

Hawaii in the Race Relations Continuum of the Pacific

Andrew W. Lind

Introduction

Since the two closely related terms of race and race relations, used in this paper, have been so variously defined and interpreted, it may be well to preface what we have to say regarding Hawaii and the Pacific in the context of these two terms by at least some working definitions of our own.

The term race, as applied to man, appears to have gained currency within the social sciences as a consequence of the widespread and continuous contact between Europeans and the darker complexioned peoples of the world during the past two to three hundred years. The vigorous outward thrust of Europeans, occasioned by the Commercial and Industrial revolutions, and the subsequent and even more widespread mobilization of the populations of Asia and Africa have brought about a meeting of peoples of sharply contrasted physical appearance and culture, unprecedented in the history of the world. It is as a result of the sudden—almost traumatic—recognition of the existence of these newly juxtaposed groupings of people that the conception of race has literally been forced upon the attention of social scientists.

For race, as the social scientists somewhat ruefully concede, has its origin in the biological sciences, and the efforts to harmonize the biological and social conceptions of race have not been wholly satisfactory to either social scientists or biologists. Granting that race, from the biological standpoint, designates a population characterized by common, identifiable, and genetically transmitted physical traits, the unassailable, albeit unfortunate, fact is that race as scientists encounter it means something quite different. As the UNESCO experts were forced to confess, "To most people, a race is any group of people whom they choose to describe as a race. . . . For all practical social purposes, 'race' is not so much a biological phenomenon as a social myth."¹

The incontestable social reality from which the social scientist cannot escape is that the people in many parts of the world, including the islands of the Pacific, do classify one another into sharply differentiated groups, which they persist in calling races, even though the identifying hall-marks are frequently cultural rather than purely biological. As social scientists, we may prefer the term ethnic groups, but as long as people generally continue to conceive of themselves and others in terms of race, we have no alternative but to take account of these facts. We may be justified therefore in defining race functionally as a group of people who, because of commonly recognized external traits thought to be gen-

¹*The Race Concept: Results of an Inquiry*, (Paris: UNESCO, 1952), p. 12.

etically acquired, have become self-conscious and are subject to differential treatment.²

The Conceptions of Race and Race Relations Applied to the Pacific

Since any widespread penetration of the islands of the Pacific by peoples from the surrounding continents and Europe is almost wholly confined to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the literature bearing on race is even more restricted in point of time. Almost from the beginning of contacts between the Western invaders and the native peoples, however, each group has been disposed to regard the others as if they were descendants of a different breed of animals—members of different races in the generic sense of that term. Especially during the initial period of contact, when the differences between Europeans and natives in both appearance and behavior were most impressive, some term to reflect these contrasts was clearly needed, and race undoubtedly was a useful linguistic device to fill this gap, as the scientific literature of the Pacific during the past century clearly indicates.

The term race relations, on the other hand, applies to a later stage in the experience of regions where peoples of diverse ethnic backgrounds meet and live together. Some time must necessarily elapse following the initial contacts before serious attention is likely to be directed to the nature of the relationships between the groups involved. Although a fairly extensive literature on the subject of race dates back nearly a century, it is only within the past thirty-five years that the term race relations has figured prominently in serious publication. Commencing at the close of World War I, when the striking dislocations of large civilian populations suddenly created new problems in inter-group relations, administrators, social workers, and social scientists were compelled to give thought not only to the groups which were irritating one another but also to the nature of these irritations. Much of the resulting literature was of a reformist character, designed to remedy the difficulties which the wartime movements of population had brought about, and this is a quality which still persists in a considerable part of what is written about race relations.

Stimulated, however, by the imaginative and objective approach of two American scholars—W. I. Thomas and R. E. Park—there developed in the years after the war a serious effort to discover the common principles which govern the interactions between such groups when they meet. An article by Park, embodying the central ideas in his theory of race relations and published in 1926 under the title, "Our Racial Frontier in the Pacific,"³ is the first serious effort to extend the scientific approach to the study of race relations in the Pacific. Romanzo Adams, however, who was Park's contemporary and admirer, must be credited with the first substantial analysis of race relations in any of the island areas of the Pacific. His now classic statement of "The Unorthodox Race Doc-

²This is a slight modification of the definition found in A. W. Lind, "Occupation and Race on Certain Frontiers," appearing in *Race Relations in World Perspective* (Honolulu, 1956) p. 57.

³Robert E. Park, "Our Racial Frontier on the Pacific," *Survey Graphic*, IX (May, 1926), pp. 192-96.

trine of Hawaii,"⁴ published in 1933, is still the most widely quoted and most scholarly treatment of the basic patterns of race relations in these islands, even after thirty years of further research which he helped to initiate.

