

Elvi Whittaker, *The Mainland Haole: The White Experience in Hawaii*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985. Pp. 349, illustrated. \$25.00.

Reviewed by Lillian Z. Mason, Brown University

This review concentrates on what I feel is the central contribution of Whittaker's book: the examination of an understudied Hawaiian ethnic group, the mainland Caucasians. These are Caucasians from the continental United States who, with other whites, are referred to as "*haoles*" in the Hawaiian Islands.

From 1778, when the first Caucasians arrived in Hawaii, to 1898, the date of annexation to the United States, *haole* activity in the Hawaiian Islands has been extensively documented. Subsequently, there has been comparatively little published about the more contemporary Caucasians, except for authors such as Lind (1980), Burrows (1947), Hormann (1982), and Samuels (1970).

To provide historical background material, Whittaker skillfully traces the Caucasian involvement in the islands from their discovery in 1778 by Captain James Cook through the arrival of the New England Protestant missionaries. Whittaker pinpoints significant historical features that have had an effect on the present *haole* situation. A number of mainland *haoles* married Hawaiian *alii* (nobles), thereby gaining access to land and power. The results of this, along with the Great Mahele (an act allowing foreigners to buy land), set the stage for the displacement of native Hawaiians from their property. The denigration of indigenous

Hawaiian culture by some of the missionaries and other early Caucasians in the islands, as well as the effects of annexation and statehood, could have been emphasized more by Whittaker to provide a fuller background for present tensions.

In 1847, there were 627 foreigners in Hawaii, with the white population forming an elite group. The term *haole*, Whittaker says, became almost synonymous with high status. Although not sufficiently examined in the book, this superior/inferior dichotomy affected the feelings of native Hawaiians-and later those of other ethnic groups-toward the Caucasians. Descendants of the missionary families and their relatives by marriage are still prominent in the large corporations representing the shipping, investment, sugar, and pineapple industries, we are told, so the situation is ongoing.

As the native Hawaiian population declined, it became necessary to import labor for the plantations. Before long, Chinese and Japanese merchants moved to positions of wealth and status alongside the *haoles*. In 1970, there were 178,531 persons born on the mainland in Hawaii (Schmitt 1977:90-105). By 1980 the Caucasians, including the Portuguese, were 33 percent of the population with the Japanese at 24.8 percent followed by the other ethnic groups, Whittaker states.

While discussing her methodology, Whittaker precipitates an interesting discussion about her search for mainland *haoles* with the distinction between the *malihini* (newcomer) and the *kamaaina* (one born on the islands). Interactional networking solved the problem of finding informants. Interviews helped the author learn that the 1970s and 1980s were "characterized more by amorphous subgroups distinguishable by life-style" (p. 61).

Whittaker approaches the data from a phenomenological viewpoint, which benefits the material. The discovery of her own *haole* ethnicity creates insights illuminating to the reader. "It is a strange existential shift for those who have always thought of others as ethnics, themselves as Americans" (p. 53). During the study, Whittaker became aware of the "continuing shifting realities" (p. 69) and that "objectivity, scientific accuracy, and logical precision are themselves . . . cherished myths" (p. 73). Although informative, this section suffers from too many points of emphasis and some of the peripheral material.

The book thoroughly investigates reasons for the *haole* migration to Hawaii. The author states that the migration narratives of her informants do not fundamentally differ from their earlier predecessors: the attractions of enterprise, economic advantage, and an expatriate sentiment. Those interviewed came to the islands of their own volition seek-

ing a better life. I think that some of the most absorbing and edifying parts of the book are the well-chosen quotes from the informants. The reader is encouraged to experience the data directly from the sources without filtering them through the anthropologist's interpretation.

Whittaker helps us to understand who the contemporary Caucasians are and their place in the islands. According to the book, the *kamaaina* Caucasians hold political and economic power as well as being self-perpetuating as an endogamous clan. The rest of the *haole* population are executives, technicians, professionals, military, and some "counterculture" (p. 81) adherents who are seeking a place close to the land. There are also a few artists, writers, and performers, plus the tourists. Whittaker admits that a truly satisfying answer as to why people came is not forthcoming. However, the expulsion and attraction (Haddon 1911) or "push and pull" (Rossi 1956) conceptions pervade the narratives and structure how the mainland *haoles* see their own behavior, the author writes.

In the chapter "Nature as Mediated Metaphor," there is a discussion of the South Seas construct. This fantasy, created with Western symbols, filled the minds of many migrating *haoles* and was projected by them onto the islands. Their desire to transform Hawaii into another version of home is also mentioned. Said's analysis of Orientalism (1978) could be usefully introduced here. Against this background, *haoles* struggle to maintain the illusions based on their cherished fantasy, Whittaker explains. These, she tells us, are challenged by actual discovery because there is alienation and the threat of unknown places. This they must accept while retaining some of the mystery and fantasy that brought them to the islands.

