RACE RELATIONS IN THE PRE-COLONIAL PACIFIC ISLANDS: A CASE OF PREJUDICE AND PRAGMATISM

by I. C. Campbell

On the whole, race relations in the Pacific islands have been free of the worst manifestations of racialism which are observable in Australian and American history and, to a lesser extent, in New Zealand history. Race wars have been absent, and in the late twentieth century the transition from colonial to indigenous rule has not witnessed the tensions and settlers' fears that have been characteristic elsewhere.

People are apt to conclude from this fairly obvious truth that there was some special quality about racial and cultural contacts in the Pacific, stemming either from some trait of Pacific peoples (their much vaunted tolerance and hospitality) or an attitude on the part of Europeans that was reserved for Pacific islanders (romanticism, humanitarianism, and the myth of the noble savage). This perception--more often implied or assumed than articulated--suggests that there was some mystery about Pacific race relations, and that understanding race relations in the Pacific therefore requires the supposition of nebulous influences that were unique.

It is argued in this essay that peoples and attitudes in the Pacific were no different than elsewhere, even though the quality of interracial behavior very often was. Numerous examples from Melanesia and Polynesia suggest that the most significant feature in the culture contact process was the absence of any clear superiority of power in the hands of one group. Necessity occasioned tolerance and cooperation; opportunity demonstrated bigotry, intolerance, hostility, and violence; and the attitudes and beliefs familiar to scholars of race relations every-

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where can be discerned quite clearly in Pacific history. In short, specific historical circumstances rather than subtle background preconditions are responsible for the comparative harmony of Pacific race relations,

In the continental territories--the new white nations of the future--race relations developed in a context of settlement. Conflict thus became a basic ethic through competition along racial lines for the ownership of resources. The manner of exploiting those resources--a cultural difference--differed also along lines that were largely racial. Thus commercial agriculture was contrasted with subsistence agriculture; pastoralism with hunter-gatherer techniques; industrial metallurgy with stone technology; urban civilization with its prolific tertiary industries was contrasted with relatively small-scale, non-urban communities that were much less differentiated. While there were exceptions on both sides, it is broadly true that in the colonies of settlement the first in each of these economic dualities represented the invading Europeans, while the second in each case represented the indigenous peoples. The first also represented greater wealth and technological power and, ultimately, greater military strength as well. Racial attitudes and behavior are not entirely to be explained in terms of these dualisms; on the contrary, existing attitudes were to a large extent responsible for the continued existence of these dualisms. There are many examples in Australian history, for example, of Aborigines becoming successful farmers, tradesmen, and entrepreneurs and competing successfully with Europeans on European terms, but being excluded from membership in the dominant society by virtue of racial prejudice. In this manner the Aboriginal farmers of Coranderrk in Victoria were deprived of their lands through intrigues of their white neighbors (Reynolds 1972:57-66; Jenkin 1979: chaps. 2 and 8; Barwick 1972:11-68). Similarly in New Zealand the Maoris found that the adoption of European farming methods and successful participation in a money economy did not persuade the settlers of racial equality (Ward 1974:39, 284-285 and chaps. 18-20).

The doctrine of racial inequality, therefore, would seem not to be simply dependent on the existence of economic dualism but to have a more complex origin. The contrasting ways of life at the time of first contact merely contributed to the acceptance of existing ideas of racial inequality. This acceptance of racial inequality at the beginning of the nineteenth century developed by the middle of the century into the dogma, accepted by most settlers, that the respective races were destined to be profoundly different as a result of the operation of a law of nature, or law of history. The destiny of the indigenous people was to be

depopulation, loss of social and political cohesion, dispossession and impoverishment; that of the invaders was to be political and social dominance: the inheritance of the earth.

In the Pacific it was to turn out differently--at least for a time--and the principal difference was that the Pacific islands were not to become colonies of settlement until late in the nineteenth century, and many of them not at all. When Pacific islands did become absorbed into the European empires the spirit of trusteeship not infrequently prevailed.

In the late eighteenth century when Europeans and some Pacific islanders began to come into relatively frequent contact, Europeans were passing through a periodic outburst of primitivism in which Polynesians and other islanders figured prominently. Rousseau, among others, had helped to publicize the doctrine of the noble savage, and the Romantic movement continued to project a sentimental and idealized picture of primitive life, providing much of the basic sympathy for non-Europeans that gave the humanitarian movement of later decades much of its impetus. From the noble savage doctrine in the 1760s (which suggested that "savages" could do no wrong) to the humanitarianism of the Aborigines' Protection Society of the 1830s (which held not that the "savages" could do no wrong, but that the "natives" were more sinned against than sinning), there is a more or less direct line of descent (e.g., Mellor 1951: introduction).

