

Towards a Sociology of Religion in Hawaii

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A European member of the Conference on Race Relations in World Perspective, held at the University of Hawaii in the summer of 1954, was being shown one of the new Japanese Buddhist temples, built in Indian rather than Japanese architecture and containing pews, an organ, and a pulpit in addition to the more typical Buddhist shrine. His comment was, "A sort of Protestant Hollywoodish version of Japanese Buddhism."

This comment indeed epitomizes the religious situation of present-day Hawaii, in which, among other curious juxtapositions, Japanese Buddhism and American Protestant Christianity interpenetrate and are influenced in an other-directed way by current fashions. It indicates therefore the difficulty facing the social researcher wishing to investigate the religious situation of Hawaii's multi-ethnic population. Hawaii is neither a single religious community nor a plural society of several separate religious communities, but a society in which religions meet, interpenetrate, and change.

An alert and trained visitor in Honolulu soon becomes aware of the great religious diversity, for Honolulu is a city rich in cathedrals, temples, shrines, churches, and chapels. Here is an Episcopal church with its cross, flanked on each side by a Japanese Shinto shrine, each with a Japanese torii gateway. There he finds a little Chinese shrine to the fishing god in the living-room of a small house, sandwiched between a Roman Catholic church and a Protestant Episcopal church. At the Pacific War Memorial Cemetery he sees the Buddhist wheel on many gravestones in the place of the cross which is on most of the others.

Let us pursue the subject of the complex religious situation of Hawaii by a brief review of the available data, published materials, and informed judgments, around certain obvious questions. It is these questions which I should like to take up in turn.

First, what are the religions of Hawaii? Brief summaries of the great religious diversity have been presented by Lind (1952) and Zeigler (1956). They give inventories of the religions of Hawaii, starting with the pre-Christian kapu-system of the Hawaiians and its breakdown and piecemeal survival and displacement through the conversion of the Hawaiians by New England Congregational, French Roman Catholic, Mormon, Church of England missionaries. They describe how large importations of Catholic groups for work on the sugar plantations of Hawaii strengthened Roman Catholicism while through importations of Chinese and Japanese the religions of China and Japan were introduced, including popular Chinese Buddhism and Taoism, Japanese Buddhism of several sects, varieties of Shintoism, and so-called new religions. These two great

streams of the labor importations might be identified as Ibero-Catholic (Portuguese, Spanish, Filipino, Puerto Rican), and Sino-Asian.

Each of these contributions to the religious diversity of Hawaii has been treated in special articles and short monographs and theses. Davenport (1952) gives a good succinct summary of early Hawaiian religion with the applicable bibliography. The process of disorganization of the Hawaiians has been analysed by Romanzo Adams (1937), Keesing (1936), Beaglehole (1937), Lind (1934), Burrows (1947), Hormann (1953). In various articles in *Social Process in Hawaii*, our student-faculty publication in sociology, there are references to the survival of kahunaism or sorcery and to revivalistic movements, matters which are also discussed by Beaglehole, Keesing, Lind, Burrows.

One of the most interesting Hawaiian nativistic movements, still functioning today, is the Church of the Living God in several branches. It was a schism from Congregationalism and is reminiscent of similar schisms from the historic Christian missionary churches in Bantu Africa (see Sundkler, 1948). This Hawaiian movement was the subject of a master's thesis by Darrow Aiona (1959).

The work of the missions among the Hawaiians has been described in scholarly works by historians (Kuykendall, 1948) and in histories of the several missions (Yzendoorn, 1927; Bock, 1941), but the sociological implications of the missionary endeavor, testing possibly Max Weber's thesis of the spirit of capitalism and the Protestant ethic, have been suggested but not realized. Bradford Smith's excellent account (1956) of the *Yankees in Paradise*, which includes detailed consideration of the first decades of the New England mission, does make reference to the Calvinist influence in Hawaii. Hawaiians, incidentally, still call Congregationalists "Kalawina."

I have mentioned how immigrants from Catholic countries greatly strengthened the Roman Catholic Church in Hawaii, but we have only a few scattered accounts by students of the family life of these immigrants (Jose, 1937, and Luis and Sensano, 1937).

