

## Response: H. E. Maude

I am relieved at the temperate tenor of these critiques, and I find myself in agreement with many of the points made, though to have provided all the information apparently considered desirable would have necessitated the production of a book which few could have afforded to buy.

All contributors comment on my use of the term slavery. I wish that I could have found a less emotive and opprobrious word that expressed the real, as against the theoretical, position of the recruits; for though Davis implies, if I understand him rightly, that because slavery had been abolished in Peru the treatment of the Polynesians did not constitute slavery, but "a different kind of social and economic abuse," this is not the view I have taken.

Slavery is abolished in the United States, and yet as recently as 1947 the Supreme Court held a person to be enslaved, using a definition of de facto slavery which would be as applicable to the Polynesian recruits as the one I have given on p. xx, and cases of slavery are reported as existing

in countries where it has been legally abolished for decades. In fact, I used the term advisedly and not in a broad popular sense; but perhaps it would have been less invidious to have adopted McCall's more precise term: indenture slavery.

It is true, as Brij Lal points out, that many contemporary observers considered the Polynesian labor trade to be a disguised slave trade, but I should have been loathe to have based my judgment on their view alone, for missionaries in particular were apt to call all forms of the indentured labor trade slavery. Some fifty years ago I was a labor recruiting officer myself on ships working the Gilbert and Tuvalu Groups, and since then I have read most of the documentation on the seven other major labor trades in Oceania--to New South Wales, Queensland, New Caledonia, Fiji, Samoa, Tahiti, and Hawaii-- as well as on a number of minor recruiting ventures to such places as Nauru and Ocean Island, Makatea, Fanning Island, and Guatemala; but in general character, none of them were slave trades, and it was to accentuate my view that the Peruvian traffic was unique that I chose an unequivocal title for the book.

Davis reproves me for giving too little attention to Peru's contemporary problems and to the work of Peruvian liberals. In extenuation I can but plead that the book was written for, and at the request of, a Polynesian readership and much of interest to Peruvian scholars had perforce to be omitted unless it bore directly on my main theme: the fate of the Polynesians in Peru. Credit was given, for instance, to the help afforded by the newspaper *El Comercio* and employers such as Cipriano Elguera and John Montero; but there were no doubt others, and it is to be hoped that someone may be stimulated by such omissions to write an account of the labor trade as seen from the receiving end. I suspect, however, that what constituted a major tempest in Oceania caused only a ripple on the shores of Peru.

For my disparaging remark on ethnic attitudes towards manual labor I must do penance; it was not well-phrased and should in any case have referred specifically to plantation labor. On the other hand, Davis has misread me in concluding that the coconut palm disease affected atolls other than Tongareva; and as regards missionary activity, I think that apart from the efforts of the Catholic Bishop in Tahiti to alert Catholics on the mainland, these were of little avail. The Protestant missions, having no contacts in Peru, concentrated on inducing the British Government to do something, but without success, while endeavoring at the same time to mitigate the traumatic effects of the trade on those left on the islands.

Brij Lal is right; I have been engaged in a love affair with the South Sea islands all my life and view the atoll world in particular in somewhat

roseate hues. I was actually engaged in producing the “long chapter” he speaks of when the sheer drama of the episode coming to light for the first time captured my imagination, and I felt compelled to tell it in full as it happened. History, to me at least, must be literature if it is to hold the interest of the reader, while transcending other literary forms by its scrupulous fidelity to fact.

I am sorry if I have evinced moral outrage, as Lal considers, for this is generally an impermissible indulgence in writing about people of another age and cultural background. One may report indignation felt by others at the time, for this is often an important fact, but it is hazardous for us to pronounce judgment when past community ethical standards are hard to ascertain and may well vary within the group; and it would be anachronistic to judge those who lived in the past by our standards today.

Other points raised by Lal are dealt with later but it should perhaps be emphasized here that the chronological island-by-island accounts in Part One, admittedly in places confusing and repetitive, are what the islanders themselves wanted and invariably turn to first. Their justification lies in the fact that they have been translated into Tokelau, Tongan, Niuean, French (for Tahiti), and I believe Kiribatese, Tuvaluan and Cook Islands Maori, with at best a summary of what happened before and after the events at a particular island group.

I am flattered by McCall’s description of me as a typical historian of the British school, though I fear that a renegade anthropologist with an interest in cultural dynamics would be rejected by that august fraternity. Nor should I care to consort with historians who, we are told, ignore context.

Surely questions of context are the very essence of any diachronic study and they were my main interest and concern when writing on the Peruvian trade. It is for others to judge whether I have succeeded or failed, but the two examples of omission adduced by McCall do not prove his contention since the first was in fact dealt with, including the special licenses which permitted the continuance of the coolie trade at a reduced level. As it was peripheral to my main theme, however, I referred those who required more information to the detailed account in Watt Stewart’s *Chinese Bondage in Peru*.