Perhaps the most important difference between the two movements was that the noble savage was a model of native superiority, of natural virtue, beside which civilized Europeans looked meretricious, a little shabby, and very debased. To many of the humanitarians and their contemporaries, the "native" was a creature to be pitied, protected in his helplessness in the face of the European onslaught: a variety of man who had moral and spiritual rights but who was less well fitted by nature than was the European to survive. For this creature, contact with the West was certain to be fatal unless positive steps were taken to elevate him in the scale of creation. This patronizing if charitable attitude was but a short step from the scientific racism of the later nineteenth century.

The humanitarian movement was to have an enormous impact on race relations and on official policy in the Pacific: it provided a stimulus for missionaries, objectives for consuls, and policies for colonial administrators. In contrast, the noble savage myth had much less direct effect on events in the Pacific. The notions of primitive nobility and virtue, or the related idea of the classical simplicity of the islanders, which are erroneously thought to pervade the accounts of Bougainville, Banks,

and their contemporaries, were not widely shared. Such preconceptions did not in fact color the perceptions or actions of Europeans who went to the Pacific in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (Campbell 1980:45-55). On the contrary, there was nothing to distinguish Europeans who went to the Pacific islands from those who went to Australia, Asia, Africa, or America; and among all these people the idea of the noble savage seemed, if it was known at all, a contradiction in terms. The noble savage was never a popular idea; it was no more than a philosophical abstraction, propounded for and discussed by academicians and the literati, propagated among their social equals, and soon abandoned for another enthusiasm. The idea was so much at variance with firmly rooted popular ideas about savages that a passing interest was all that should be expected. That it was seized upon by satirists so quickly indicates that it had no firm hold among the prejudices of the people. There is no reason to think that it ever penetrated further in the ranks of society than to the frequenters of salons and coffee houses.

The majority attitude, and the one most firmly rooted in European civilization in the late eighteenth century, was the very familiar one seen in other historical periods: that colored races were inferior, that they were ferocious, barbaric, treacherous, and probably cannibal, destined for menial and subordinate roles in their relationships with Europeans. This is the attitude taken by Europeans into the Pacific from the age of exploration up to the twentieth century. Captain Cook, famous for his humanity and forbearance, for his insistence on a concept of improvised justice, is conspicuous most of all because he was an exception to the general rule. He knew he was dealing not with ideal prototypes of humanity, but with living human beings with their own desires and failings, who were simply "no wickeder than other men." Like any manager of men he knew that the survival of his expeditions lay in being able to forestall any threats that might arise. More revealing of popular attitudes is the fact that Cook had repeatedly to restrain his crews from wanton mistreatment and even indiscriminate shooting of islanders (Beaglehole 1955-1967, 1:195, 239, app. 2, 4; 2:365-366, 414-418). The indifference toward bloodshed that was so common of the age is more indicative of racial attitudes than any philosophical tract pleading the cause of the noble savage.

Cook, in the end, died at the hands of the Hawaiians on a visit during which several Hawaiians had been needlessly killed. Other explorers had their problems: Wallis in 1767 had to defeat the Tahitians before he could establish workable relations; Surville in 1770 showed brutality

and a want of tact in his relations with the Maoris, despite the kindness they had shown him; in 1773 Cooks companion Furneaux lost a boat-load of ten men to the Maoris; in 1772 the French explorer Marion du Fresne was killed in New Zealand. Wallis's companion, Carteret, left a trail through the Solomons marked with bloodshed at every place he stopped, though through no personal fault of his own. Bougainville at almost the same time also had clashes in the Solomons--and even in Tahiti, where he had been so courteously received, relations were marred by Tahitian thefts and French musketry (Beaglehole 1966: chaps. 9-12).

With the development of commerce, which was inevitably in the hands of men less high minded than the explorers, and whose crews were less subject to control, it was only to be expected that instances of misunderstanding, attempted exploitation, and bloodshed would multiply. The earliest trades were the pork trade between Tahiti and New South Wales and the Hawaiian sandalwood and provisioning trade, both of which were well established before the end of the eighteenth century. The former was generally conducted without violence, but also without much respect on either side as the Tahitians extorted as much as they could from the English, and the English showed their disgust at the covetousness and transparent opportunism of the Tahitians (House 1801-1802:20, 28, 30; Turnbull 1813:370). In Hawaii the islanders lost little opportunity in attacking vessels and abusing and mistreating the sailors who were left on shore to trade; the traders, for their part, showed little reluctance to exploit native wars or to conduct massacres of their own (Ingraham 1790-1792:64-65, 68, 70, 72-73; Bloxam 1825: n.p.).

