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A question readers might well ask about David Stannard's *Before the Horror: The Population of Hawai'i on the Eve of Western Contact* is, What difference dues this latest accumulation of population facts and conjectures make? For a younger generation of Native Hawaiians such as ourselves, [1] who are exploring the balance between academic discourse and cultural self-identity, it makes an important difference.

Stannard revises the population of Hawai'i at the time of Cook's arrival upward to 800,000 or more. Had his revision resulted in a lower figure, more in keeping with the currently accepted 350,000 to 400,000 estimates, presumably the academic community would embrace his findings, perhaps making minor adjustments and revisions of their own

work to be in accordance with his. However, as Stannard's results drastically raise the estimate of Hawai'i's population before contact (or prior to the *haoles'* arrival, as Stannard puts it), current writers--for example, demographers Eleanor Nordyke and Robert Schmitt and columnist/author Bob Krauss--have chosen to debate the issue. To be sure, this helps sell the book, but more importantly, the controversy raises questions regarding accepted perspectives of Hawaiian history. This book thus has broader political implications. It gives us, a new generation of potential Hawaiian scholars, an opportunity to explore various "myths" regarding our past. For Hawaiians, history is not simply a fact of the past but an ongoing process in the present--a point Borofsky (1987) emphasizes is true for other Polynesian islands as well.

Emerging Reflections

Does it matter that Stannard's population analysis differs so greatly from both Nordyke's and Schmitt's? Will the doubling or tripling of the accepted numbers at the time of contact make a difference? The reality is, it matters, and on many levels. Hawaiians died in tremendous numbers between Cook's arrival and the time of the first missionary census. Much of the decline was caused by introduced diseases from the West. Both Nordyke and Schmitt treat this reality with studied detachment--the numbers dehumanize; Hawaiians become statistics, Stannard approaches the subject differently. He allows contemporary Hawaiians to consider the "horror" of decimation in a way that parallels how modern Jews reflect on the Holocaust. The decimation of the Hawaiian populace following Cook's arrival deserves recognition and demands moral responsibility, however distasteful that may be to Western scholars. Hawaiians did not commit mass suicide, nor did they die en masse accidentally. Diseases were irresponsibly introduced and the Hawaiians succumbed in large numbers.

We believe a "historical colonialism" has taken place in regard to our history. By this we mean that not only were we as a people colonized, but so too was our history. Hawaiian history became for Hawaiians both artifact and artifice--written in a Western format attuned to the Western ear and to a Western sense of propriety. Hawaiians thus look back at a history made by others. Can Hawaiian history written by non-Hawaiians ever be a completely "true" reflection of the Hawaiian past, when it has no relevancy to the present-day Hawaiians?

Today, Hawaiian history is a contrivance, worked and reworked, lay-

ered and selectively stripped for the purpose of justifying political and economic dominance of foreigners, past and present. Irene Silverblatt's discussion of the Inca's demise parallels the situation in Hawai'i. Her comments on Spanish imposition of alien structures on Andean society (which led to its disintegration) could just as well be applied to Western imposition of alien structures on Hawaiian society.

> The economy of Spain, oriented toward the emerging market economy of Europe, saw in its new world colonies the opportunity to accumulate great wealth. The political institutions imposed on the colonies worked to ensure that these colonizing aims were met. The ideological underpinnings of these institutions embodied an evaluation of the universe--of the quality of the relationship between society and natives, and between social groups--that was foreign to the Andean peoples being colonized. Buttressed by a worldview in which nature and humanity were becoming increasingly defined in relationship to their market value, colonial secular and religious authorities attacked the social foundations of Andean culture that were incompatible with colonial enterprise. (Silverblatt 1988: 182-183)

Hawai'i's "colonized history" offers Hawaiians very little in contrast to what it offers others. Whereas economic gain and upward mobility became passwords to success for immigrants, for Hawaiians--who experienced near-total cultural destruction from the time of Cook's arrival onward--" colonized" history has become the main alternative to no history. Greg Dening recognizes this loss of native histories in referring to the Enata (native Marquesans) and the Aoe (Westerners) in *Islands and Beaches.*

> Dispossession has extended far beyond the appropriation of their Land and the rooting up of their living culture. Who Enata were, what they did, how they made their islands, now do not belong to them. Their past is not merely dead in the Land. All knowledge of it has been transferred across the beach. The past now only exists by virtue of the fact that Enata's material artefacts and Aoe's transcription of Enata's culture on to paper are preserved in museums, archives and libraries around the world. The culture of the old only lives in so far as it has become part of Aoe's culture. (Dening 1980:271)

Most histories of Hawai'i have been approached from a Western perspective, implicitly using the West as a standard for analysis. They are histories perceived within a Western context focused on Western concerns, The idea that the population at the time of Western contact could not have exceeded 400,000 implies a view of ancient Hawaiians as "primitive" and lacking in technology (despite Marion Kelly's work disputing such claims [1989]). Likewise, the indigenous historian who uses oral history and genealogies for historical reference is dismissed for relying on undocumented sources (for example, Kame'eleihiwa 1987). Our point is that there is more to Hawaiian history than has been presented to date. Where various Western writers have seen disease, poverty, and ignorance, we perceive generosity traded for disease, land traded for poverty, and oral traditions traded for a written colonized history.

Stannard's work affords Hawaiians something rarely available to us in the past: a choice in forming our own history. Western historians, of which Stannard is one, construct and reconstruct native histories. Stannard's position is somewhat special in that he presents an anti-Western, anti-establishment view. One may question his motives, but to Hawaiians the why of his actions is relatively unimportant in this context. What is significant is that a Western scholar, established and respected, has focused on the possibility that historians made errors in their reconstructions. Whereas we as Hawaiians were once limited, historically, to a population size of somewhat less than a half million at Cook's arrival (according to Nordyke 1977, Schmitt 1978, Andrew Lind 1955, and others), Stannard introduces the possibility, perhaps even probability, that twice that number may have been present. If this is so, then we may reasonably question data presented by other Western historians who specialize in making Hawaiian history.

Where errors in our history can be shown to exist, Hawaiians can choose to accept versions that give us greater control over our lives. This is freedom in the Western sense--the right to choose our own destiny by building on our own past. The right to choose a history not geared to Western concepts is a worthy objective and the first step toward decolonization.

Historically, Hawai'i has been classified with the other forty-nine states in terms of a standardized history aimed at attaining statehood. American historians recounting the history of the individual states present the evolution of events in such a way that emphasis is placed on those that led to annexation. In the case of Hawai'i, as Gavan Daws intentionally notes in *Shoal of Time,* Hawaiian history begins "At dawn on January 18, 1778" with Cook's first sighting of the Hawaiian Islands

(1968: 1). By 1898 we were "brought in" officially through annexation and two years later given the vote, In 1959, statehood turned second-class Hawaiian citizens into "first-class" Americans, culminating 181 years of reconstructed history. Essentially, this is a way of myth-creating for the purpose of political consolidation. Hawaiian history has been organized in the context of this political myth. What is important for those in power is that the myth support current political "realities." What Stannard has done is challenge both the "reality" and the myth that supports it. In so doing, he also challenges the current underlying structures of Hawaiian history and provides an opening for alternative, more Hawaiian-oriented perspectives.

Ua pau.

NOTE

1. We define "Native Hawaiian" as any person whose ancestors resided in Hawai'i prior to 1778, the accepted date for initial Western contact.

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