We are told that some Caucasians decry the "rape of Hawaii" (p. 118), of the land and of people's sensitivities, often by entrepreneurs and tourists. This desecration has destroyed the paradise of their dreams by exploitation and crowding. The book states that development irritates many *haoles* who abhor the skyscrapers and pejoratively call the tower cranes of Waikiki "the national bird of Hawaii" (p. 124). I feel that this creates a significant dilemma for the Caucasians, since many who desecrate the landscape and sensitivities are themselves Caucasians.

At the present time, more and more mainland *haoles* are arriving to settle, while many others are forming part of the fast-multiplying tourist population, we learn. During 1976, overnight visitors totaled 3.25 million, Whittaker writes. Native Hawaiian activists, feeling displaced along with others of Polynesian ancestry, have been agitating for social

disenfranchisement, a return to Hawaiian culture, ecological preservation, and a limit to commercial expansion. In Whittaker's view, this activism has its roots in the early *haole* history, as noted; however, it now is escalating with the addition of present events. It brings dissension to the islands and affects feelings and relations with the whites today, Whittaker adds.

In an informative section, the author argues for the particularly deep connection to the land found in the indigenous Hawaiian culture. The Hawaiians have a "feeling of organic and spiritual identification with the '*aina* (homeland) and '*ohana* (kin)" (Handy and Pukui 1958:28), a significant point. "Many mainland *haole* are torn between the consciousness into which they were born, which advocates 'domestication of the landscape,' and the consciousness born of their commitment to honor the authentic and indigenous" (p.124). This is an astute conclusion. The author adds that it is part of the *haoles'* romantic self-image that they should acknowledge the poignant truths of native Hawaiian beliefs.

Two of the most interesting quotes from Caucasian informants reveal how some are affected by native Hawaiian beliefs and mythology. One thought that he gave a ride to Pele, the Hawaiian volcano goddess, in her human form. Others, after breaking sacred and state law by gathering forbidden greens, felt what they believed to be the wrath of the waterfall goddess: one of these informants stated that the goddess nearly killed him when she dropped giant boulders near where they were standing. The author, however, reveals her own cultural preconceptions when she states, "All too frequently the white people of Hawaii stand uncomfortably with one foot in the reasonable, rational world of North America and the other in the mystic truths of an ancient and strange culture" (p. 125).

Whittaker develops insights into *haole* ethnicity and perceptively analyzes it in her excellent chapter "Rituals of Inequality: Ethnicity and the *Haole*." The theoretical framework is ethnicity as a social construction. For some, pluralism is a kind of ethnic segregation, the book tells us, which is a new form of colonialism. "A sense of exclusion is a component of ethnic awareness" (p. 148), the author adds.

The book's information about the Caucasians' feelings when they are exposed to ethnic difficulties is a worthwhile addition. In Whittaker's view, some *haoles* compare themselves to blacks on the mainland, with a concomitant feeling of powerlessness. (I note here that a number of mainland blacks do not feel powerless, so perhaps this represents these Hawaiian *haoles'* view of blacks as a totality.) There is a *haole* ethnic

stigma. When Caucasians are denied jobs or housing because of ethnic prejudice, it affronts their Western liberal conscience. They detect discrimination in politics, economic pursuits, and everyday interaction. Of course, according to Whittaker, there are those who deny it and believe that certain Caucasians bring it on themselves by poor behavior and manners. Those who feel this way assert that racial harmony still exists in Hawaii.

To Whittaker's credit, she gives us a realistic view of some ethnic and racial problems in the islands. She describes a *haole* perception of self: "Sooner or later they confront their own whiteness, and come to understand that this very whiteness makes of them objects of suspicion, dislike, or ridicule" (pp. 155-156) as they have their inevitable meetings with Hawaii's other ethnic groups. The idea that the stigma is supported by some kind of consensus, we learn, is even harder to accept than the stigma itself.

This section about prejudice toward whites is, in my opinion, one of the most sensitive and illuminating in the book. The quote by one informant as to how she tries to be meek and humble to avoid discrimination by the non -- *haole* helps us to understand the emotions involved. Having *also* been a *haole* during my Hawaiian fieldwork, I can attest to the authenticity of what Whittaker and her informants are describing.

Often Caucasians refuse to acknowledge that reasons other than their ethnicity, such as the experiences of landlords in Hawaii with unreliable mainland renters, may account for some of their difficulties. However, the book states that in the workplace one could argue that "power is allocated or denied on the basis of ethnicity" (p. 158).