In the late 1790s in Tonga, beachcombers and missionaries alike failed to establish long-term, workable relations, and in 1802, 1804, and 1806, the Tongans attacked European ships that called there for refreshment. The Tongans soon had a reputation as a "nation of wreckers" and commanders of ships were warned against calling there (*Sydney Gazette,* 6 Aug. 1809, 17 Sep. 1809).

Throughout Polynesia, therefore, relations between Europeans and islanders developed within a framework of commerce, and commerce was conducted with a good deal of wariness and suspicion on both sides --notwithstanding that the Polynesians were the supposedly friendly natives. Wariness was to be even more called for in Melanesia.

The Fijian sandalwood trade, which was conducted between 1804 and 1815, gave the Fijians a reputation for ferocity that they kept for decades afterwards. Assaults on wooding parties, attacks on ships, bom-

bardment of villages were not everyday events, but they were everyday possibilities, Cooperation between trader and chief often depended on the sandalwooder being prepared to fight--and defeat--the chiefs enemies, and even then cooperation was not guaranteed. Nor was victory: in the aftermath of one such deal, Peter Dillon (later famous as the discoverer of the fate of La Pérouse and his expedition) had to flee for his life and take refuge with several other Europeans on a rock pinnacle where he was besieged for several hours (Dillon 1829, 1:9-24). Dillon, then as later in life, prided himself on his good relations with Pacific peoples. The sandalwood trade in Fiji closed in 1815. The last ship to seek the fragrant wood had four men killed by the Fijians, including Oliver Slater, perhaps the first European ever to have lived with the Fijians in the first years of the century, and the man whose reports had begun the trade (*Sydney Gazette,* 4 Mar. 1815).

The trade in Marquesan sandalwood began as the Fijian trade closed, and although the Marquesans were perhaps most famed for their "proverbial" hospitality, they were also feared for their constant wars and cannibalism, rumors of which greatly magnified reality. This trade is one of the least well documented in Pacific history, but it is evident that fear and bloodshed were an intimate part of it (*Sydney Gazette,* 8 Nov. 1815, 5 Aug. 1816; Roquefeuil 1823:54).

By 1820 Marquesan sandalwood had been exhausted, and Hawaiian sandalwood was to last only a few years longer. Before any commercial hiatus developed, the whaling trade began to boom. Whalers had begun to operate in the Pacific in 1790, but the European wars and then the Anglo-American war of 1812-1814 kept the scale of operations small. By 1820, however, the American whaling fleet had begun its rapid expansion, voyages began to lengthen beyond two years, and the demand for provisions and refreshment suddenly became a major trade. Islands that were poor in the accepted commercial resources of the Pacific were able to supply whalers with fresh food and water in exchange for a variety of European artifacts from hoop-iron to muskets. Contact relations in the provisioning trade were workable but not necessarily good. One beachcomber wrote early in the century that "ships touching at any of these Islands in the south sea frequently meet with accidents, sometimes through their own missconduct, and sometimes thro the hostile beheavour of the natives," and gave some examples of how easily violence developed--sometimes through simple misunderstanding, other times by ill-will or by misjudgment engendered by fear. After praising the forbearance and unvengeful nature of his adopted countrymen, the Marquesans, he concluded:

> I hope, if ever this Narrative should fall into the hands of any-one frequenting the pacific ocean, [they learn] to be cautious and not to leave things in the way of these Kind of people, as they are apt to pilfer. Never fire a ball till you are obligated, nor be allured from your boat on any account, as at several Islands in these seas they will entice you from your boat with their young women, who will lead you from the beach into the bush. There you get murderd, and the boat becomes their prize, if the ship is not well in shore so as to have the boat under cover of the ships guns. (Dening 1974: 103, 105-106)

Supplying whalers became a major industry, especially at those islands with safe, commodious harbors and ample land and labor, The Hawaiians, like the Maoris and other peoples, modified their agriculture specifically to supply the demand for food, potatoes in particular. Prostitution became a regular trade, and for over three decades (until the late 1850s or early 1860s) these two activities were the economic mainstay of the Hawaiian kingdom and the means of obtaining the much sought Western artifacts everywhere.

