcanic sand.

On the northern and northwestern sides of the island a few farm villages and rural communes endure much heavier rainfall and heat in order to attain almost total privacy. The only way to get there is by jeep or on foot. One village, *New Canaan*, consists of die-hard Calvinists who hate both anarchism and the Moro Way, but have yet to refuse their dividends (not recommended to the visitor); another, *Nyarlahatap*, is the headquarters of a cult of black magicians (also not recommended).

On the slope of Mt. Sonsorol north of Port Watson and just inside the Enclave border lie the enigmatic monolithic ruins called *Nbusala*, thought to date back beyond the coming of the Moro pirates. Popular myth calls it "The Temple of the Clouds" and associates it with lost archaic myth and legend. Nearby, the highest waterfall on the island lends the area further enchantment. The climb through steamy jungle is exhausting, but the spot is popular with artists, yogis and neo-pagans who consider it a "power place", the island's living heart.

12. How To Become A Resident



Sonsorol has no tourists and few visitors, and some of the latter can't bear to leave. The Bank's computers have opined that the island could double its population in five years without lowering the average dividend or causing any over-crowding, but in fact the rate of growth is much smaller. How can a visitor become a permanent resident?

Those of independent means can simply settle in Port Watson and do as they please — as long as they agree to "sign the Articles." To become a Shareholder however one must either be taken in by an already-existing commune or company, or else convince a Random Synod

mosses, hepatics, ferns, orchids, etc. Sonsorol enjoys plenty of fresh water, including waterfalls in the hills, and even a small river, the *Garuda*.

Vegetation: typical tropical abundance and variety, including many species of orchids and a plethora of other tropical flowers and fruit. Formerly copra, taro, sugar-cane and pineapples were cultivated in the southwestern savannah region; now the plantations have been abandoned and gone wild except for a few coconut groves reserved for local consumption (every part of the plant is used, in cooking, building, etc.) Indigenous fauna are sparse, mostly limited to birds and insects (which can prove annoying). Pigs, chickens, goats and other European species were imported in the 17th century. Fishing is spectacular, and provides both a staple diet and a good deal of sport; the three small coral atolls which belong to Sonsorol offer superb snorkeling and abound in rare types of tropical fish (see *Excursions*).

Nearly circular in shape, and lacking any decent bays or inlets, Sonsorol would at first seem strategically unsuited to its ancient role as pirate enclave; however, the coral reefs which surround the island provide a sort of lagoon in which ships can ride at anchor "in the roads" quite safely, even in heavy weather.

2. How To Get There



Travel in the Pacific usually consumes either too much time or too much money. Sonsorol remains one of the least accessible islands in the entire area. No commercial airline lands there. Freighters carry cargo to Sonsorol from Mindanao, Java, Taiwan, Hong Kong and other ports, but the only ship which calls there with some regularity is *The Queen of Yap*, a rusty tramp steamer which plies between Zamboanga and the Caroline Islands, roughly once a month. (Information and reservations can be obtained from the Ngulu Maritime Co. Ltd., Kalabat, Yap, U.S. Trust Territory of the Pacific.)

Port Watson is now the only port of entry for Sonsorol, and no Customs & Immigration Authority exists there. However, no one can hope to escape notice in a town so small. Anyone who stays more than a month or so will probably be asked politely either to apply for residence or else leave (see *How to Become a Resident*).

Visitors to the Republic of Sonsorol (outside the Port Watson Enclave) are encouraged to have their passports stamped at the Post Office at Government House in Sonsorol City (q.v.) — the "visa" stamp is quite beautiful — but no one will insist on this. Neither Port Watson nor the Republic have any police, so the residents tend to watch out for trouble and take responsibility for solving problems. Unfriendly, abusive, thieving or obstreperous visitors have been beaten up by vigilantes or Peoples' Militia, and exiled on the next ship out.



Generally however visitors are welcome ("not tourists, but *visitors*," the Sultan said once), and the inhabitants are friendly, even excessively so.

3. History Before Independence



The "aboriginal" inhabitants, of mixed Malay and Polynesian ancestry, may not have arrived till the 14th century; whether they met and absorbed any earlier groups is unknown. Presumably these people were "pagans" of some sort; traces of their language survive in place names, craft terminology etc., although the present dialect consists of a bewildering mix of Bahasa Malay, Suluese, Spanish, Dutch and English. (Apparently, interesting drama and poetry is now being composed in this Sonsorolan "language"). All that remains of the "pre-historic" or pre-Moro Period is an enigmatic ruin near a waterfall high on the slope of Mt. Sonsorol (see *Excursions*).

Around the middle of the 17th century, Sonsorol was invaded by pirates from Sulu who called themselves Moros ("Moors", i.e. Moslems) even though their crews included Sea Dyaks, Bugis from the Celebes, Javanese and other "lascar types". Their semi-legendary admiral, Sultan Ilanun Moro, settled down with some of his followers — who thus became an island "aristocracy" of sorts.

