EDITOR'S FORUM

POLYNESIAN PERCEPTIONS OF EUROPEANS IN THE EIGHTEENTH AND NINETEENTH CENTURIES

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The doctrine among Pacific historians that their goal is the creation of "island oriented history," or "'history from the islanders' point of view" is by now acquiring grey hairs. Although sometimes represented as a breakthrough in historiography it is no more than a restatement of the doctrine of the sympathetic imagination which has for long been part of the historian's stock-in-trade. For an historian to attempt to get inside the mind of his subjects, to see the world as they did, is a most essential means to understanding why they behaved as they did. The task is not unique to Pacific history, although the task becomes more difficult the more removed is the culture of study from that of the historian. Perhaps the greatest difficulty--and again one not unique to the Pacific--is the paucity of documentary sources from Pacific islanders' hands, for although literacy spread rapidly, especially in Polynesia in what Parsonson has termed the "literate revolution," the islanders generally did not make a habit of recording their present to make a more intelligible past for historians in the future. Getting inside the minds of Polynesians of the past necessitates reliance on European sources which frequently provide evidence only of an anecdotal kind. Such evidence often lacks the sympathetic imagination on which the historian relies so heavily in the effort to cross the frontier of culture and mind. In the subject of this essay, the contemporary observers needed unusual powers of perception to try to see themselves as others saw them, but that was an exercise not congenial to the culturally self-assured Europeans of their era. Consequently, while European perceptions of other peoples frequently attract attention, the reciprocal observation has usually been ignored.

It has become a commonplace to observe in studies of culture contact between European and tribal societies, that the Europeans' perceptions of the tribal population were conditioned by romantic preconceptions of primitive purity and virtue. With closer acquaintance and the passage of time, the perceptions became less romantic and reflected more the failures in the contact relationship. The emphasis passed from purity and vir-

tue to observed vices such as treachery, theft, cruelty, poverty and oppression. The changing perceptions have been described by an historian of Australian culture contacts as a sequence from noble savage to sinful savage, and successively, comic savage, degraded savage, and finally, disgusting savage.

The "savages" for their part, had certain preconceptions and reactions of their own towards the European strangers who intruded upon their lives. Generally speaking, the range of attitudes parallels that of the Europeans: from an idealized, unrealistically flattering perception in the beginning through a series of revisions, to the other extreme of outright hostility and rejection.

At first, Polynesians were overawed by the strangers who came among them in such numbers and in such strikingly majestic vessels as the tall-masted frigates and ships of the eighteenth century. Their amazement at everything they saw on board the first ships was that of a people seeing and touching the inconceivable. These strangers, they were inclined to think, must be gods. The admiration for their possessions and the awe which they felt was reflected in the names they gave the strangers: *papalangi* and its cognate forms in Western Polynesia; and *pakeha* in New Zealand. *Papalangi* literally translated means something like "heaven bursters" with the connotation that the tall ships which showed their white sails like clouds above the horizon before the ships themselves came into view, appeared' to be coming from the sky.[1] The Tahitian *popaa* or *papaa* possibly has a similar origin. Their coming was said in later years to have been prophesied: "There are coming children of the glorious princess, by a canoe without an outrigger, who are covered from head to foot."[2] The Marquesans, closely related to the Tahitians, called Europeans "Etua'," or spirits, thinking that they came from the sky. The use of the term continued long after the original error was realized.[3] The New Zealand term *pakeha* refers not to the manner or place of their coming, but to the type of creature they seemed to be; the term *pakepakeha* already existed for small imaginary beings of light color. An alternative New Zealand theory was that *pakepakeha* was the name of a god of the sea and that it seemed appropriate to transfer the name to early European visitors. Other names of sea gods were also said to be used such as Atua, Tupua, Marakihau . . . etc.[4]

The derivation of the Hawaiian word *haole* for foreigner is more obscure, but the evidence presented by Fornander suggests that both the word and its meaning are probably ancient. The traditional usages recorded by Fornander imply a considerable admiration for Europeans, amount-

ing in some cases almost to veneration. In the ancient Chant of Kuali‘i the likeness of the *haole* to gods is made quite explicitly:

> I have surely seen Kahiki,
> A land with a strange language is Kahiki.
> The men of Kahiki have ascended up
> The backbone of heaven;
> And up there they trample indeed,
> And look down below.
> Kanakas are not in Kahiki,
> One kind of men is in Kahiki--the Haole;
> He is like a god.[5]