Familiarity promoted easy relations in the more frequented islands, but the continuing risk, resulting from continuing suspicion, was pointed out by an American officer when he acknowledged the usefulness of beachcombers and missionaries: "their residence offers some inducements for vessels to resort there, and are generally a preventive to violence from either party by giving confidence to both" (Browning 1835-1836:99, 50, 121).

The principal difference between the provisioning trade and the more specialized and speculative trades was in the length of time a ship had to stay in one locality. A whaler usually could get its business done in a few days, and few stayed in port for more than a fortnight. A sandalwood trader might be weeks in one place; a bêche de mer vessel, in contrast, could be months. Collecting this marine creature from the reefs was a slow process and required cooperation from the islanders in the form of a large labor force if the work was to be done in a reasonable length of time. After collection from the shallow reef waters the creatures had to be dried before being packed for shipment. Long drying sheds were constructed close to the collecting points. Drying racks were fitted to the sheds and fires maintained beneath them twenty-four hours a day for weeks at a time. The process entailed some of the ship's crew being on shore for protracted periods, and the opportunities for ill-conduct on both sides were ample.

The trade was entered into readily: "The king told me I must not go in the ship, but tell the captain to come and trade with him for *bêche de mer*" ([Cary] 1922:44), declared one beachcomber on the arrival of the first ship he had seen for years. Willingness was no guarantee of safety: the beachcomber William Cary tells of a Fijian attempt to capture the *Glide,* on which he was working as an interpreter in 1830. The attempt failed, with loss of life on both sides. Cary continues,

> Fortunately for us I brought off a chief with me who wished to visit the ship. When I told him that we had two men killed by the natives of Ovalau he was very much frightened. I told him he need not be frightened, but he was a prisoner for the present. The captain told me to get every thing we had on shore off to the ship. We went to Camber with two boats to take off our property. When we arrived we found the men that I left in care of the establishment much alarmed, fearing an attack from the natives. They had been under arms all night. The natives had been very insolent and troublesome during my absence. We immediately commenced loading our boats and five or six canoes which I hired for the purpose.
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> When the natives found their chief was detained they very readily assisted us . . . and behaved very civilly, but I have no doubt if we had not had the chief on board they would have robbed and perhaps killed us all.

Shortly afterward in another part of the Fiji group the trade, which had been going well, was interrupted by a drying house catching fire.

> . . . the natives became troublesome, annoying us in every possible manner both night and day, stealing everything they could get hold of and continually insulting some of our party in the grossest manner, which we dare not resent.
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> I bore it until it became past endurance and I began to fear that they had still worse intentions. I then went on board the ship and informed the captain. . . . He went on shore . . . and was soon satisfied that it would be imprudent to stop longer. . . . ([Cary] 1922:67-68)

Throughout the. 1830s, when the bêche de mer trade was at its height, there were constant rumors of conspiracies to attack ships (actual attacks were less frequent), threats against shore parties, and a

constant need for Europeans to be armed. For their part, the Europeans were not at all sympathetic toward Fijian life and conducted their affairs with a fixity of purpose and a ruthlessness commensurate with their driving anxiety to fill the ship with bêche de mer as quickly as possible, with as little loss of life as possible. They had little respect for the Fijians and little trust in the fidelity of the chiefs; commercial necessity was the principal foundation for such fair and consistent dealing as prevailed ([Wallis] 1967:119-121, 137-140; also Eagleston 1830-1833:296; 1833-1836:9, 14, 34; 1836-1837:98).

Other forms of commerce for the rest of the century were conducted in much the same atmosphere: roughly consistent dealing with substantial mutual agreement on its terms, in an atmosphere of mutual suspicion. The Melanesian sandalwood trade, which flourished in the 1840s and tapered off in the 1850s to near extinction by the early 1860s, was marked early on by violent clashes. The hostility of the inhabitants and the apparent inevitability of bloodshed ensured that more than a decade was to pass between the first attempts to collect sandalwood in 1826 and 1829-1830, and the establishment of a regular trade. Such was the violence of the trade--both actual and threatened--that it soon became a byword for white depravity, ruthlessness, exploitation, and fraud; those who conducted it became prime targets for the philanthropists and humanitarians who argued that the islanders were the inevitable losers from any contact with Western civilization (Shineberg 1967: chap. 6 and passim) .