Islam sat rather lightly on the Sonsorol Moros: the stricture of the Divine Law they ignored, and illiteracy kept them ignorant of the Koran. Like bedouin of the sea, religion served them as a new ethnic identity and an excuse to plunder their "unbelieving" victims.

With Sonsorol as a base, they continued their predation and grew moderately wealthy — and finally acquired a modicum of culture. In the late 18th and early 19th centuries Javanese taste prevailed, and Indonesian sufis visited the island.

Unfortunately not a single architectural trace of this "Golden Age" survived the invasion and conquest by Spanish forces under the Governor of the Philippines, Narcisco Clavería y Zaldua, in 1850. The Sonsorol Sultans were nearly the last of the Moro pirates to be subdued and the conquistadors imposed upon them a ruinous and rapacious colonial regime, including forced conversion and outright slavery.

By 1867, however, the Spanish had lost interest in the island, which produced nothing but copra and resentment. The Dutch rulers of Indonesia added Sonsorol to their empire after a single desultory battle; the natives considered the Dutch an improvement over the hated Spanish, and at first raised few objections — in fact, a great many converted to the Dutch Reformed Church.

Dutch influence remains strong in Sonsorol. Scarcely a family on the island lacks European blood; Dutch words survive in the dialect; the Old Quarter of Sonsorol City (q.v.) boasts several modest but pleasant

lives center around the Sultan's "Palace," (actually a twelve-room villa), and the Sultan's Mosque, a large but simple Javanese-style *kraton* with covered courtyard, surrounded by adjacent villas, workshops and gardens.

Sultan Pak Harjanto Abdul-Rahman Moro IV (born 1945) may have renounced all power, but scarcely all activity. His fascination with both libertarian philosophy and traditional Sonsorolan mysticism has inspired him to create several closely-linked cultural and educational institutions which are centered around the Mosque. The Court Gamelan (a Javanese percussion orchestra imported in the late 19th century and extremely precious) finds its performers in the *Palace Academy of Traditional Arts & Crafts*. Connected with this are two schools for children, one for boys and one for girls, which teach music, dance, art and batik-making, but generally ignore everything else. Sonsorolan children who want a modern education can attend the co-ed "Government School" or one of the Port Watson Academies. But here, all is archaic, refined, *recherché*, even a bit decadent and perverse. The students suffer no traditional discipline, however: they're free to come and go as they like, so long as they fulfil their "contract" to study and perform at the weekly public concerts (every Friday starting around sundown and lasting sometimes till dawn) which constitute the central ritual of the Moro Way.

Along with the Palace Academy and the two childrens' schools, the Mosque also maintains a batik workshop, theater and dance classes for amateurs and aficionados, a library of works on Sonsorolan culture and history, and regular sessions of group meditation. Martial arts are also taught. Sonsorol City's one newspaper, the monthly *Court Gazette*, is also published here and printed on the old press at Government House.

The enrollment at these institutions consists of as many "settlers" as "natives". Some Watsonians have become citizens of the Republic in order to live and study in Sonsorol City. Traditional arts and especially music enjoy great esteem, particularly among the new generation of native-born settlers' children; perhaps they're rebelling against their parents' anarchism by this infatuation with gamelan and *Ramayana*, the wearing of sarongs and batik and flowers in their hair, the aping of old-fashioned Moro mannerisms, and a cult of piracy and sorcery.

The westerners in Sonsorol City live either around the Palace and Mosque, or else along the coast in the former Dutch neighborhood. At the head of "Dutchman's Beach" is *The Old Colonial Club*, now occupied by the City's only two real restaurants: one devoted to native cuisine (*The Corsair's Cave*), the other to French gourmet elegance (*Chez Ravachol*) — both are expensive. The Club also offers a game room with "the only pinball machines in all Oceania." Along the beach to the west lie the old Dutch villas, some in ruins, others inhabited by settler-communes of artists, musicians and other aesthetes with a taste for the quiet life, or for hobnobbing at Court.



single policeman to restrain the madness. As one graffiti in the (co-ed) toilet at the Cannibal Café puts it: "After midnight the Social Contract is cancelled! (signed) The Lord of Misrule."

10. Excursion To Sonsorol City



An old school bus, completely rebuilt in shining bronze and chrome, plies back and forth along the only paved road in Sonsorol, from the Bazaar in Port Watson to the capital of the Republic, Sonsorol City. (That is, it does so when someone can be found to drive it.) The road passes through the Savannah, the most heavily populated and cultivated rural area on the island, farmed mostly by native Christian Sonsorolan families who cling to the "virtues" of hard work.

Life in the Republic flows at a slower and more conservative pace than in the Free Enclave. The older natives either cling to Dutch Reformed attitudes or else follow the Moro Way with all its subtlety, fine manners, aesthetic elitism and "magical superstition". The Republic lacks a police-force, but the people tend to conform to certain *mores*, at least in public, and within the context of a general Polynesian-style easy-going morality. The visitor should remember not to offend any sensibilities by overtly Watsonian behavior (such as public fucking).