That Cook was regarded as a god--specifically as an incarnation of the god Lono--is well known and has become a part of *haole,* legend perhaps as much as it was a reality of Hawaiian belief. Not only was Cook himself regarded as an *akua,* but that sanctity was applied also to his surroundings; the ships were regarded as *heiau;* the crew were "wonderful beings," "with white foreheads, sparkling eyes, wrinkled skins (clothing), and angular heads (hats)," "sharp noses . . . and deep-set eyes"; their speech "was like the twittering and trilling of the *‘o‘o* bird, with a prolonged cooing sound like the *lali* bird, and a high chirping note."[6]

Since they were unable to command thunder and lightning, it was, in Fornander's words:

> no wonder that the natives regarded Captain Cook as an avatar of the great Lono-noho-ika-wai of their religious creed, whose attributes may be found described in the chant of the deluge . . . their adoration was as natural as it was spontaneous . . .[7]

According to Hawaiian legend, the first sight many of the Hawaiians had of the foreigners was of them eating the exotic watermelon, and smoking tobacco. They fearfully exclaimed:

> These men are gods indeed; see them eating human flesh . . . and the fire bums in their mouths."

The legends preserved by Fornander and Kamakau contain anachronisms and errors of detail, but in the manner of legends everywhere, probably record the contemporary feeling with greater fidelity.

In Fiji also, the arrival of the first European residents--involuntarily, by shipwreck--was celebrated in song and dance and thus encapsulated and preserved for more than a century of turmoil and colonization, the perceptions of the witnesses of that first arrival. According to the chants, the Fijians "saw what appeared to be men, and they thought they must be gods, as they were biting live fire and had their ears wrapped up."[8] A generation after that first contact new arrivals were still sometimes asked if they were spirits or "real men."

> "Are you a spirit?" I told him no, that I was flesh and blood the same as himself. "Well," said he, "if you are the same as me what makes you so white?" . . . But he seemed to think I must have some supernatural aid or I could not take the [musket] locks apart and put them together so readily.[9]

The artifacts which Europeans brought with them were also considered to be of supernatural origin. William Mariner, a resident in Tonga from 1806 to 1810, reported that books and writing were believed to have supernatural powers and to be instruments of sorcery. They had good presumptive proof for this belief, arising from their experience nine years before Mariner's arrival when the London Missionary Society had landed missionaries in Tonga. These foreigners built a house, and when they shut themselves up in it with their books, the Tongans outside could hear the unmistakable sounds of ritual activity. Within sixteen days the highest chief had died; within a few months more high chiefs had died than during any similar period in legend or memory.[10] In New Zealand a travelling artist in 1827 observed, after thirteen years of unsuccessful missionary activity, that the Maoris called "gods" anything which they did not understand: compasses, windmills, muskets, and so on, until they became familiar with them.[11]

Now the mystification of the unknown is such a widespread human trait that it might be thought to be unworthy of notice. Even in this age of scientific inquiry--indeed, in which there has practically been an apotheosis of science itself--the imperfectly understood is liable to be labeled "mysterious." This idea is worth commenting upon, however, for two reasons. First, in a time of political and intellectual decolonization, it is sometimes thought to be demeaning to the "natives" to suppose that they could ever have been so gullible and naive as to mistake flawed Europeans for flawless gods; many claim that this interpretation was merely created by the appeal which it has to colonial masters accustomed to being reminded of their all-encompassing superiority. It should be

noticed, however, that the perception predates the period of colonial mastery. Moreover, the tribal Polynesians, like many other peoples all over the world, did not live in a society of open intellectual inquiry but in one in which the unfamiliar, unexpected, or the inexplicable were habitually categorized as supernatural. Their world was one in which the spirits were ubiquitous and powerful; it was practically an everyday occurrence for a god to enter into one of their number, or, for one of their number to speak or act through him.[12]

The second reason is that scepticism of the supernatural perception is often based on a common misunderstanding of the nature of the supernatural in Polynesia. The dominant characteristic of supernatural beings in. Polynesia was not their justice, charity, or protectiveness, but their power. In an intellectually closed system in which belief was self-validating, in which rituals and oracular consulations were required for many acts from planting yams to making war, one should be wary of supposing that the supernatural imputation implied respect, adoration or affection. Spirits were often malevolent, usually mischievous, and always unreliable. In. a very short time, perhaps from the beginning, that is how Europeans where regarded also. For instance, the *pakepakeha,* the New Zealand imaginary creatures of pale skin who gave their name to the Europeans, were creatures of evil influence,[13] just as in European folklore fairies often bode ill for mortals.[14]