The religions of the East, coming from Sino-Asian civilization, are conventionally listed as Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism for China, and Shintoism and Buddhism for Japan, but to understand the religious life of the immigrants from these countries, Redfield's distinction (1956) of the Great and Little Traditions is helpful. The above named religions in their philosophical depth are characteristic of the literate gentry, of city life. They are represented in Hawaii by the priests of the great Buddhist sects of Japan, Soto-Zen, Shingon, Nichiren, Jodo, and Shin, and more recently by Chinese Buddhist monks brought in by the now urbanized upwardly mobile Chinese of Honolulu. These established Japanese Buddhist sects are covered by Tajima's master's thesis (1935). By family tradition most Japanese are enrolled in one or another of these sects.

However, the majority of the immigrants were from peasant villages and followed the Little Tradition. Here aspects from the Great Religions are combined eclectically to form popular Shinto and Buddhism (Kwannon-do, Odaisan) and Chinese folk religion. (See Glick, 1938; Tajima, 1935; Embree, 1941; and many student articles describing shrines and temples and the religious activities of immigrant families for birth, marriage, death, and other crises and in the course of the festival year, for instance, Anonymous, 1958; Gushiken, 1947;

S. Kimura, 1958; Miki, 1947; Onishi, 1937 and 1938; Tanaka, 1947; S. C. Wong, 1937; Yamada, 1947; Yashima, 1947; Yoshinaga, 1937.)

These accounts of Chinese and Japanese family life also make clear the important role of filial piety and the cult of the ancestors in home life. Shrines containing the ancestral tablets at which daily rituals are carried out are found in almost all the immigrant and perhaps even second-generation Chinese and Japanese families. Beyond these religious symbols of the unity of the family, the accounts also indicate something of the sacred principles which are stressed in training the children, respect for elders, responsibility to parents and grandparents—what the Japanese refer to as *on*—mutual responsibilities in maintaining and strengthening the family, the disgrace of bringing shame upon the family and the need of guarding and advancing the good name and community position of the family through thrift, work, and education. One gets the sense that the most important social controls upon the children are found here.

But also introduced from the Orient have been the so-called new religions of Japan, Konko-kyo, Tenri-kyo, Messhya-kyo, Seicho-no Ie, and Tensho Kotai Jingu-kyo, the sect of the Dancing Goddess, as well as health cults. We have a master's thesis on this last sect (Jabbour, 1958). The way these sects and cults have prospered partly because of the social unrest of the immigrant generation, made acute by their experience during and after World War II, has been well analysed by Dr. Yukiko Kimura (1947).

As Hawaiian unrest led to nativistic movements, so unrest among immigrants has led to cults and movements among them. The Filipinos have had their Filipino Federation of America, described by Thompson (1941). The curious health promising Wahiawa stones cult of the 1920's, described by Lum and Miyazawa (1941), attracted persons from all Hawaii's ethnic groups.

There has also been a grass-roots process of exchanging charms, folk remedies, and practitioners among the different racial groups, as they mingle in plantation camps and Honolulu's slums. This parallels the linguistic process of the attrition of ancestral languages and the development of the Hawaiian Islands dialect of English, what is generally referred to as "pidgin" English. I have extended this term and coined the term, the "pidgin culture of Hawaii," and this exchange of what sophisticated urban people would regard as superstitions would then be the pidgin religion of Hawaii.

As Hawaii in this century has become ever more fully a part of the United States Mainland, various churches have been brought in from there, and sects, cults, and the fads of religion also find their way here. This development gained impetus after World War II, reaching a climax with the coming of statehood. Now Hawaii has all the major denominations of the United States represented here. In their establishment, and in the continued direction of many of them from Mainland headquarters, the dilemma has been whether to regard Hawaii as home or foreign mission territory. Frustrations of leaders of the churches grow out of inability to resolve this dilemma; out of the great turn-over of the Caucasian population, which is the basically Christian population; out of the rapidly increasing large number of small, weak churches; out of the continued existence on the part of the older established Protestant denominations of racial churches, inheriting their ethnicity from the time ethnic languages were in use; out of distance from headquarters. Dunstan (1952) attributed the weakness of Pro-

testantism to these factors, and documentation is provided in two published case studies of Protestant Caucasian churches (Giltner, 1952; Chapman, 1958).

However, many more case studies of the phenomena described in the preceding paragraphs are needed.

Second, what are the number of adherents of these religions, or, put in another way, how would the population identify itself religiously? Zeigler (1956) gives statistics derived from official leaders: 200,000 Catholics, about 50,000 adult Protestants, just over 62,000 dues-paying Buddhists, nearly 22,000 Shinto adherents. It is futile to add them, because they are not comparable. In accordance with the U. S. pattern no religious censuses have been taken in Hawaii since Annexation. The three censuses of the last century taken by independent Hawaii, in 1853, 1884, and 1896, are summarized by Lind (1952). He notes that in 1853, 100 per cent of the native population identified itself as Christian: four-fifths as Protestant, 4 per cent as Mormon, and 16 per cent as Catholic. However, many of the Protestants were not fully admitted members of the Congregational church, according to Smith (1956, pp. 285, 319), only 22,000 out of the total native population of 50,000.