From Whittaker, we learn that Caucasians in the islands must deal with negative stereotyping about *haoles*. Some whites feel that those who are prejudiced against them will have to change their opinions as soon as suitable evidence is presented. However, there are "rituals of inequality unique to the Hawaiian Islands" (p. 165). "There is a resurrection of the mainland notion of pluralism-peace through the glorification of differences" (p. 163), the book reports.

In a perceptive accounting, Whittaker depicts the responses of some newcomers to the prejudice. They believe that their envisioned happy coexistence is not working because they have not correctly portrayed their eagerness to get along peacefully. Consequently, they adjust their behavior to one of visible humility, "sometimes even an embarrassing obsequiousness" (p. 165). Even more, "it is as if a display of public unworthiness was the essential requirement for the attainment of equal-

ity" (p. 166). Others react by becoming extremely outgoing and jovial in what the book labels as the "ritual of righting behavior."

There are those who respond by self-reflection on what in their own characters or beliefs causes this discrimination, she tells us. Others, such as one informant quoted, saw the reaction of ethnic groups toward them as a backlash to "crass American power and insensitivity abroad" (p. 167). Another informant declared, "the underground hatred here is the worst of any place in America, I think. On the mainland it's expressed openly. Here it's hidden. But the hatred here is much more intense" (p. 167). The author relates that some believe ethnic confrontation is an inevitable part of life, while others reason that they merely occupy another ethnic or racial niche.

Whittaker gives us facts that add to our understanding of the situation. Violence and acts of exclusion threaten the Caucasians' comfort and freedom. Whites serve as scapegoats for impotent rage, which becomes naked aggression (p. 168). "Kill *haole* day" (p. 170) is mentioned as a ritual in Hawaiian schools that formalizes the badgering and hazing of whites. However, acts of exclusion are more prevalent. The author mentions that there are problems with what Caucasians see as a Japanese hegemony with Japanese running the state government and excluding whites.

Discussion includes the "token white" (p. 173) syndrome that emerged in the last half-decade. Reverse discrimination, ethnic pejoratives, and stereotyping create problems for the *haoles* as well as for members of other ethnic groups. Ethnic discomfort of the mainland Caucasians is cited as one reason why some whites return to the mainland to live while others move into *haole* neighborhoods.

The liberal consciousness of the mid-twentieth century is revealed in all its propensity for self-criticism and guilt, Whittaker writes. This translates into *haoles'* being ashamed of fellow Caucasians who sometimes only have white friends, know nothing about Hawaiian traditions, and are greedy or disrespectful toward island customs and people. According to Whittaker, by admitting and even embracing guilt, the admission of guilt is a kind of absolution (p. 188).

The author states that ethnicity is the lingua franca of Hawaii, an "inescapable inevitable" (p. 189). She interprets the phenomenon of ethnicity as a mirror, reflecting first the Western world, second the anthropologist or other documenter, and third the differences among Hawaiian people. It verifies, she continues, the Western consciousness, which is a portrait of Hawaii, with Hawaii being a place and a fantasy

that European imperatives fashioned. In this analysis, the turbulence of these islands becomes one between competing dogmas or cultures (p. 192). To me, it is interesting that the counterpoint between the ideal of ethnic harmony and the fact of ethnic tensions continues in an unrelied dialectic.

Many newcomers refuse to accept the prevalent ethnic paradigm because it differs from their liberal hopes, we are told. I feel that Whittaker's discussion about ethnicity and prejudice is valuable and well written, helping to shed light on this complex and ambiguous topic. Whittaker discerns that if we could see ethnicity as a Western construction, our interpretation might be more valid. This leads me to contemplate what new model we might construct to replace the ethnicity paradigm and whether it will be more helpful in solving the problems.

Noteworthy supplements to the text are the fascinating photographs, which add another dimension in our attempts to understand the circumstances of the mainland *haoles* and their lives in the islands. Many were chosen from the superb collections of the Bishop Museum, the Hawaiian Historical Society, and the Hawaii State Archives.

Whittaker is at her best, I found, when she writes with simplicity and directness about the *haole* in Hawaii and uses her fascinating material in this manner. In the sections where this takes place, the style makes the author's considerable knowledge about her topic readily accessible to readers of many backgrounds. However, sometimes the reader's attention is diverted by confusing and seemingly extraneous scholarly intricacies and references, which could bog down all but the most dogged academics.

Although there is much analysis of the prejudice felt by Caucasians, I think the book would be better balanced by a glimpse of those Caucasians who are accepted, even loved, by various members of Hawaii's ethnic groups.

On the whole, Whittaker deals competently with difficult and complex material and provides a meaningful contribution to the body of Oceanic literature.

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