The likeness seen between Europeans, spirits and gods was not necessarily flattering to the former even at first contact. It did not prevent the Polynesians from driving hard bargains in trade, nor did it save the strangers from assault. According to the Hawaiian traditions, the Hawaiians debated on the very day of the first arrival of Cook's expedition in 1778 whether or not to attack the strangers.[15] Cook himself, the incarnation of Lono, was struck down on the beach at Kealakekea Bay within a month of his being paid the highest honors and continued after death to be regarded as a god.[16]

Sixty years later, the Fijians made it perfectly clear to the beachcomber, William Diaper, that being a spirit was no estimable thing. The country people, he wrote,

> evinced much curiosity at seeing me, some of them scarcely believing their own senses, putting forth their hands towards me to prove whether I was tangible or not; while others would come and shake their hands before my eyes to ascertain if I was blind, and then say that I was not blind, but had eyes like a cat. Others would say I was a leper, or like one, which others would con-

> tradict, by saying that I resembled a pig with all the hair scorched off more than anything they knew of. The young girls would not come nigh at all, and if any of the young men laid hold of them to force them close to me, they would scream as though they were going into fits.[17]

It seems likely, therefore, that the comparison with the supernatural implied bewilderment and fear--that to call the foreigners gods was an acknowledgment of their power as well as their strangeness, and not a token of admiration.

Experience sometimes seemed to bear out the belief that Europeans had some evil, mystical force. On Tongareva, an atoll in the Northern Cooks, the barrenness of one islet was explained as resulting from the murder of a European castaway.[18] In Tonga there was a similar story recorded by William Mariner. Mariner was once taken to see the grave of John Norton, one of the crew of H.M.S. *Bounty* and one of those who joined Bligh in the *Bounty's* long boat after the mutiny for the epic voyage to Timor. Bligh put in at one of the Tongan islands to obtain water, and while doing so the Tongans murdered one of his men--John Norton. After the body was stripped, it was dragged some distance through the grass to a place where it was left to lie for two or three days before being buried. Ever since that time--Mariner was there eighteen to twenty years later--the track made by the dragging of the body, and the place where it had lain, had been bare of grass.[19] Norton, therefore, if he was not a supernatural being, clearly had had the patronage of a powerful god.

The Polynesians regarded the Europeans as supernatural only long enough for names like *papalangi* and *pakeha* to become fixed, but the idea was gradually modified rather than totally abandoned. For some time after realizing their humanity, they were regarded as having some special heavenly patronage which gave them immunity from the restrictions of the Polynesian *tapu* system and accounted for their marvelous material possessions.

Perhaps the earliest acknowledgment of the exemption of foreigners from *tapu* was in the experience of George Vason. Vason was one of the London Missionary Society brethren who had been sent to Tonga in 1797. After several months of uncertain and futile activity Vason gradually abandoned the supports of Christian religion and his identity as an English artisan and began to live like the Tongans. The Tongans considered him a chief. He had his own household and estate, and he learned to conduct himself with correct aristocratic courtliness. He had been living this way of life for over a year when the civil war of 1799 broke out. Vason

joined the side of his chiefly patron in a war which was fought with a degree of savagery and disregard for the correct forms of behavior which horrified the Tongans themselves. Quarter was seldom sought or given in this war; the destruction was on a scale previously unknown. A time came when a defeated group from the opposite side took refuge in a sacred place, an act which by the normal rules of warfare should have preserved their lives. Their enemies (i.e. Vason's party) were determined that they should die, but none dared break the *tapu* of a place of refuge. At length someone had the idea that since Vason had a foreign patron-diety no harm would follow if he broke the *tapu*. The idea was approved, and Vason set fire to the fence sheltering the fugitives. Their massacre was promptly accomplished.[20] The same idea was later applied in other parts of Polynesia but in less sinister contexts--usually to absolve the foreigners or the indigenous community from responsibility for some *tapu* infringement, or to explain the failure of supernatural sanctions.

With the wider application of this idea, it became clear to all that Europeans were merely human beings with extraordinary capabilities. These capabilities in turn were eventually demystified and were accepted as being within the range of Polynesian learning. The process was described by a Tongan *matapule* who, in 1822, admitted that he had at first been overawed by Europeans and their marvelous property. But, he later reflected on closer acquaintance, they too had two eyes, two feet, ten fingers. . . .[21]

The realization that Europeans were merely human had come as soon as regular, more or less continuous, contact began. At the same time it became clear that there were different classes of Europeans--chiefs and the vulgar--just as in Polynesian society. Chiefs could be identified not only by the respect they commanded among their own people and by their wealth, but also by their conducting themselves with decorum and courtesy. Polynesian attitudes thus became more complex, and accordingly, it becomes more difficult to distinguish their attitudes towards Europeans as a type from their attitudes towards particular Europeans.