In the 1896 census the large influx of Chinese and Japanese made it necessary to pay attention to non-Christians and to people who did not report any religion. Just over 95 per cent of both Japanese and Chinese were thus reported, and this reduced the proportion of at least nominal Christians of the total population to just half. Of the nearly 40,000 Hawaiians and Part-Hawaiians at that time, about a fifth were given as unreported or non-Christian, two-fifths as Protestant, 28 per cent as Catholic, and 12 per cent as Mormon.

Today we have only a few spotty and unrepresentative samples, a file of which I am accumulating, to give us a clue as to how the population might identify itself. The greatest uncertainty exists for three groups, the Hawaiians, including Part-Hawaiians, the Chinese, and the Japanese, totalling well over half the total population of the fiftieth state, and certainly the less transient half. For the Hawaiians, we can't know whether the proportion of Protestants, Catholics, Mormons, and unidentified found in 1896 would obtain today. Among my samples, derived from students at Kamehameha Schools and the University, from hospital records, burials of persons of Hawaiian name at the Punchbowl national cemetery, I note, for instance, a range in the proportion of Catholics from 20 to 47 per cent.

I discussed the difficulty with the Japanese in an article three years ago (Hormann, 1958). They and the Chinese seem to be on the move from their Old World religions to Christianity. As a result many identify themselves as not having a religion; others might claim Buddhism in some situations, Christianity in others, and Shintoism in still others.

In a crude way I would venture the following "guesstimates," that the Roman Catholic element is around 200,000, confirming the figures given by the clergy, and that this figure is subject to steady increase through converts from the Chinese and Japanese groups; that the non-Catholic Christian strength, although much more elusive, would at its maximum equal or even surpass the Catholic figure, at any rate if large numbers of Chinese and Japanese, many unbaptized, who think of themselves in some way or other as Christian, would be included. Here, too, converts are moving over at a steady rate. Overlapping with

this figure would be many Japanese and some Chinese who would under certain other circumstances, particularly in connection with funerals, inevitably have to be counted as Buddhists. Looked at in this way, the number of Buddhists would probably not reach 200,000, but it might approach that figure, somewhere above 150,000. All other religions are minor or secondary, including Shinto and Chinese folk religion, because their adherents would overlap with the Buddhists.

Third, what are the relations among the diverse religious groups? In the virtual absence of formal relations between Buddhist and Christian bodies, no studies have been called for. The beginnings of the attempt to establish an interfaith council at the University of Hawaii involving Protestant, Catholic, and Buddhist student organizations and leading subsequently to several successful annual religious emphasis weeks have been described by Zeigler (1952). World Brotherhood for a period in the fifties sponsored a community-wide interfaith committee.

Among the Christian bodies the relations are similar to those on the Mainland. For instance, Protestant denominations cooperate in a Honolulu Council of Churches.

Most of the relations among the religions are at the personal grass-roots level, in families that are mixed. One type of such mixed family, involving war brides, is the subject of an unpublished article by Dr. Yukiko Kimura.

Fourth, what contributions might further and more systematic researches in Hawaii be expected to make to the sociology of religion? I think I have indicated enough of the religious complexity to suggest that almost every kind of problem in the sociology of religion might be investigated in Hawaii. I should here like to speak of three problems.

A. One of the central problems of the sociology of religion is how religion integrates societies. In Hawaii we have not only a poly-ethnic, but also a multi-religious society. How, we ask, can such a society achieve integration? If we can find an answer to this question we can perhaps get a clue as to the *functional alternatives* to religion in a secular society and to what Bellah and Glock call the *sacred* but not *religious* superordinate meaning system (Glock, 1959).

Heterogeneous Hawaii is put to the test every day, but somehow manages to achieve day-to-day integration. This integration is partly a product of a common-sense recognition of the need for a *modus vivendi* in such a society, where the facts of divisiveness and conflict are ever present. The *modus vivendi*, to be sure, may finally have become what Romanzo Adams referred to as the *mores of racial equality* (see Adams, 1934 and 1937). In achieving this day-to-day integration, the schools, playgrounds, courts, the political party system, open economic competition, the large number of groups, all have a part to play. Such are the primarily secular forces one thinks of, rather than religious ones, in this integration.