This view has been challenged by modern scholars who maintain that there is unequivocal evidence that if the islanders did not want to trade then no business could be conducted. Among the reasons most commonly put forward for occasional native refusal to trade were traditional agricultural or ritual commitments, or dissatisfaction with the quality or variety of trade goods offered. Fraud by the islanders, fluctuating prices, and attacks on ships were all risks for which a trader had to be prepared. The trade had no place for a man who was inclined to be charitable, who could not drive a hard bargain, who could not be ruthless, or who was less than constantly vigilant. Traders had constantly to put themselves into the hands of the islanders and they did so feeling anxious and vulnerable. Trade was frequently conducted from boats under the protection of the ship's guns. Fear of the natives permeated the character of perhaps every man engaged in the trade. Whether the islanders felt the same way is hard to say, but it was they who were in the position of greater strength. The trade required of its personnel that they not be sentimental or liberal in outlook; the circum-

stances in which they worked seemed to preclude the likelihood of their being apostles of racial harmony (Shineberg 1967: chaps. 13, 14, and 16).

Andrew Cheyne, an early participant in the trade, reported the prevailing attitudes and conduct of those engaged:

> I again went round the Island cutting Wood with a small party of men well armed, but in consequence of many narrow escapes and threatened attacks by the Natives, I considered it no longer prudent to do so. . . . The natives would neither show us the trees, nor render any assistance whatever--about 50 Natives followed us into the bush, and it required the utmost vigilance on our part to prevent them from Snatching our Arms or Tools out of our hands. . . . I . . . made up my mind to return at once to the ship and delay no longer here as the vessel's charter was an expensive one, and I could not see any possibility of getting a cargo at this place. . . .
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> . . . all savages are treacherous and cruel to the last degree they are much addicted to thieving and covet every thing they see. . . .
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> . . . My experience among Savages . . . has taught me a . . . lesson, and the more I know of them and their character and habits, the less I am inclined to trust them. Natives ought never to be suffered to come on deck, but should be kept in their canoes, and away from the vessels side, especially when any work is going on, or when getting the vessel underweigh. . . . Those who have the most experience of savages, invariably trust them the least, and are always on their guard against treachery. (Shineberg 1971:90-91, 127-128, 142)

Every student of race relations knows that "treachery" and "covetous" and other value-laden words often conceal genuine misunderstanding; often their use is simply the result of a culture-bound perspective. That may or may not be sometimes the case with Cheyne; but whether or not ethnocentrism, racism, or misunderstanding were present, there clearly was not a great deal of liking or respect on either side. In other words, trade was conducted despite all the possible difficulties that might arise.

The labor trade that became so infamous in the eyes of those committed to native welfare and protection grew out of the sandalwood trade. In the 1850s the latter was becoming less and less profitable, and at the

same time European crews were less willing to work in it. Both problems could be partly offset by the employment of Melanesians, both on ships and at shore stations away from their homes. With the recruitment of island labor, race relations took a turn for the worse. The island laborers, away from their homes and having no affinity with the people with whom they worked, became almost totally dependent on their European employers. Here was scope for abuse, callous treatment, and fraud far greater than before; and now Melanesian employees rather than European employees bore the brunt of dealings with the owners of the sandalwood trees. The degree of fear and suspicion between the parties was not ameliorated by the substitution of one race for another, for Melanesians had developed no loyalties based on skin color but traditionally regarded all outsiders as enemies.

By the end of the decade the sandalwood trade was dominated by Robert Towns, who also had plantation interests in Queensland. His career bridges the sandalwood and labor trades. The step between recruiting labor to cut sandalwood and recruiting labor to work in Queensland was, in principle, a short one. The horrors for which the labor trade became notorious--kidnapping, murder, overcrowding, hiring by misrepresentation, and so on--have a substantial degree of truth in them. The trade was likened by critics to the African slave trade, which Britain had not participated in since 1807 and which decades of naval patrolling and international diplomacy had aimed at stamping out altogether. To observers of the Pacific labor trade this business was a horrible atavism that in the name of humanity had to be stamped out. The outcry led to the passing of regulatory legislation by both the Queensland and Imperial parliaments in 1868, 1872, and 1875, with further amendments in later years (Morrell 1960: chap. 7; Docker 1970:54, 58, 245 and passim).

The regulatory legislation was only partially effective. In some respects it was unworkable, but the standards observed in the trade improved nevertheless. Recent historians argue that this improvement was the result of the internal logic of commerce: fraud could not work indefinitely; people could not be duped so easily once they had lost whatever innocence they might have had. As with the sandalwood trade, the islanders' numerical strength and control of the desired resource put the recruiters at a disadvantage. Consequently, the latter had to operate with extreme caution and pay due attention to the foibles, demands, and prejudices of the islanders. The trade continued for nearly half a century and only came to an end when colonial governments, and later the Australian federal government, decided for reasons

of their own to prohibit the traffic. Among the islands that provided the laborers and received the benefits in terms of European trade goods, the cessation of the traffic was a disruptive and bitter experience (Docker 1970: chap. 11; Corris 1973: chap. 8).