A number of anecdotes show the formation of a stereotype of Europeans and also a willingness to respond according to particular circumstances. The stereotype was an unfavorable one. John Papa Ii, the Hawaiian historian, wrote that during his childhood at the beginning of the nineteenth century, *haoles* were an object of fear to small children and that the threat of calling the *haoles* was used by exasperated adults to frighten refractory children into more subdued behavior.[22] In Tahiti, the missionaries--among the earliest permanent European residents on that island--were looked upon as estimable fellows in their own way, but "as a

kind of children, or idiots, incapable of understanding the simplest facts of island politics or society."[23] The New Zealand Maoris were shocked at the missionaries' want of charity and hospitality to their disreputable countrymen who found greater warmth among the Maori people. Indeed, like other Polynesians, they were convinced that hell was a place only for "the white faces"--that any Maori could be so wicked as to deserve eternal punishment of that kind was incredible to them.[24]

The development of an unfavorable stereotype owed something to prejudice and to experience alike. When in 1806 William Mariner, an inoffensive boy of fifteen who was soon to be adopted into one of Tonga's paramount families, was stranded in Tonga, he spent his first day onshore being taunted, had stones thrown at him, was spat upon, and had his fair sunburnt skin compared with that of a hog which had been scraped of its hair. The Tongans later learned from Mariner and his stranded comrades that European ideas of hospitality did not allow a person to invite himself to any house where food was being served and share the meal, that money was a measure of value and means of exchange and accumulation, and that European notions of courage in battle meant a preparedness to fight and die rather than to fight and run to live and fight another -day. These traits, the Tongans concluded, helped to explain the stinginess and selfishness for which Europeans, by 1807, had already become famous. What Europeans called bravery, the Tongans called recklessness, a selfish display and vain quest for glory which would merely deprive a warrior's comrades of his support.[25]

Prejudice or xenophobia is perhaps also evident in the example of the whaling captain who, when shipwrecked in Tahiti in the 1790s, was informed that since he no longer had a ship, he could no longer be regarded as a chief.[26]

Disdainful tolerance was the common attitude among Polynesian chiefs. In about 1840, the famous beachcomber William Diaper found in Fiji that "tame" white men were in strong demand as chiefly pets, but that when they transgressed local norms the chief would remark contemptuously, " 'What could be expected from a *papalangi* (foreigner)?' "[27] At about the same time when another beachcomber contributed a few remarks to a conversation between a visiting trading captain and a chief, the latter

> turned to him, exhibiting in his whole bearing the utmost "hauteur" and said, "who are you?--nothing but a runaway sailor,

> who has no riches but what he earns. You are not to say your own words. When Mr. Wallis tells you to speak, then you may speak."[28]

Late in the contact phase this attitude had become firmly reinforced by experience. In the early 1860s, the acting British Consul in Samoa, John Chauner Williams, attempted to apologize to a Samoan chief for the behavior of a white man who had walked across a *malae* while some chiefs were in conference upon it. The chief replied to Williams:

> We are not angry with a man like that. When we see a white man behaving in that way we know that he was simply a common fellow (*puaa elo,* lit. stinking pig) in his own country who knew no better and has never been taught how to behave himself. We know that if he was a gentleman he would not act in that way and so we do not care to get angry with a man like that.[29]

It was not, however, merely the cultural habits of Europeans which Polynesians objected to; they found their very persons offensive, as in the insults made to Mariner and Diaper about their skin. In Samoa, Consul Williams father, the pioneer missionary John Williams, reported in 1832 that the Samoans complained of the offensive smell of Europeans and called them unclean. "This I don't wonder at," remarked Williams, "when we consider the general nature of Europeans with which they have been acquainted," But he did wonder that they said frankly the same of himself, "although I put clean clothes on every day I was there."[30]

For many years after the first contacts, traders and beachcombers were preponderant in the experience which Pacific islanders had of Europeans. It was to be many years before most of them saw much of the more redeeming features of European civilization. Ship's crews of the nineteenth century were heterogeneous but mostly representative of the criminal, the desperate, the vulgar, the ruthless, the embittered and the disadvantaged. During their short visits to the islands they frequently gave displays of drunkenness and violence, and those men whom captains intentionally left onshore were those whose antisocial behavior made them most unwelcome on board. Conditions on board most ships until late in the nineteenth century reinforced vices and instilled no virtues in their crews. The discipline on American whalers was reputed to be vicious and tyrannical in the extreme; colonial Australian vessels were no less vicious

for their equally extreme lack of discipline. The sailors were not only likely to behave badly, but many of them were probably repugnant to the personally fastidious Polynesians: washing facilities on board ships were virtually nonexistent; scurvy continued to be common; venereal diseases were common also; sailors who were left onshore were often there because they were too ill to stay on board. Tuberculosis was not uncommon; measles, influenza and other infectious diseases were introduced from time to time. These Europeans were not an attractive people.