Sonsorol City is even smaller and sleepier than Port Watson. The bus drops you off in a dusty street of ugly corrugated-iron-front shops along the river bank. At one end of *Market Street* lies a small but ultra-modern *Hospital*, the only new building in the City. At the other end sits the "*Calvinist Cathedral*", actually a small and rather undistinguished Dutch-style church built in 1910 (the Rector is Dutch and liberal; he preaches "Tolstoy, Thoreau and Gandhi"!)

West of the Cathedral lies the "*Christian Quarter*", a neighborhood of small tropical/colonial bungalows centered around *Government House*, the former colonial administration building in the Dutch-Indonesian "Batavian" style, with raised amsterdammish facade of pink coral and red-tile roof, where one can attend an occasional session of the Legislature, and listen to rants and harangues from every point of view from Protestant fundamentalism to mystical anarcho-monarchism. The *Post Office*, a public computer center, and an old hand-set printing press constitute the only regularly functioning State Organs, but the plaza in front of Government House is pleasantly shaded and popular with evening strollers and gossips.

Between Government House and the river lies the *Moro Quarter*, where the old Batavian villas are worth a walking tour. The Moro "aristocrats" number less than two hundred, and no longer enjoy any income or prerogative higher than other citizens — in fact, most of them refuse to work, and live off their Bank dividends, modest and penurious. Their

houses in "Batavian" style, with raised facades and red tile roofs; the Calvinist "Cathedral" and the small Government House are also worth a visit.

In this period the Moro "aristocracy" (those who traced descent from the pirates) reverted to their easy-going brand of Islam. The Sultans were allowed "courtesy titles" but remained powerless and penniless. Javanese culture shaped their attitudes, especially the arts of gamelan and dance, the esoteric teachings of the *kebatiman* sects (including martial arts and sorcery), and the millenarian concept of the "Just King". Out of this ferment — a strange blend of revolutionary proto-nationalism and mystical fervor — resentment of the Dutch began to fester.

In 1907 (the same year the Netherlands finally subdued northern Sumatra), the Sultan of Sonsorol, Pak Harjanto Abdul Rahman Moro I, staged a tragic and futile uprising against colonial forces. It is said his followers believed themselves magically invulnerable to bullets. The Sultan and other conspirators were executed, the title abolished, and the island sank into depression, somnolence, lassitude and obscurity.

At the start of World War II, Sonsorol's population had sunk to about 2000, with a Dutch garrison and administration of fewer than fifty. In 1942, the Japanese made an easy conquest of the island, sent the Europeans to prison-camps in Java, built a few bunkers (still extant), left behind a token force, and departed for the invasion of Malaysia.

The new Japanese overlords behaved harshly, almost sadistically — if the tales still told on Sonsorol can be credited — and anti-Japanese sentiment survives to this day. In 1945, a single cruiser manned by Australian and New Zealand naval forces arrived to liberate the island. The Japanese put up a suicidal resistance, and the native population, led by Sultan Pak Harjanto III (grandson of the "martyr" of 1907) — joined in the battle for freedom on July 20.

The post-war period found Sonsorol with new colonial masters: a Joint Protectorate under Australia and New Zealand. A slump in the price of copra ruined the last vestiges of the economy; emigration soared, and by 1952 the population had sunk beneath a thousand. The Protectorate, burdened with the administration of other Pacific islands, ignored Sonsorol except as a source of cheap labor.

The Sultan, hero of the liberation, began to agitate for independence; a sincere admirer of western democracy, he believed that political freedom would somehow solve the island's problem. In 1962 the Protectorate allowed a plebescite, and a clear majority chose independence under a Constitutional Monarchy. On August 17th of that year, the Joint Protectorate withdrew.

4. History Since Independence



The expected benefits of freedom failed to materialize. Emigra-



tion was now cut off; only sparse and grudging aid from the former Protectorate Powers kept the population from complete destitution. In 1967 the Sultan sent his young son and heir, Pak Harjanto Abdul-Rahman IV, to college in America, hoping vaguely that this might somehow result in an infusion of U.S. aid. The Crown Prince obtained a scholarship to Berkeley University, and majored in economics.

In California the Prince felt attracted to "the Movement" — civil rights, anti-war, free speech and expression, ecological awareness, Haight-Ashbury, etc. — and soon found himself convinced by libertarian anarchist philosophy. At college he met Travis B. O'Conner, the scion and heir of an Oklahoma-Texas oil family (not *super-rich*, but definitely millionaires); they took a year's leave of absence from school and enjoyed an American *wanderjahr* together. The Prince never lost a sense of responsibility toward his homeland: all his thought and study aimed at his peoples' salvation, or at least relief. O'Conner found himself fascinated by tales of Sonsorol, and together the young friends plotted and dreamed.