Briefly stated, Adams attributes the peculiar or unorthodox character of Hawaii's pattern of race relations to certain "accidents of history," and the natural consequences flowing from them. The early visitors to Hawaii, both traders and Christian missionaries, were compelled by the peculiar exigencies of their situation to show respect not only for the authority and dignity of the native rulers, but also for the customs and values of the native people generally. This was the central and critical element in Hawaii's subsequent race relations that from the very outset there was established a relationship of equality between the foreigners and the natives. The "accident of history" chiefly responsible for this unusual fact was that the foreigners in Hawaii, unlike those in so many of the newly discovered areas of the world, could not rely on the military support of their home government to guarantee them special privileges.

A significant point in Adams' analysis of the Hawaiian situation, frequently overlooked by critics, is that the doctrine or profession of racial equality—and actually quite orthodox in terms of our American national documents such as the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution—is in Hawaii re-enforced by the solid foundation of ingrained habits and customs. Thus the visitor to Hawaii from regions where racial distinctions are commonly made, encounters not only the pressure of the public professions of racial equality but what is even more compelling, *viz.*, the constant and universal example of the people about him. Modes of conduct toward people of other ethnic groups which at first had been accepted reluctantly or indifferently as matters of simple expediency come finally to be internalized as that which conscience dictates. The gradual emergence of a sizable population of mixed-bloods further seals the commitment of both Westerners and indigenes to a relationship of equality.

While recognizing the existence of conflicting forces in both the plantation and the military establishments, Adams implied that because of their relatively late appearance, they could not seriously jeopardize the previously established equalitarian pattern. Subsequent studies by Adams and his colleagues at the University have focused somewhat greater attention upon these competing influences, especially those carried from areas of "orthodox" race doctrines in continental United States by military personnel, planters, businessmen, and tourists, but these studies have in general confirmed rather than undermined the validity of the thesis of the "unorthodox race doctrine of Hawaii."

Elsewhere in the islands of the Pacific, the concept of race relations has not yet played any significant role either in research or in the understanding of the problems of human interaction. The one noteworthy exception is the work of the New Zealand anthropologist, Ernest Beaglehole,⁵ who sought in 1950 to apply Adams' thesis of "racial unorthodoxy" to at least the eastern and southern

⁴Romanzo Adams, "The Unorthodox Race Doctrine of Hawaii," in E. B. Reuter, ed., *Race and Culture Contacts* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1934), pp. 143-160.

⁵Ernest Beaglehole, "Race Relations in the Pacific," *International Social Science Bulletin*, II (Winter, 1950), pp. 489-496.

Pacific. Beaglehole maintains, for example, that in New Zealand, despite earlier bloody wars, "neither Maori nor European deviates from a European code of good behaviour in social relations," and "with a few minor exceptions in which the law still responds in a tactful way to Maori memories of antagonism and resistance surviving from Maori war days, the law confers equality upon the Maori." In the absence of more detailed data and analysis than are available in Beaglehole's paper, one wonders whether he has placed more confidence in the expressions of a doctrine of equality than the facts of day-to-day conduct actually justify. Moreover, most of the descriptive evidence presented in his paper provides, as he expresses it, examples of "exceptional" areas or regions of "interesting contrast to . . . New Zealand and Hawaii," although to this observer the data provided regarding New Zealand do not support the thesis that its race relations are of the same basic type as those of Hawaii.

An analysis of published materials describing the association between ethnic groups in various parts of the Pacific, conducted in 1958 at the request of UNESCO, strongly suggests that Hawaii belongs, not only geographically but sociologically as well, toward one pole of a continuum among the island areas of the Pacific. Despite the extreme paucity of scientific studies of race relations in most parts of the Pacific, there is a surprising volume of useful descriptive material to be drawn from sources of admittedly uneven quality such as newspaper accounts, government reports, and a few scientific monographs relating to other aspects of social life, which together yield a basis for some preliminary hypotheses and generalizations.

Without elaborating upon these hypotheses—for it is not the purpose of the present paper to establish the basis upon which they were evolved—the following propositions relating to the race relations continuum in the Pacific may be briefly summarized:

1. Regardless of the length of contact with the Western world, the quality of the initial relationships between the invaders and the indigenes determined to a considerable degree the quality of subsequent relationships, with perhaps the minor qualification that sporadic violence at the outset might be forgotten, if the continuing relationships were amicable.

2. Trading and missionary contacts, which have commonly been among the earliest of the associations established across racial lines, are generally conducive to equalitarian relationships, providing they are not complicated by the use of political or military pressures.

3. Conversely, wherever coercion has become institutionalized in plantation, mine, factory, mission, or political state, a relationship of superior and inferior, with corresponding attitudes of caste distinctions of pride and condescension, on the one hand, and of envy and resentment, on the other, become firmly entrenched.