Sailors' attitudes to Polynesians during this time were fearful. They were suspicious of Polynesians as savages, believing them to be probably cannibals and certainly the practitioners of horrifying rites and customs. These attitudes, allied to the callousness of the age, when applied to Polynesians amounted to an almost total disregard for local life and interests. Given these characteristics of the European population and the Polynesian willingness to take by force anything with even a superficial appeal--from nails, to sailors, to the ships themselves, it is remarkable that there was comparatively little violence in contact relations. It was mostly safe for sailors to go ashore unarmed in Polynesia, even spend the night onshore. Such security was probably unknown in Melanesia and was comparatively rare in Micronesia as well. There was a considerable element of calculation in this Polynesian restraint. This early lesson in contact that more could be got by trade than assault was not lost on the Polynesians, who learned not to let their own preconceptions override their material self-interests.

Even the redeeming features of western civilization excited scorn: charity and mercy were signs of weakness and fear, The failure or refusal of foreign governments to avenge assault was viewed with contempt. For example, Finau, a usurper in Tonga in the early nineteenth century once exclaimed,

> Oh, that the gods would make me king of England! . . . The King of England does not deserve the dominion he enjoys. Possessed of so many great ships, why does he suffer such petty islands as those of Tonga continually to insult his people with acts of treachery? Were I he, would I send tamely to *ask* for yams and pigs? No, I would come with the *front of battle;* and with the *thunder of Bolotane.* I would show who ought to be chief. None but men of enterprising spirit should be in possession of guns. Let such rule the earth, and be those their vassals who can bear to submit to such insults unrevenged.[31]

A profound contempt for Europeans was the inevitable result of these experiences during those years when island societies were comparatively little changed and before European political and economic power was extended over them. This is nowhere better demonstrated than in an event, a. masquerade, which took place in Fiji in the early 1840s.

> An individual took the part of a white man, and performed it so well that he caused great mirth. He was clothed like a sailor, armed with a cutlass, and as a substitute for bad teeth (which is a proverbial characteristic of white men among these people), he had short pieces of black pipe stems placed irregularly, which answered very well. The nose on his mask was of a disproportionate length (which they also say is another prominent feature, adding nothing to the beauty of white men). His hat was cocked on three hairs, in the sailor fashion, and made from banana leaves. In his mouth was a short black pipe, which he was puffing away as he strolled about, cutting the tops of any tender herb that happened to grow on either side. This masquerade is carried on by the slaves when they bring in the first fruits and offer them to the king, and even at such times, when allowance is made for not being over-scrupulous in paying the accustomed deference to superiors', they nevertheless keep a little guard over themselves, and behave with more or less decorum. But this mimicking sailor acted his part cleverly, and paid no attention whatever to decorum, but strutted about puffing his pipe as unconcerned as though he was walking the forecastle. He detached himself from the crowd, flourishing his cutlass about and gaping alternately in all quarters, as though he was a stranger just arrived, when some of the masqueraders reminded him that he was in the presence of Tui Drekete. He immediately asked who Tui Drekete was, and could not be made to understand, till some of them looked in the direction the king was sitting, when he pointed (which is greatly against the rules), and asked if that was the "old bloke," walking up to him bolt upright and offering his hand, which the king smilingly shook. The sailor then told him he had better take a whiff or two with him, as it was the best tobacco he had smoked for many a day. The king, willing to make the best of the amusement, took the pipe, the spectators making the air ring again with their shouts and laughter, "*Vavalagi dina., dina sara*" (a real white man, a real white man).[32]

In most places the known examples of Polynesian attitudes suggest a unilinear progression from reverence, to a pragmatic reserve, to open contempt. It is unlikely that the development of attitudes is ever as neat as this, and it is certain that similar developments in different places were rarely contemporaneous. In New Zealand at least, the attitudes and changes were more subtle than has been suggested above. The initial reaction to strangers was one of suspicion and hostility. If Europeans were regarded as gods or spirits then they must have been regarded as evil beings and as creatures against whom it was possible to fight. Tasman in 1642 lost a boat's crew to the Maoris, quite unexpectedly; Furneaux--Cook's colleague in 1773--lost a boat's crew; Surville in 1769 'had a violent encounter; Marion lost his life with many of his crew in 1772. Among these early visitors Cook alone avoided serious trouble, although the threat of it was frequent. The traveling artist, Augustus Earle, remarked,