They reasoned thus: virtually all classical Utopias — from Plato's Republic to Brook Farm — involve a high degree of *abstraction*. The implementation of abstract ideas in society requires a correspondingly high level of *authoritarian control*. As a result, most Utopias in practice have proven oppressive and deadening — "social planning" would seem to be an offense by definition against the "human spirit". O'Conner and the Sultan desired an anarchist utopia, one without authority — and yet they realized that utopia is impossible without abstraction.

The greatest and most oppressive of all modern abstractions is finance, *banking*, the creation of wealth out of nothing, out of pure imagination. Now the pirates of old lived virtually without authority — even their captains were virtually mere first-among-equals — and they created lawless "utopias" or enclaves financed by *stolen wealth*. The two young friends decided that since Sonsorol could never produce any real wealth, they must follow the pirate path — admittedly the way of parasites and bandits rather than "true revolutionaries" — and *steal* the energy they needed to fund and found their utopia. The bank robber robs banks "because that's where the money is" — but the *banker* robs banks and even his own depositors with total legal impunity. The California dreamers decided to go into banking.

In 1979 the old Sultan died and his son succeeded to the throne of a forgotten and ruined island. At once he and O'Conner began to activate their plan. It began with the creation of a mercantile bank called "The Ilanun Moro Savings & Loan Association" (ironically named after the pirate-founder of the dynasty). The new Sultan then railroaded a series of bills through the island legislature: he arranged for the creation of a *free port enclave*, Port Watson (the origin of the name has never been explained), consisting of ten square kilometers of abandoned copra plantations. The Bank, making use of O'Conner family connections and capi-

of Port Watson!), an arts monthly, a plethora of pamphlets and a small but steady stream of actual books (including some in the Sonsorolan dialect) published by companies with fanciful names — Chithulu Press, New Rocking Horse Books, Fourth Eye Books, End of the World News & Stationary — and of course a Pirate Press.

Post-New Age spirituality thrives in the Enclave. Collectives and communes are often organized around some Path or life-therapy. A partial listing of such organizations includes: Wicca and other forms of neopaganism (including a rather spurious revival of ancient Sonsorolan polytheism based on Castefieda, Lovecraft and Margaret Mead!); various forms of Taoism (traditional/magical, philosophical/alchemical, and anarcho/chaotic); Chinese Zen; Church of the SubGenius; Temple of Eris; the Illuminati; "Mystical Anarchism"; tantra-yoga; Chinese and Japanese martial arts, especially *tai chi* and *silat*; various Ceremonial Magick circles and orders, including a "New Golden Dawn" and a "Reformed O.T.O."; Church of Satan; the Sabbatai Sevi School of Magical Judaism; the Si Fan ("a conspiracy devoted to world-wide subversion and poetic terror"); the Gnostic Catholic Church; the Temple of Materialist Atheism; Church of Priapus; and so on. One of the most popular spiritual paths in Sonsorol, including Port Watson, is the so-called "Moro Way", a brand of pure esotericism rooted in Javanese *kebatinan*, sufism, shamanism, Hindu mythology and heterodox Islam. The "Mosque" in the Bazaar serves as a center for groups such as Sumarah, the School of Invulnerability, the "Moorish Orthodox Church", the Moro Academy of Meditation, etc. (See *Sonsorol City* for more details.) Meetings, seances, classes, etc. are advertised on the "Great Wall."

9. Nightlife & Recreation

Just as the Watsonians created their own "Slums," so also they have their own "red-light district" — not from any economic necessity but simply because they *enjoy* sloth and vice. After dark, Godown St. becomes a den of iniquity and doesn't close till dawn. Night-trippers start with a meal in China St., move on to the *Cannibal Café* for coffee, thence to *Euphoria* (a casino), *The Johann Most Memorial Dance Hall* (a rock palace), *Bishop Sin's Massage Parlor* (the closest thing to a brothel in Sonsorol), *The Unrepentant Faggot* (a gay bar), *Café Voltairine* (a lesbian club), *Eat The Rich!* (a late-nite snackbar) and other short-lived fancifully-named dives. Usually these clubs consist of no more than a ramshackle lean-to in an alley between two warehouses painted in lurid colors and perhaps boasting a dadaesque neon sign. Visitors take note: you're not *exactly* risking your life on Godown St., but one never knows (so to speak) what's in the punch. Watsonians need never pine for the insanity of big city life: it's all concentrated here — without a



counterparts, they sometimes seem to have arrived from another planet... yet at the same time they are obviously the *real* Watsonians.

7. Where to Stay & Eat



Port Watson boasts only one commercial inn, *The White Flower Motel* on China St., a two-storey building with a courtyard owned and operated by an old Taoist "adept", doyen of the Chinese community, Mr. Chang. Single \$15 a night, double \$25. "Budget" visitors will find huts or rooms for rent in the Slums for as little as two dollars a day, and if all else fails the Bank maintains several free guest-rooms (for visiting financiers, in theory).