Nevertheless, although the trade was entered into with the willing participation of both parties, it was conducted in the same atmosphere of suspicion, fear, and risk-taking that had characterized the earlier trades. Captain William Wawn, who worked in the trade for nearly twenty years, described his habitual method of recruiting laborers. He always used two boats, together, for safety.

> Our boats, two in number, were each pulled by four islanders. . . . Each native boatman was armed with a smooth-bore musket, cut short so as to lie fore and aft on the boat's thwarts under the gunwale. . . . The whites--the recruiter in one boat, and the mate and G.A. [Government Agent] in the other--had revolvers and Snider carbines. The smooth-bores of the boatmen were, a few years later, changed for Snider carbines, and the whites generally adopted the Winchester. Each boat carried a 'trade box'. . . .
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> . . . the boats are lowered, and pulled or sailed along the coast, stopping wherever natives collect, the ship keeping as near to them as possible. . . . The recruiter's boat having been backed on to the beach stern first, the keel just touching or resting on the sand, the savages crowd about the boat. . . .
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> The intending recruit comes close to the boat for inspection, a friend carefully guarding him on each side, not so much to prevent kidnapping as to stop him from getting into the boat before he is "paid" for, and thus spoiling the bargain. The amount of "pay" once settled, the recruit gets into the boat, and passes forward into the bows. If the covering boat is on the scene, it is backed in, and the recruit transferred to her and taken off to the ship if convenient. . . . . (Wawn 1973:8, 14-16)

The amiability that frequently prevailed was made possible by the sense of security provided by the precautions described by Wawn. When vigilance or care lapsed, the real dangers of the business became evident, even as late as the 1890s. "I never made a voyage," wrote Wawn, "either in this [New Hebrides] or the Solomon groups without most of us experiencing the sensation of a bullet or an arrow whistling past us occasionally." But, he argued, "it ought not to be forgotten that

it is to the trader's interest to be friendly with, and to behave fairly towards, the islanders" (Wawn 1973:35, 214).

For a century, therefore, there was a consistency in the relations that developed between the Europeans who came in ships and the inhabitants of the islands. Sailors for the most part looked down on the islanders as an inferior class of beings, and showed little reluctance to take a life as long as their own was not thereby threatened. Herman Melville's observation of his fellow sailors in the 1840s seems to be generally applicable:

> Indeed, it is almost incredible, the light in which many sailors regard these native heathens. They hardly consider them human. But it is a curious fact, that the more ignorant and degraded men are, the more contemptuously they look upon those whom they deem their inferiors. (Melville 1924:24)

There seems little reason, therefore, to attempt to distinguish between such men and the working class frontiersmen who had much to do with shaping race relations in colonial Australia, New Zealand, and North America.

For their part, the islanders were not slow to shed blood if it seemed to be in their interests. On the whole they were not greatly impressed with the fair-skinned foreigners: they resented wanton killing when they were the victims; the fair skin and pale eyes of Europeans were often offensive to their own standards of beauty; they had their own suspicions of foreigners, whether white or brown, and they were usually fully aware that most of the white men they met were of low class. The obvious poverty and subordination of such men were self-evident in both Polynesia and Melanesia where wealth and stature were marks of status. This was especially true in Polynesia where society was more usually hierarchical (Campbell 1982:64-80). The lack of regard was thus reciprocal, so that when race relations were good, it was because both sides were in pursuit of something they valued.

Different attitudes and values were involved in the interracial transactions when resident missionaries came upon the scene. Their arrival was erratic: London Missionary Society Protestants in Tahiti, Tonga, and the Marquesas in 1797; Wesleyans in Tonga in 1822 and 1826, spreading to Fiji in 1835; American Protestants of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (A.B.C.F.M.) in Hawaii in 1820; Catholic missionaries in Hawaii in 1826 and 1837, and spreading through the South Pacific in the 1830s and 1840s; Presbyterians in the

New Hebrides after 1848. Missionary attitudes were complicated: their social background (for Protestants often upwardly mobile, lower middle class) implies assumptions of European racial superiority. Their theology condemned the cultures of the heathen as diabolical, and enjoined them to love and raise in the scale of civilization the people who were thus the creatures of the Devil. Their relationship therefore was replete with ambivalence. Their vocation, of course, brought them into more sustained and intimate contact with the people than most other visitors. For years on end, often for a lifetime, they lived in close proximity and constant daily contact with the islanders--teaching, preaching, healing, remonstrating, advising. Whatever racialist prejudices they might have brought with them from their homelands, their experiences taught them a certain respect for the Pacific islanders. Many of them came to admire the complexity of Pacific languages, the intellectual challenge of their cosmogony, the subtlety and ingenuity of their theological arguments. At the same time they despaired of the superficiality of their understanding of Christianity and the political and materialist basis of their conversions.