> The sight of beings so extraordinary (for thus we Europeans must have appeared to them) excited in their savage minds the greatest wonder; and they thought we were sent as a scourge and an enemy: and though Cook, one of their earliest visitors adopted every method his ingenuity could devise to conciliate them, yet, as they never could thoroughly understand his intentions they were always on the alert to attack him.[33]

Maori opinion of the *pakeha* improved with closer contact, and the various tribes of this highly competitive people vied to have a resident *pakeha* for the distinction of it--and also for his mechanical skills and his propensity to attract traders, and thus European manufactures, for which there was a vigorous and early demand. They were also much sought after as husbands, neighbors and trading partners.

Earle records two instances of the respect accorded European sensitivities in 1827. At Kororareka in the Bay of Islands the white settlers adopted a strict Sabbath observance. They slept in, wore their best clothes when they arose, attended religious worship if a missionary came to conduct a service, and refrained from working. The Maoris, though still deaf to Christian doctrine, behaved similarly out of politeness. Indeed, reported Earle, not even the most pressing necessity could induce them to work on that *tapu* day. The full extent of the respect being shown was not apparent until it was discovered that the Maoris, taking advantage of the *pakehas'* long sleeping, worked frantically from early in the morning until the first of the white men emerged. Work ceased at that moment.[34]

The second instance was one which caused Earle some embarrassment. He had interfered in the preparations for a cannibal meal in a very provocative manner, but failed to prevent it. The next day he was rebuked by his patron chief who had heard of the incident and who pointed out: that he himself now refrained from cannibalism out of respect for his white friends, but that it was a folly and impertinence on Earle's part to expect others to pay the same compliment.[35]

By the 1830s, the Maoris had revised their earlier opinions even of the missionaries and accorded them a new respect. They had powers of healing where their own *tohunga* failed. They attracted trade. They were persistent peacemakers and stopped many a battle in such a way as to allow the contending Maoris on both sides to save face. The Maoris came to rely on them to save them from the consequences of the belligerent challenges which an acute sense of honor bound them to make. By the mid-1830s the missionaries had been cast as men with solutions to the new problems wracking Maori society. Suddenly their churches were crowded with eager converts.

In the era of political intervention European prestige fell to an all time low level. In New Zealand there was disillusionment and bitterness over the failure of the Treaty of Waitangi to secure for the Maoris their land rights and internal jurisdiction. European colonists appeared to be predatory and deceitful--consummate tricksters--*pakepakeha* indeed.

Elsewhere in Polynesia Europeans with power seemed to be dedicated to embarrassing Polynesian chiefs and dispossessing their people. Naval commanders like Thomas ap Catesby Jones, La Place, and Lord Paulet seemed to relish the opportunities to impose unequal treaties on staggering island governments, and by claiming extra-territorial privileges, challenged the rights of those governments to determine their own policies. Consular representatives like Richard Charlton, Richard Blackler and John Brown Williams left no opportunity untried to embarrass and belittle the authorities to whom they had been sent. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that in 1835 the government of Tahiti enacted a law prohibiting marriage between Tahitians and foreigners, a measure aimed specifically at preventing Europeans from gaining further influence on the island.

Thus, the Tahitian chiefess, Arii Taimai could look back late in the nineteenth century over more than a hundred years of Tahitian experience of European contact and see only disease, depopulation, misgovernment, muskets, and insect pests as their endowment.[36] Gunpowder, for instance, she described as "being as great a curse as every other English thing or thought had ever been."[37] She did not mean by that that the

French were preferable to the English; they had faults of their own. For instance she wrote in reference to Bligh, "Had he been a Frenchman, he might perhaps have enjoyed discovering the mistakes of his predecessors, and trying to correct them with mistakes of his own, but when the English once saw what they took to be a fact, they saw nothing else forever."[38]