4. Depending upon the peculiar interaction of the foregoing factors, each region of racial contacts undergoes an identifiable sequence of developmental stages. The same underlying forces of economic expansion and maturation which brought the races together propels them into more intimate association with one another. From an initial state of dependency upon the group with superior technology, the native and immigrant labor groups gradually move in the direction of economic and social parity.

Hawaii's Place in the Continuum

Once the most isolated geographically of all the major island areas in the Pacific and the last to be discovered by the Western world, Hawaii has unquestionably moved the farthest in the direction of complete integration within the Western economy. Partly by accident of their being the only sizable land mass in the north-central Pacific, the Hawaiian Islands developed relatively rapidly as a trading frontier following their discovery by Captain Cook in 1778. Partly again by accident of their being so remote geographically and therefore thought to be of less strategic value to the principal European powers then bent upon creating colonial empires for themselves, the Hawaiian group escaped the political dependency which soon encompassed most of their island neighbors within the Pacific. The European traders and the American missionaries who found it profitable to settle in Hawaii could not as readily as their confreres in other truly colonial regions call upon the military minions of their own governments to enforce arbitrary demands upon a subservient native or immigrant population. Instead they were compelled, as Adams rightly contends, to treat the natives with the respect and dignity befitting equals, regardless of what their native prejudices or dispositions might once have been.

Even the plantation, normally functioning as an independent state and founded upon slavery or some other form of forced labor, in Hawaii to a greater degree than in most other parts of the world has likewise found it necessary to modify its authoritarian practices in accordance with principles of humanitarian considerations acceptable to a native sovereignty. The planters, like the traders and the missionaries, had to accept the fact that Hawaiians and not Americans or Europeans were the rulers of the country, however influential Haoles or white strangers might be in the counsels of the kings. Hence, rules of conduct could not officially be sanctioned even on the plantations which violated the elementary rights and dignity of people simply because their skin was dark or because they had come to work as unskilled laborers.

Neither planters nor businessmen in Hawaii were any more disposed than their counterparts in other areas of the world to accept humane practices when they interfered with private advantage or profits. Under the somewhat unique conditions which prevailed in Hawaii—a native sovereign state, a resident and therefore somewhat responsive proprietorship on the plantations, and a well established tradition of respectful relationships across ethnic lines—the more serious abuses of Western trading and planting practices were kept under closer control than in most other parts of the Pacific.⁶ When toward the close of the nineteenth century the American and European plantation and business interests could no longer countenance what they regarded as the insufferable inadequacies of a native monarchy, they engineered a revolution, eventuating in annexation by the U.S. in 1898. Paradoxically these Islands, admitted only as a dependent territory and retained in that somewhat subordinate political role for another 61 years, probably gave more authentic expression to the ideals of human equality across race lines, as stated in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, than any other part of the American commonwealth.

⁶For a more detailed exposition of this theme, see A. W. Lind, *An Island Community: Ecological Succession in Hawaii* (Chicago, 1938), pp. 210-243.

But the idealistic profession of racial equality or more precisely of the disregard of race as a factor of any consequence in human relationships, finds full expression only gradually, in the actual practices of everyday experience. The full integration of the plantation within the wider Hawaiian tradition of racial equality has been chiefly confined to the past thirty years, and there are still vestiges of earlier discriminatory practices. In the meantime the appearance of large contingents of military forces, recruited heavily from the American South, particularly during World War II, and the even larger hordes of tourists who followed later, all with their racial preconceptions differing from those in Hawaii, have temporarily disturbed but never seriously threatened the existing pattern of life among the ethnic groups. Certainly discrepancies still persist between profession and practice, as more than one enthusiast for Hawaii, including James Michener, popularizer of the "Golden Man"⁷ myth regarding Hawaii's people, can testify; but the objective record nevertheless reveals a steady narrowing of the gap between them.

Some Criteria of Racial Equality Applied to Hawaii

For the remainder of this paper we shall apply a few reasonably objective criteria as a means of establishing somewhat more precisely Hawaii's position within a race relations continuum of the Pacific. It would seem, for example, that within any region the greater the variation in the occupational status of the several racial or ethnic groups the more nearly that region would approximate the pole of racial stratification and isolation, whereas an area in which such occupational distinctions are most completely lacking would most nearly approximate the pole of racial assimilation. Similarly, there would appear to be a fairly high positive correlation between the proportion of socially sanctioned marriages across ethnic lines and the degree of cultural fusion between these groups. Still other measurable indices of acculturation and assimilation, such as the degree of participation in government, the rates of infant mortality, and the comparative size of incomes, have been suggested and utilized as bases of comparing different regions, but the limits of this paper will not permit their application here.