China St. is the place to eat, and Port Watson qualifies as a genuine "food trip", as the budget-travelers say. *The Yellow Turban Society* specializes in Peking and Mongolian cuisine. *The Manchu Pretender* in Cantonese and Hong Kong (the proprietor claims to be the "lost dauphin" of China!), and *The Cinnabar Immortal* serves Taoist/Buddhist vegetarian cuisine of the highest quality.

Little cafés and restaurants spring up and vanish in the Slums. Two of the longest-enduring are *The Crowbar Club*, which specializes in sea food, and a hamburger stand called "McBakunin's"! *The Drugstore* serves coffee and pastry, among other things.

The Bank maintains an American-style cafeteria which is cheap and popular, nicknamed *The Willie Sutton Bar & Grill*. Market days in the bazaar are also feast-days, with numerous entrepreneurs selling everything from homemade coconut cake to imported truffles.

8. Cultural & Spiritual Activities



Not an evening passes on Sonsorol without a performance somewhere — music (Classical, gamelan and rock are popular), dance, drama, poetry, etc. Watch the Big Character Wall for announcements. Sculptors and artists display their work in public; and all over the island one may stumble across aesthetic surprises, artworks blended into the landscape, or landscape *as* art, or *objets trouvés* (finders keepers), or (in one case) a giant green plastic Godzilla standing alone in the jungle. The Bank presents evening programs of old movies and shows "pirated" from TV satellites. Few Watsonians own televisions (many eschew electricity altogether), but they enjoy watching occasionally at the Bank, laughing at the commercials. A few artists work in film and video, and use the Bank's facilities — which are "state of the art."

In this leisured society books are considered a necessity, and local publishing thrives out of all proportion with the population. This town boasts two weekly newspapers (one called *The Protocols of the Elders*

tal, moved to Port Watson and began "off shore" operations; phantom subsidiaries, tax-free registrations, "cut-outs" and "strange loops", currency speculations, secret go-between activity for mainland Chinese interests, laundering funds for certain overseas-Chinese "businessmen", numbered accounts and so on. Port Watson was planned to enjoy virtual freedom from law; the bank practises a new and invisible form of "piracy". Since it depends for its efficacy on satellite communications, it might perhaps be called Space Piracy!

The Sonsorol Bank possesses few "real" assets, little that could be looted — its wealth exists largely in computer memories. Its discreet machinations are tolerated by international banking interests; after all, a "blind" account or something of the sort proves useful, from time to time, even in the most respectable financial circles. Almost overnight (1976-1980) Sonsorol grew moderately well-to-do.

Every citizen of Sonsorol and resident of Port Watson, child, woman and man, was made an equal shareholder in the Bank; everyone — including the Sultan and O'Conner — owns exactly one share of the profits. By 1980, around a thousand people in Port Watson and 2000 in Sonsorol each received an annual dividend of about \$4000. In 1985 the total population reached about 9000 and the dividend slightly more than \$5000 — virtually a guaranteed income.

Aside from the creation of Port Watson and the Bank, very few changes were made in the legal structure of Sonsorol, which remains (at least on paper) an Anglo-American-style republic with a legislature, army, police, compulsory education, taxation and so forth. No foreign power can accuse the island of "anarchy" — and in any case the Labour Government of New Zealand has recently signed a defense treaty which offers international recognition and protection for the Republic. On the surface, all is normal. The Constitution was amended to disestablish the Dutch Reformed Church and allow freedom of religion (1976); and in 1979 the Sultan abdicated all executive function and reduced himself to a ceremonial figurehead. As he put it, "I attained the state of the Taoist Sage-King described in the *Chuang Tzu*: I sit on my throne facing in a propitious direction — and do absolutely nothing!"

In practice, however, the functions of the Republic have almost entirely lapsed into desuetude. No army or police exist because no one will join them; instead, a volunteer Peoples' Militia serve in emergencies (extremely rare so far). Taxes are not collected; moral laws are not enforced; the Legislature passes no new laws (although it meets from time to time to debate projects and philosophical issues); schools exist but attendance is voluntary. No one needs to work, and many find their Shares enough to support lives of Polynesian *dolce far niente*. Anyone who objects to the "minarchy-monarchy" of the Republic can move to Port Watson, where no law exists at all.

The "real work" of Sonsorol, banking, can be handled by a handful of part-time computer hackers and wheeler-dealers (nicknamed



"Sindonistas"); however, the Sultan and O'Conner wanted to see Port Watson become a genuine libertarian community, and they encouraged immigration by offering interest-free loans and even outright grants to useful and sympathetic people. Several major collectives were founded: the Energy Center (q.v.), a Co-op for alternate energy, appropriate technology and experimental agriculture; and the Academies (q.v.), devoted to education and research — schools for children, and "natural philosophy" of all sorts for advanced students.