Her remarks share the same tone with those of the Hawaiian historian, Samuel Kamakau, who though professedly grateful for the benefits of Christian civilization, stressed *haole* self-interestedness and success in oppressing and dispossessing the Hawaiians. He pointed out that the Hawaiian constitution of 1840 benefited the foreigners to the disadvantage of the locals, and he marvelled that Europeans who were so lacking in practical, useful skills could be so adept at conducting the affairs of government to their own advantage. In 1845 he relayed to King Kamehameha III a petition begging him not to appoint foreigners to his government: they "devastate the land like the hordes of caterpillars the fields."[39] In addition, they are, he said, quick tempered, violent, sacreligious folk who repay Hawaiian generosity and hospitality with exploitation.[40]

It can hardly be doubted that these bitter feelings had ample justification. But little satisfaction was reported with the medicines, laws, boats, domestic animals, new food plants and metal tools which the Hawaiians had been willing to accept from across the sea. Foreigners were associated with ill rather than with good, and the operation of a stereotype may be inferred.

In the period of political destabilization--which covers more than half of the nineteenth century--those Polynesians who were politically more aware than the generality, distinguished between the actions of foreigners and the actions of foreign governments. When it came to seeking assistance or protection it was clear that not all foreigners were equally regarded. The British were preferred over all others; and the Americans were looked upon more favorably than the French or Germans. Britain received by far the most invitations to annex or establish protectorates: three times from Tahiti in about fifteen years; four offers of cession from Fiji or parts of Fiji in sixteen years, and several requests in the last twenty years or so of the nineteenth century from various small islands who feared and expected a worse fate.

Clearly, attitudes were complex in the proportion that they reflected the changing conditions of culture contact. The class of Europeans which disturbed society, leaving behind women fit only for prostitution and children who were unwanted, was usually distinguished from individuals of integrity, sincerity and worth. The range of attitudes might not have been

very different from that early in the nineteenth century immediately after the "supernatural" phase, although the elaboration and emphasis of these attitudes differed, The later range is encapsulated in the remark attributed to Cakobau, the putative king of Fiji in 1874 when with relief he finally saw Fiji pass to the British Crown: "The whites in Fiji are a bad lot. They are mere stalkers on the beach. . . . Of one thing I am assured, if we do not cede Fiji, the white stalkers on the beach, the cormorants, will open their maws and swallow us."[41]

The changing attitudes of Polynesians towards Europeans in the nineteenth century undoubtedly reflected changing contact relations, and as contact passed into colonization, changed even further. The colonization of the mind is a concept which has become widely known since Franz Fanon published his critiques of colonialism. It is the most difficult form of colonization to perpetrate; but with time and singlemindedness a people's self image might be altered. But inducing them to accept the image the colonizers had of themselves was next to impossible. In their views of the strangers the Polynesians remained authentically autonomous.

As foreigners were seen to be mysterious, useful, harmless, threatening, miscreant, and so forth, so were they mentally classified and condemned, ignored or praised. But as with attitudes to race in other communities, people's perceptions were clouded by ignorance and misinformation; in addition, it is likely that there was a good measure of simple stereotyping, deriving from features of Polynesian society itself. The tradition of Polynesian hospitality notwithstanding, there was a sizeable streak of xenophobia among Polynesians reflected, for example, in the connotations of the Maori word *pakepakeha*, in the emotional revulsion at the encounter with a pale skin and light colored eyes, as the experiences of Mariner and Diaper show, and in the term "long necks" widely applied to the first European women to come to the islands.

.A provocative overtone can be detected here. Throughout Polynesia a fair skin on a woman was especially esteemed. Women treated their skins with vegetable bleaches and kept out of the sun as much as possible; European sailors commented on their fair complexions. This Polynesian admiration for fair skin is perhaps the source of a deeply rooted but ambivalent stereotype about race analogous to the European complex about dark skins connoting good and evil.

Another characteristic much admired by Polynesians was bulk. A tall heavily boned, fleshy physique was the ideal, so much so that a chief of slight stature could command little esteem. The Polynesians could tell as soon as they looked at Cook, for instance, that he was a chief. The Polynesians early in their contact history were among the tallest people on

earth, usually some inches above the European average, with their chiefs being taller still. The pervasiveness of this notion perhaps helps to explain why the less statuesque Europeans could never command more than a grudging, qualified respect.

However powerful these sentiments might have been, there is no reason to think that Polynesians, any more than Europeans, allowed their preconceptions or reactions to racial differences to override self-interest in their dealings with foreigners. There was no Polynesian Montezuma; on the contrary, Polynesian history shows unremitting calculation and determination to seize whatever advantages circumstances offered.