Unusual crises can put Hawaiian society to even greater tests. Thus, after the attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii achieved a sort of morale growing out of the recognition of the practical necessity of meeting the crisis, which unified us, and which, in Blumer's analysis is clearly different from the way traditional societies show their morale and societies following a charismatic leader. Blumer

speaks of these as involving a sacred goal and a romantic goal respectively (see Blumer, 1943).

At any rate, if the social function of religion is integration, Hawaii's experience suggests that in religiously diverse societies there are "functional alternatives" to religion.

One recognizes in Hawaii that the religious organizations themselves have the problem of maintaining their own integrity. The strategies Christian and Buddhist churches and sects work out in defending and advancing themselves in this cosmopolitan society bear careful and constant scrutiny. (See, for instance, Hormann on the revival of Buddhism, 1947.)

B. We need a clarification of the less structured religious groupings, often indicated by the concept of *cult*. The present typologies in the sociology of religion are of two sorts. One grows out of the church-sect contrast of Troeltsch, the contrast between membership by birth and membership by personal decision and election. This typology has been criticized as applying primarily to the Christian churches. The other typology is built on stages in the processes of collective behavior in which religious organizations are traced from their inception in a situation of social unrest through crowd behavior—Park's crowd that dances—and social movements to institutionalization and bureaucratization.

To be sure, Yinger (1957), Nottingham (1954), and Warner (1953) use the concept of *cult*, Yinger putting it close to a sect, Nottingham describing it as what occurs in a heterogeneous cosmopolitan environment, and Warner applying the concept to patriotic American ceremonies on Memorial Day. It is recognized as a possible bridge concept to religious phenomena in non-Christian societies. The numerically small size and unorganized character of the followers, and the unconventional and somewhat undeveloped character of the practices and beliefs are also given as characteristic.

In Hawaii we have at least three different varieties of such cults. We have the domestic and ancestral cult of the Oriental population, the traditional cults connected with popular Shinto, Buddhist, and Taoist deities, and the health-success promising new cults of East and West.

I look for an enrichment of our typology by close attention to these phenomena in Hawaii.

C. The third problem has to do with the behavior of individuals on a religious frontier in the face of change and diversity. Sociologists have been interested in the racially marginal man, and linguists in bilingual speakers, as discussed in the article by Dr. Elizabeth Carr in this issue. I propose that we pay attention to the "marginal man of religion," to the "religious bilingual."

While to the Sino-Asians "multi-lingualism" in religion, the so-called religious eclecticism of the Orient, is normal, to many a Christian the very thought is anathema. Yet in Hawaii we have many such marginal men. About the Japanese I asked a few years ago, "How has it been possible for an ethnic community which is religiously so divided, confused, uncertain, and loosely identified . . . to continue to send out into the wider community such a large proportion of persons of integrity and poise," and Father Joseph Fichter, to whom I sent the paper, challenged me to find the answer (see Hormann, 1958).

The careful reading of hundreds of student papers about their upbringing

would suggest to me that the tentative answer lies in Oriental familism. Somehow even in the face of religious diversity within the family, it is much more common for the unity of the family to be maintained than for it to disintegrate. This would suggest that the basic religious orientation is filial piety rather than institutional Buddhism or peasant animism.

Yet conflict cannot be avoided, and can be quite intense and bitter. It is important to note the source of conflict. I see conflict primarily at two points. One is at the point where the elders fear that Christianity is a threat to the unity of the family. If the child demonstrates his continued loyalty to the family and continues to promote the well-being of its members, if Christianity does not symbolize desertion of the family, through intimate relations established with Christians of other than Japanese ancestry, if the child's good moral behavior is being advanced and he is making his decision in a sober manner, most parents can accept their Christian children.

The other source of conflict is from conversion to churches whose leadership is uncompromising about Christians participating in family and funeral rituals or who exert undue pressure for the convert to influence the other family members in the direction of Christianity. This is of course exactly what the parents had feared and why, according to the first point, they sometimes object strongly to their children's becoming involved in Christianity.

In the long run, however, it is my judgment that the pervasiveness of secular Christianity and the important role of Christian schools is bringing about a painless transition to Christianity, and that in the process Christianity may well be grafted on to what is truly basic about Oriental society, namely familism. What this would do to both Christianity and familism is at present something we can picture only in flights of the imagination rather than in informed judgments.

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