Small entrepreneurs, mostly overseas Chinese, were also invited to set up shop; energetic and thrifty, they expanded their shares into small businesses and now dominate various aspects of Port Watson's commercial life. Hundreds of libertarians and anarchists from Europe and the Americas flocked to Sonsorol, each with some life-experiment, New Age cult, utopian commune, craft, art or pet project. Some Sonsorolans who had migrated to New Zealand in the '40's and '50's came back to claim their Citizen's Shares. The island came alive — once again — thanks to "piracy"!

In Port Watson, all business and indeed all human relations are carried out by *contract*. No regulatory body exists to interfere in agreements made between "consenting partners," whether in bed or in a banking deal. Contracts can be witnessed by an independent arbitrage company; complaints against groups or individuals are adjudicated by a "Random Synod" — a computer-chosen *ad hoc* committee of Shareholders. The Synod has no power of enforcement. In theory a "defendant" who refused the Synod's recommendations would go free and the complainant would have no recourse but duel or vendetta; in practice however this has occurred only once or twice. New settlers in Port Watson are asked only to agree to live according to this non-system, to donate one day a month to community projects (known as "shit-work"), and to refrain from coercive or oppressive behavior. This agreement is called "signing the Articles", after the custom amongst old-time buccaneers and corsairs. Indeed, Port Watson's form of "government" might well be called a Covenantancy of Pirates — or perhaps laissez-faire communism — or anarcho-monarchy (since each human being is considered a "free lord" or sovereign agent.)

Land is "owned" only when occupied and used. A typical commune may consist of a single building, no land, three or four members (perhaps even a "nuclear family"!); or a farm-sized collective with 12-25 members and several buildings. Economic independence makes solitary life feasible; but a group can pool resources, afford better housing and share luxuries. Nearly everyone belongs to some form of collective, union or sodality, from informal dining clubs to strict ideological utopian communes (mostly in the hills outside town). "Phalansteries" or erotic affinity groups are popular; so are craft guilds and esoteric cults (see *Cultural/Spiritual Activities*).

bourse of the Enclave. Tuesdays and Thursdays are "Market Days," although parts of the Co-op are always open. Amazing luxuries from all over the world (tax-free, of course) make the bazaar an unknown Shopper's Paradise; electronic goods for example are cheaper here than in Hong Kong or Singapore. The architecture of the bazaar is scarcely noteworthy, but in the middle of the plaza sits a small ornate pre-fabricated mosque imported in pieces from Pakistan via Brunei and assembled here as *The Sultan Pak Harjanto I Center for Esoteric Studies* (named after the Martyr of 1907 who brought Javanese sorcery to Sonsorol). All pink minarets and green scallops and white and gold like a child's birthday cake, with liquorish icing of Arabic calligraphy, the "Mosque" is used as a performance space and public meditation hall. Surrounded by a small flower garden and shade trees, it makes a pleasant retreat from the heat and dust of the Bazaar.

Another amusing feature of the Bazaar is *The Big Character Wall* (or "Great Wall"), where notices, flyers, poems, curses, graffiti and "big character slogans" are posted or painted — a sort of giant unmovable newspaper. A book fair (trade, exchange, purchase) is held here on Tuesdays.

A kilometer along the beach west of the Slums lies *The Academies*, a cluster of communities and collectives devoted to education and knowledge, occupying an area of deserted copra plantations. Some of the architecture is restored colonial (not very interesting); the rest of it represents an attempt to create a new Sonsorolan "vernacular" making use of traditional materials (palm, thatch, coral) and the "alternative tech" comforts provided by the Energy Center. Buildings here are named after Ferrer, Goodman, Fiere, Neill, Illich, Reich... and the educational theories practiced derive from their teachings. Higher scientific research is limited, of course, but computer access and more-than-adequate funding for certain projects have resulted in a spirit of breakthrough in — for example — ESP studies, theoretical physics and math, genetics and biology (especially morphogenetic field research) and even a modest observatory (named after Prince Kropotkin).

Children occupy a unique position in Port Watson. As Shareholders from birth they are financially independent, and no legal or moral force binds them to their "families" if they want to live on their own. Both at the Academies and elsewhere in the Enclave, Polynesian-style childrens' communes thrive without "adult supervision". They choose their own educational curricula and pay for the specialized knowledge they desire — or else they apprentice themselves to some trade — or else do nothing at all but play and enjoy themselves. Sexual freedom between or among *any* consenting partners is taken for granted in Port Watson. Childlife has mutated into a cross between *Coming of Age in Samoa* and a computerized play-utopia; happy, healthy and uninhibited, both more serious and more *savage* than their American or European



an Erector Set put together on Acid. The genial Whole-Earth-New-Al-chemy techies of the Energy Collective adore all this machinery, dirt, noise and inventiveness. The Bank may pay the bills, they say — but maybe not forever. And meanwhile the Energy Center is the living heart of Port Watson.