The great majority of the missionaries lived amicably and harmoniously with the islanders, whether Polynesian or Melanesian. A degree of disdain and racial prejudice often persisted, however. Examples can be found of missionaries using terms like "poor brown dick" and "dick broadnose" with their implications of denigratory stereotyping (Gunson 1978: 204-205), and there was probably no missionary of the nineteenth century who would have even entertained the thought of allowing his daughter to marry a Polynesian or Melanesian. A degree of aloofness was always maintained, consonant with the hierarchical society from which they came. Critics of missionaries are quick to point to evidence of missionary aloofness and imply racial prejudice--the large mission house on the hill with its own iron roof and picket fence, for example--forgetting both that fencing was not unknown to Pacific islanders and that a measure of privacy was essential for much of a missionary's work. There was nothing sinister or inherently discriminatory in the missionaries' adherence to their own cultural norms. They were, moreover, the evangelists of a civilization, not just of a religion. Their whole purpose was to be exemplars and to teach the islanders to live as they themselves did--not to adopt local customs. Consequently, that they should see a degree of inequality between themselves and the islanders, with themselves as superior in certain respects, was an inescapable perception and one that was shared by the islanders. It was, moreover, based on the premise of the goal of attainable equality. Sometimes this attitude of

superiority was manifested as high-handed or arrogant behavior, which although virtually inevitable was not necessarily racist.

More important was the willingness of the islanders to accept the missionaries. Sometimes they were not willing: Catholic missionaries in Hawaii were expelled in 1827 and were ejected from New Caledonia in 1847. Protestant missionaries withdrew from Tahiti in 1798, from Tonga in 1800 and 1822, and several times from the New Hebrides before meeting with their first success there in 1850. Indifference or suspicion was a common early response, but the relative wealth of the missionaries often made a favorable impression, while as men of learning and as priests they commanded respect. Favorable early foundations were not always built on, but the islanders' desire for foreign wealth and power created a demand for the means to attain it (religion, literacy, and medicine) and ensured the good standing of the medium (e.g., Wright 1958: chaps. 7 and 8).

So far, race relations exemplified a pragmatic tolerance springing from a recognition that neither side could afford the consequences of intolerance, let alone of violence. The advantages of mutual tolerance grew into a mutual dependence, which was the most effective regulator of behavior.

New problems in race relations were to arrive with settlement of another kind, which began in Hawaii in the 1820s. Attendant on the whaling trade came white settlers to trade, not so much with the islanders but with the whalers. Hawaii's strategic location in the middle of the north Pacific and the early establishment of stable government made it an ideal place for ship refitting, with consequent opportunities for ship chandlers and provisioners. In their train came grog shops and general stores and a multitude of professions and trades to meet demand. Lawyers and consuls were not to be far behind. With this kind of growth, race relations were placed on an entirely new footing. Tensions grew between the Hawaiians and the whites in the form of rivalry in business, land ownership, and legal authority. Social distance increased as white society became more heterogeneous and therefore more self-contained, although the physical segregation of other settler towns was less evident in Honolulu. Before the 1820s came to an end, the white residents of Honolulu had begun to challenge the legitimacy of the native Hawaiian chiefs to legislate for them and exercise jurisdiction over them.

Extractive and provisioning trades were not to become a permanent economic staple for any of the island groups. Commercial agriculture was both an economic necessity and an attraction to settlers whose

political philosophies held a place for the doctrine of racial inequality and for the aristocratic tradition of a landed, hereditary social and political elite. Opportunities for large-scale commercial agriculture were consolidated into plantation systems that shared many of the characteristics of plantation societies elsewhere: the concentration of wealth in relatively few hands, a dependent, rural labor force of a different race from the landowners, and by extension, the belief that each race was naturally fitted for certain roles and places in society, and for differential rewards. Race stood in a fair way to becoming a definition of social class. In the emerging plantation society of Hawaii, race relations became tense periodically between the 1830s and the 1890s as Europeans sought a greater share of political power and as Hawaiians and the subordinated immigrant groups resented the increasing wealth, arrogance, and influence of white Europeans. The Europeans in their turn, between the 1850s and the 1890s, became more strident in their articulation of the doctrine of white supremacy as they came face to face with Chinese and Japanese ambitions for social mobility and economic advancement (Lind 1938: chaps. 9 and 10; also Daws 1974:179-182, 209-213).