Each of the above mentioned indices depends upon the availability of reliable census data or vital statistics, which, of course, for many portions of the Pacific have never or only very recently been available. Data on the occupational status of the different ethnic groups and on the intermarriage among these groups are chiefly limited to the present century and to the regions which have moved furthest toward integration within the western orbit of trade and industrialization, such as Hawaii and Fiji.

Like most of the other island areas of the Pacific which have experienced the penetration of Western commerce and trading practices, in Hawaii the positions of power and of substantial rewards tended first to be wholly concentrated in the hands of promoters from Europe and America. Only after some years of apprenticeship under the new regime could persons of ethnic groups previously

⁷A term popularized in the concluding chapters of James Michener's best-seller, *Hawaii*.

lacking such a tradition be expected to occupy positions of prestige and influence. There is, however, considerable variation among regions in the readiness with which the less privileged groups are given access to the means of qualifying for the preferred positions. In this latter respect, owing to the circumstances already briefly outlined, Hawaii has been better situated than any of the other island areas to afford an equal opportunity to all of its various ethnic groups. By 1950, for example, the earlier disabilities of the immigrant labor groups had been so far overcome as to place the Chinese, most of whose parents or grandparents arrived in Hawaii a generation or two earlier as lowly plantation laborers, in a higher average position with respect to annual income than any other ethnic group. Moreover, in a substantial number of the preferred occupations, the men and women of Oriental ancestry by 1950 had clearly outstripped their earlier mentors of Caucasian ancestry. At the same time we must recognize that not all of the immigrant groups have availed themselves of the opportunities for economic and social advancement to the same degree and that the more recently arrived immigrant groups necessarily operate at a disadvantage as compared to the earlier arrivals.⁸

One of the further significant developments of the past decade, reflecting the changing commercial and business relationships among the various ethnic groups of Hawaii, has been the acceptance of non-Caucasians as officials and directors of the larger and once sacrosanct corporations of the Big Five, Hawaii's interlocking organization of major economic enterprises. The participation of Island-born men of Oriental ancestry in the direction of the plantations on which their fathers served as unskilled laborers a generation ago still seems incredible to observers of the racial scene in most other areas of the Pacific. Increasingly during the past decade the promoters of new business and industrial enterprises expanding from continental United States have found it advantageous to seek out competent young men of Oriental ancestry for key positions, recognizing that their clientele is drawn from a population which is more than half of Oriental ancestry.

As recently as twenty years ago, in the competition between two men of equal technical training for a preferred business position, one of Oriental ancestry and the other a Caucasian, the latter commonly would enjoy the advantage. Today that situation is frequently, although by no means always, reversed, and if anyone, it is the Caucasian rather than the Oriental who complains of being discriminated against.⁹

Similarly, the political control of Hawaii has progressively lost the racial coloration it possessed a half century ago when a small minority of Hawaiian and Caucasian elite dominated the scene. Notably since World War II, the ethnic composition of both the elected and appointed officials in the government of the Islands has tended more and more to approximate that of the entire population of Hawaii, although here also the groups with the least experience

⁸This theme is further elaborated in A. W. Lind, *Hawaii's People* (Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 1955), pp. 70-79; 92-97.

⁹For a further elaboration of this type of development in Hawaii prior to 1950, see Report No. 24 of the Romanzo Adams Social Research Laboratory of the University of Hawaii, A. W. Lind, "Mounting the Occupational Ladder in Hawaii" (January, 1957).

or inclination to engage in politics are still under-represented but not un-represented.¹⁰ By way of summary and without going into detail, it can be accurately stated that in no other Pacific islands have any immigrant labor groups advanced in economic and social status so rapidly and so far within a comparable period of time.

The most obvious index of a diminishing concern for race and of an equalitarian relationship across ethnic lines is, of course, that of interracial marriage and here also Hawaii has progressed further along the continuum than any of its Pacific island neighbors, for which accurate records are available. Some appreciation of the degree to which this process has already occurred and of its inevitable impact upon the future quality of Hawaii's population and social structure may be derived from the fact that somewhat more than a third of all marriages occur across ethnic lines and a slightly lower ratio of all children born in Hawaii are of mixed ethnic ancestry."¹¹ As a consequence, it becomes only a question of time—certainly less than another generation—before Hawaii's population will have become so extensively interbred as to make the retention of the present system of racial categories a useless pretense. In most other island areas of the Pacific this same process is also taking place, but at a much slower pace, judging by such data as are available.

¹⁰George K. Yamamoto, "Political Participation Among Orientals in Hawaii," *Sociology and Social Research*, XLIII (May, 1959), pp. 359-64.

¹¹During the last three years for which complete records are available (1958-1960), 37.4 per cent of all marriages were officially designated as out-marriages, although a total of 46.8 per cent of all marriages were either across ethnic lines or involved persons who were already of mixed racial ancestry. During the same period, 36.5 per cent of all children born in the Islands were of mixed racial ancestry.