NOTES

1. Rev. J. Orange, *Life of the Late George Vason of Nottingham.* (London, John Snow, 1840), p. 121.

2 Rev. George Turner, *Nineteen Years in Polynesia,* (London, John Snow, 1861), p. 103.

3. Teuira Henry, *Ancient Tahiti,* (B. P. Bishop Museum Bulletin No. 48, Honolulu, 1928), p. 9.

4. A. J. von Krusenstern. *A Voyage Round the World,* (London, John Murray, 1813), vol. I, p. 171. See also David Porter, *A Voyage in the South Seas* . . . (London, Phillips & Co., 1823), pp. 91-92.

5. S. J. Baker, "Origins of the Words Pakeha and Maori," *Journal of the Polynesian Society,* (1945) Vol. 54, pp. 223-224.

6. Abraham Fornander, *An Account of the Polynesian Race,* (Tokyo, C. E. Tuttle, 1969) Vol. II, p. 388.

7. S. M. Kamakau, *The Ruling Chiefs of Hawaii,* (Honolulu, Kamehameha Schools Press, 1961), pp. 93,96.

8. Fornander, *op. cit.,* II, p. 179.

9. *Ibid.,* p. 169.

10. Sir Everard im Thurn and L. C. Wharton (eds.) *The Journal of William Lockerby,* (London, Hakluyt Society, 1925), p. xli. See also Samuel Patterson, *Narrative of the Adventures* . . ., (Palmer, The Press, 1817), p. 96.

11. [William S. Carey], *Wrecked on The Feejees* (Nantucket, Inquirer and Mirror Press, 1928), pp. 51-52. cf "Jackson's Narrative" in J. E. Erskine, *Journal of a Cruise Among the Islands of the Western Pacific,* (London, Dawsons, 1967), p. 434.

12. John Martin, *An Account of the Tonga Islands,* (Edinburgh, Constable, 1827), Vol. I, pp. 72-73.

13. Augustus Earle, *Narrative of a Residence in New Zealand,* (Oxford, Clarendon, 1966), p. 197.

14. e. g. Martin, *op. cit.,* I, p. 103.

14. Baker, *loc. cit.,* p. 223.

15. cf. Peter Worsley, *The Trumpet Shall Sound,* (London, Paladin, 1970), p. 218. Worsley quotes New Guinean opinion of German colonists as being " 'These are not men, they are merely gods.' "

16. Fornander, *op. cit.,* II, pp. 167-168, quoting David Malo. Also Kamakau, *op. cit.,* p. 94.

17. e. g. Martin, *op. cit.,* II, pp. 73-74. William Ellis, *Polynesian Researches: Hawaii,* (Rutland and Tokyo, C. E. Tuttle, 1969), pp. 132-133.

18. "Jackson's Narrative," *loc. cit.,* p. 429.

19. E. H. Lamont, *Wild Life Among the Pacific Islanders,* (London, Hurst and Blackett, 1867), p. 161.

20. Martin, *op. cit.,* I, p. 209.

21. Orange, *op. cit.,* p. 174.

22. Rev. Walter Lawry, "Diary, 1818-1825," Mitchell Library MS A1973, p. 85. (4 September, 1822).

23. John Papa Ii, *Fragments of Hawaiian History,* (Honolulu, Bishop Museum Press, 1959), p. 20.

24. H. B. Adams, *Tahiti: Memoirs of Arii Taimai,* (Ridgewood, Gregg, 1968), p. 128.

25. Earle, *op. cit.,* pp. 86-7, 133, 191.

26. Martin, *op. cit.,* I, pp. 199, 213-4.

27. Examination of Mr. Cover by the Directors, 15 September, 1800. London Missionary Society, South Seas Letters, Box 1.

28. "Jackson's Narrative," *loc. cit.,* p. 422.

29. "A Lady" [Mary D. Wallis], Life in *Feejee* (Ridgewood, Gregg, 1967), p. 226.

30. [Rev. George Brown], "Old Hands and Old Times" (TS), Mitchell Library, M.L. 1119 p. 41.

31. Martin, *op. cit.,* I, pp. 329-330. See also, Vol. II, p. 139.

32. "Jackson's Narrative," *loc. cit.,* pp. 468-469.

33. Earle, *op. cit.,* p. 186.

34. *Ibid.,* p. 129.

35. *Ibid.,* p. 116.

36. Adams, *op. cit.,* pp. 136-137.

37. *Ibid.,* p. 126.

38. *Ibid.,* p. 98.

39. Mamakau, *op. cit.,* p. 400.

40. *Ibid.,* pp. 411-412.

41. R. A. Derrick, *A History of Fiji,* (Suva, Government Printer, 1946), p. 248, quoting from C. F. Gordon-Cumming, *At Home in Fiji*).