But the *Bank* must take the prize for the island's most Absurdist architecture. Built by some Neo-Futurist Italian design team, already it's falling apart; but everyone enjoys its extravagance andchutzpah, so the Bankers grumble but spend to keep it up and functional. Shaped like a cross between an Egyptian and a Mayan pyramid, sort of squashed out, seven stories high, all of the black reflecting glass and stainless steel (now looking rather rusty after four typhoon seasons) — the whole concept so ultra-post-modern it approaches Comic Opera (or Space Opera!)... and yet, its shapes reflect the dead volcano which makes up the island's mass, and its color reflects the black sand, and its rust harmonizes with the tropical heat... and after the first shock and giggle, one falls a bit under its spell! a BANK! plopped down on this equatorial isle, shaped like the Illuminatus symbol on a dollar bill (only no eye) — heavy, dense and yet shimmering like obsidian.

Inside, the Bank is bisected right down the middle. One half remains open, a "cathedral space" without partitions, a huge glasshouse or botanical crystal-palace or arboretum, raucous with tropical flowers and uncaged birds — staircases and ramps lead to balconies and hanging gardens — glass tubes with escalators inside them (like De Gaulle Airport in Paris) crisscross the vast space, giving the "lobby" a Pirenesi/Buck Rogers atmosphere — fountains splash on the ground level or fall in cascades — and Watsonians come here to picnic or fuck in the foliage.

The other half of the Bank is the Sultan Ilanun Moro Bank itself, a maze of offices, computer rooms, vaults (said to contain almost nothing of value), living quarters for the Bankers (who tend to be Libertarian computer hacks and anarcho-capitalist visionaries), all ultra-modern and air-conditioned, futurologistic and severe. The Bank maintains a satellite dish near the peak of Mount Sonorol, and computers are manned 24 hours a day for financial and political news. Some islanders who are not members of the Bank Collective have nevertheless taken to punting in international finance games; speculation and gambling are popular sports.

The Bank also serves as a community center: a printing press, a medical clinic (called "Immortality Inc.", for some reason), a popular cafeteria, a tape and record library and other facilities are open to the public.

Between China St. and the Bank lies the *Bazaar*, a large open (hot and dusty) plaza surrounded by more corrugated-iron shops and palm-thatched shanty-stores, plus a large building not unlike a supermarket or mall. All this together constitutes the great *Port Watson Peoples' Cooperative Center*, the exchange mart, import-export boutique, grocery bin and

5. Money (A Note for the Traveler) \$ £

"No prey, no pay!" and "To each according to the bounty; from each according to whim!" — these might be Port Watson's mottos. Even the Republic of Sonorol has no currency of its own (although it does sell lovely postage stamps). For small transactions such as paying for a meal or newspaper any foreign currency will do in theory, although in practice New Zealand pounds or U.S. dollars are preferred. Larger transactions are generally carried out by computer, since all Shareholders have an "account" to draw on. Visitors may find it convenient to deposit some of their funds in the Bank, either in a "holding" or a "moving" account. The former is simply an electronic lock-box. A "moving" account constitutes an actual investment in the Bank. In February 1985, such accounts paid 7.5% interest, and in March 12%; frugal travelers may actually leave Sonorol richer than they arrived!

The islanders have worked out a rather elaborate computerized barter system amongst themselves. A crafts collective which produces batik, for example, will turn over its stock to the Port Watson Cooperative (called "The 5 & 10" by local wits) in exchange for a certain amount of credit, measured in abstract quanta. Members of the collective can then use their credit towards any goods at the Co-op. Both the Co-op and several independent Chinese merchants act as import-export agents, filling orders for foreign goods and luxuries in return for Bank or Co-op credit. Price-fixing does not exist; the value of local produce is determined by computer, but imports and goods sold outside the Co-op system are subject to intense bargaining, reminiscent of the oriental bazaar. Naive visitors have sometimes been duped by Watsonian sharpies. *Cautea emptor.*

Many groups within the Port Enclave are eager to establish barter and communications with alternative networks elsewhere in the world. As much as possible, Sonorol attempts to avoid official international trade with all its tariffs and taxes and regulations, and to rely instead on non-governmental non-commercial contacts with communes, collectives, *bolos*, craft groups and individuals around the world — especially those which share the libertarian-anarchist perspective. Visitors to Sonorol are particularly welcome when they offer some contact with the "outside", such as "potlatch" (exchange of gifts), barter, cultural contact, exchange of hospitality, etc.