The second example, after investigation, I dismissed as a hypothesis without documentary support which in any case had no effect on de Lesseps, whose motivations are clear from his official and private correspondence. I suggest that a conclusive objection is the fact that when Peru sought France’s support early in 1864 over Spain’s seizure of the Chincha Islands the Polynesian labor trade was found to be the only issue of any

importance between the two countries, and on this being settled by a reimbursement and indemnity their relations immediately became cordial, and remained so. Yet France's participation in the Mexican adventure continued until 1867.

Apart from this minor variance I am in agreement with all McCall's comments, including his inference that I am a narrative rather than a theoretical historian. I should be churlish, furthermore, if I did not acknowledge here the assistance obtained in completing the study from his own pioneering work on the Easter Island trade and his researches in Peru, which I was able to pursue in more detail "from a quiet Canberra garden," as he happily phrases it, where I was not burdened with a teaching load.

Some passages in the critiques call not so much for comment here as for further research on subjects connected with, but ancillary to, the theme of the book. I have already expressed the hope that to amplify, and correct any imbalance in, the account given in part 2, a South American specialist might care to research the trade from the Peruvian perspective, after examining documentation which I was unable to obtain such as the minutes of the Executive Council, the Naval correspondence, hacienda records, and the books of the commercial firms engaged in recruiting operations.

Such a survey could include the information asked for by Lal on the Peruvian social and economic environment into which the recruits were precipitated, but his analogous survey of the situation in Polynesia would require a detailed enquiry into the early political, economic, and social development of Polynesia from the beginnings of European contact to the middle of the nineteenth century. There are studies on particular aspects, notably J. M. Davidson's 1942 doctoral thesis, and on particular areas, such as Colin Newbury's recent book *Tahiti Nui*, but much information has come to hand of recent years and what is now wanted is a synoptic survey of the whole Polynesian region; it would, I believe, establish that trading and missionary inter-island communications had integrated Polynesia as never before.

In reply to a query by Lal I have affirmed that the Polynesian trade was unique in bearing the general character of a slave trade, but there is now sufficient material available to enable a comparative study to be made of the Pacific labor trades as a significant element in the overall picture of culture contact in Oceania. It should elicit some surprising data on such matters as the number of recruits involved: the locale and methods of recruitment; the nature and efficiency of government controls; the location and nature of employment; the legal and actual status of the

laborers; conditions of employment; repatriation arrangements and their efficacy; mortality statistics and causes; and the effect of the trade on the island societies.

Another study of, I submit, even greater importance to our understanding of island, and especially atoll, societies concerns their reaction to disaster conditions, for it became clear when writing the chapter on "Crisis in the Atolls" that the many specialized works on disasters in other regions were mainly concerned with modern, urbanized communities. Practically no work has been done on the effects of, and response to, calamities in Oceania and yet, with its unique multiplicity of small and culturally variant societies known to have been subject to natural disasters, the region is ideally suited to research on this theme. We do not really know, for example, the precise mechanisms by which the island communities coped with disaster conditions and whether, as I strongly suspect, the more rigorous conditions of atoll life enabled the inhabitants to adapt to catastrophe with greater success than those on the volcanic islands.

That two out of the three topics suggested in the commentaries or this reply represent comparative studies of regional or subregional scope is not surprising for, as Kerry Howe has indicated in *Pacific Studies* for Fall 1979, the great number of detailed papers on particular themes now published makes the synoptic approach a feasible and profitable one.

Nevertheless, a perusal of the book will show that there are still many topics of mainly local importance concerning that of which we know next to nothing and which might well interest someone seeking a subject for research: for example, an investigation into the land tenure system on Tongareva as affected by the labor trades; the history of the pearlshell industry in the Tuamotus during the early nineteenth century; the significance of the oral traditions relating to the cannon preserved at 'Uiha in Tonga; and the recovery and reproduction of the missing diary of the Jennings settlement on Olosenga from 1856 to 1866, last seen during 1919 in the possession of a Miss Nellie Skeen of Nuku'alofa.

A final point which has been raised by readers, though not by the commentators, is whether the sudden depopulation and associated cultural shock experienced by the eight island communities who lost more than half their population bear out the views advanced by Alan Moorehead in *The Fatal Impact*. Moorehead's thesis, however, was based on an examination of induced change on a single Pacific island, and it would seem that, with the exception of Easter Island, the marked demographic resurgence and community regeneration following the Peruvian raids suggest on the contrary the remarkable resilience of island, and in particular atoll, communities.