A similar process was to develop in Apia, the main town in Samoa in the 1850s, and a decade later in Levuka, Fiji. The social life of the two races, which during the beachcomber era and the early years of resident traders had been more or less integrated, now became increasingly segregated; interracial marriages, once the rule, became scandalous and children of mixed race an embarrassment. Doctrines that were unmistakably social-evolutionist became the stock-in-trade of the settlers, with more or less sinister overtones (Ralston 1977: chap. 8). To a minority of Europeans it seemed that contact between primitive and civilized led to an unfortunate process of inevitable decline of the colored race. To the majority this formula sounded hollow, sentimental, and hypocritical. To them the colored races were inherently inferior; it was the law of nature that they should make way just as lower forms of life, unable to adapt, had always to make way for higher forms of life (Young 1970:157). These ideologies are familiar to colonial historians everywhere. Their propagators in the Pacific came from the same society as their propagators in the continental colonies of North America, Australia, and Africa. Many of them in Hawaii, Samoa, Fiji, and the New Hebrides had themselves been colonists in America or Australia, and they carried these attitudes with them. In the Pacific islands, where a society with colonial characteristics already existed--that is, a society that had already become a socially self-sufficient white enclave within a

large, colored, potentially hostile and powerful native population--these racialist doctrines flourished as they had been unable to do earlier.

The reason that racialist ideas did not flourish earlier was not that they had not been born. The consistency of attitudes and behavior of white visitors to the Pacific from the late eighteenth century to the end of the nineteenth has been demonstrated. The powerful restraints on the behavior of Europeans were prescribed by their dependence on the islanders. Numerical inferiority and the exigencies of trade enforced a relationship in which a great deal of heed had to be taken of the islanders' wishes: more heed, in fact, than the islanders needed to take of the visitors'. The relationship was seen by all participants as an unequal one of mutual benefit.

With the advance of acculturation--in particular the adoption by the islanders of metal tools and firearms--the relationship of dependency began to swing, and with it the onus of conciliation. It would not swing very far by itself: what pushed it to the other extreme was the growing self-sufficiency of Europeans, which allowed the new expression of a cultural and racial arrogance that had never been entirely absent. Not needing to find native wives, being able to import labor from elsewhere, buying land and thus acquiring a resource base that rendered them economically independent of their island neighbors, and then finding that American and European governments or their naval representatives were prepared to support them in their disputes with the native authorities, provided the hothouse conditions in which the existing plant of racial animosity and prejudice could flourish on a scale previously unknown.

The massive depopulation that occurred on the continental frontiers, the racial wars, the bitter hatred, the exclusiveness that was to keep antagonism alive long after the wars had finished, did not characterize the Pacific islands. Before the end of the century something of this process had begun to develop in the groups that had been annexed by France and Germany. Those territories that were to become English speaking were spared the worst of these traumas. Only two of these groups were to acquire any considerable body of white settlers. In Hawaii land alienation was undertaken with the consent of the Hawaiian government in a context of a steep decline of the native population. A bellicose settler stance was thus not necessary, while a widespread sense of hopelessness and despair muted the defiance of the Hawaiians. In Fiji the worst was prevented first by the establishment of settler governments in partnership with traditional authority--which thus recognized the reality of Fijian power--and secondly by annexation. The

governorship of Sir Arthur Gordon (1875-1881) placed the interests of the Fijians ahead of those of the settlers. His policy was unpopular with the settlers, but the actual and sublimated violence of the 1860s was permanently avoided. Subsequently, economic difficulties in the 1890s confirmed that Fiji was not to become a white man's country.

The quality of race relations, therefore, was not governed by romantic views or disinterested hospitality. The belief in racial harmony that seems to call for an idealist explanation is in fact false: economic relationships had much more to do with the behavior of the races toward each other. But in the final analysis, economic activity provided only the matrix of contact. The really critical consideration in determining the quality of Pacific race relations was that of power. Whichever party was dominant was able to show its true character; when neither party was dominant there had to be compromise. In other words, race relations in the Pacific were subject to the same rules and show the same patterns of cause and effect--not different ones--as race relations elsewhere. Circumstances made the Pacific a more pleasant place to be.

I. C. Campbell
Adelaide University
Australia

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