Shareholders are free to do whatever they want with their dividends, and to engage in any business which pleases them and involves no coercion, wage-slavery or rapacious greed. However, outside the island community (and the widening network of "alternate" world contacts) these constraints vanish. Like their pirate predecessors, the Sonorolans are "at war with all the world" when it comes to



seizing some commercial or fiscal advantage. As a result, many Watsonians have grown quite wealthy — especially the Bankers and the Chinese merchants. Any display of excessive affluence is considered bad taste, even “oppressive” — epicurean comfort and aesthetic indulgence meet with social approval, but the “typical Watsonian” is said to be a millionaire who lives like a beachcomber, a Taoist hermit or an artist, and donates large amounts to various radical charities and revolutionary causes around the world. Islanders like to quote Emma Goldman’s quip about the “champagne revolution”, and Nietzsche’s remark about “radical aristocracy.” Money, ultimately, means very little here (except as a game); the real value-scale is based on pleasure, self-realization and life enhancement.

6. Sightseeing in Port Watson

Port Watson has sprung up rapidly and has the taste of a gold-rush town despite its tropical languor. Its architecture appears eccentric, and “city planning” is considered a dirty word. Everyone builds where and what they like, from thatch-hut to junkyard to geodesic dome or quonset, pre-fab or traditional, aesthetic-personal or functional-ugly. Most streets are unpaved, and automobiles are rarely seen — although several hundred “free bikes” (painted white) lie about for anyone who needs them.

The population of the enclave is said to be about 2000, although no census has ever been taken. Perhaps half are native Sonsorolans; the other half consists of many nationalities, the largest percentage probably North Americans — then Chinese, Australians and New Zealanders, Europeans (British, French, German, etc.), Scandinavians, South Americans, a scattering of Filipinos, Javanese and other Southeast Asians; and individuals from such unlikely places as Iran, Egypt, South Africa. Most of the “settlers” came to work for the Bank or one of the other Port Watson concerns, although a significant number “just happened by, and decided to stay.” Living styles range from Gauguinesque beachcombing to the international jet-set (the Bank’s roving front-people), but the majority fall somewhere between such extremes.

Important: the traveler should constantly bear in mind that Port Watson differs from the rest of the world in one major respect: the absence of *all law*. Some Watsonians like to depict their town as a cross between *The Heart of Darkness* and Tombstone City — there’s gossip about duels and feuds, stories about “little wars” between communes, etc. — but in truth these incidents are quite rare, possibly even apocryphal. Nevertheless, the newcomer should be aware that *no authority* exists to pluck anyone from danger or difficulty; every Watsonian takes full responsibility for personal actions; the visitor must willily follow suit.

Libertarian theory predicts that such a system — or non-system! — will lead to greater peace and harmony than violence and disorder, provided every individual owns wealth, and agrees not to force or oppress another human being. In practice the theory seems to work — after all, Port Watson is really a small town on a small island, a “social ecology” that reinforces cooperation and even conformity. For all their anarchist bluster, most Watsonians are too blissed out to cause trouble — but a visitor who fails to grasp the “unwritten code” or display the correct laid-back good manners may well suffer unpleasant consequences.

The *jetty* bustles with activity: lighters unloading cargo from some tramp steamer anchored out in the lagoon; fishing boats coming and going, the crews haggling with Co-op reps over their rainbow-gleaming catch; children playing and swimming; loungers drinking coffee at the popular Cannibal Café. Behind the jetty runs *Godown Street*, named after its row of ugly warehouses or “godowns”; here also are found various maritime offices, chandlers and boat-builders (proas, junks and out-rigger canoes) — and a number of small jerry-built clubs and bars which open around sundown (see *Nightlife*).

Beyond Godown St. lies *China Street*, home of Port Watson’s Chinese community. Shabby one-storey shops with corrugated iron fronts and brilliant calligraphed signs; the island’s only hostelry, the White Flower Motel, and several excellent Chinese restaurants (see *Where to Stay & Eat*); and a small Chinese temple of the sort seen everywhere in Southeast Asia, concrete baroque pillars, pre-fab dragons and phoenixes painted garishly, writhing over an uptilted tiled roof, incense billowing from a gold and crimson altar...: *The South Pole Star Taoist Temple*. Most Watsonian Chinese are Taoists or Ch’an Buddhists, and *tai chi* has become a fad throughout the island.

Along the beach west of China St. an area called “The Slums” sprawls out on the sunny sand — a twin to the post-hippy “budget traveler” ghettos of Goa and Bali; thatched huts and little make-shift bungalows, a few craft shops, coffee-houses and restaurants, a population of beachcombers and lotus-eaters: the voluntary poor of Port Watson. Here also is found the City’s famous “Drug Store”; a detailed description would be impolitic, but you get the idea.

East of the Jetty, about half a kilometer along the road to Sonso-rol City, lies the fabulous *Energy Center*, without doubt the ugliest complex structure on the island. Its work may be environmentally benign, but it *looks* like a stretch of the New Jersey Turnpike transported piecemeal to the tropics and re-assembled by a madman. Banks of gawky towers and experimental windmills (like something from *War of the Worlds*!), sinister black solar collector-banks, huge ungainly generators making electricity from tide, wave and wind power; rows of jerry-rigged plastic hydroponic greenhouses; ateliers and workshops, blacksmith’s shop, Bricolage Center & Garage — all designed like

