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The Pseudonyms of Larimer Fison, 1857-1883

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on two things:

- (a) Whether the European can, before it is too late, enlist the whole-hearted interest and co-operation, in his anthropological experiments, of the more highly educated members of such communities;
- (b) Ability and understanding to discriminate--among the mass of data which we have now accumulated--between what is, and what is not, vital for the attainment of the object which we have in view.

This object may perhaps be defined as the retention of the particular genius and individuality of the races concerned.

BIBLIOGRAPHICA ARCANA

THE PSEUDONYMS OF LORIMER FISON, 1857-1883

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H. R. Hays in From Ape to Angel leaves Fison at 1880, after the publication of Kamilaroi and Kurnai, by simply adding that "during the latter part of his life he gave up anthropology"--which is quite incorrect. At this time Fison was signing all his work and Hays should have located it. To the end Fison corresponded with Frazer, Howitt and others. His last book, Tales of Old Fiji (which he had researched in the 1870s), came out in 1904 (reprinted 1907) just before he died.

Between Kamilaroi and Kurnai and Tales of Old Fiji he maintained a flow of published articles, some showing the influence of Lewis Henry Morgan, but many indicating original research on marriage patterns, burial rites, religious cults, word studies, riddles and material culture. Six of these appeared in the Journal of the Anthropological Institute (a door opened to him by E. B. Tylor), along with several others co-authored with Howitt and Codrington; four were papers read to the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science; and others appeared in Australian and American journals, including the Sydney Morning Herald, Argus, American Anthropologist, Annual Report of New Guinea and Australasian Monthly Magazine. He wrote the article on "Aborigines of Victoria" for Baldwin Spencer's Handbook of Melbourne (1891).

However, what is generally not known is that Fison wrote a great deal under pseudonyms from 1857, when he edited the

ship journal en route from England to the Australian gold fields and wrote poetry for it under the name VIATOR.

Many of Fison's writings in church and missionary newspapers were simply signed "By a Missionary." Some have considerable anthropological value, especially his reports of his Fijian itinerations during the 1860s. For any reconstructing of the picture of culture change due to Christianization or settlement these are important. He wrote thirteen long anonymous descriptive letters, published in Wesleyan Missionary Notices between 1865 and 1870.

In the mid-1860s Fison was writing for Watchman and The Christian Advocate--descriptive material from Fiji, odd items on Fijian words and cannibalism--under the nom de plume FILIUS. In 1871 and 1872 he was using NEMO. He seems to have used specific names for different kinds of writing--church politics during the 1870s were covered by MEDEIS, the Volunteer Movement by MEDAMOS (1871-1872) and lay representation in the church by FESTINALENTE (1874).

In the secular press he followed the same pattern, writing on Tongan affairs under the name DELTA (1875), on Fijian words under AMBATHA, and on cannibalism under FIJIAN. These appeared in the Daily Telegraph, the Fiji Times and the Australasian when he was in Victoria preparing to return to Fiji for the second time.

That Australian interlude (1871-1875) had been spent on aboriginal research and in his battle over the South Seas labor trade. His entire work in this last connection was published in the daily press. First he wrote as VITI and later as OUTIS. His series of eleven major articles in the Daily Telegraph (1873-1874) employed the pseudonym OUTIS. This is possibly the major primary source for the period of kidnapping which led up to the cession of Fiji to Britain.

The Sydney Morning Herald published a book-length series of thirty-five articles entitled "The Dominion of Fiji" (1875-1877), written by Fison under the pseudonym HARDY LEE (which he also used for stories about the Australian gold fields). In the Weekly Advocate, under the name of MANSELL HALL, he contributed "Intercolonial Correspondence" and wrote on the missionary ownership of land between July 1877 and July 1878.

In 1881 he became "Our Special Correspondent" for Fiji to the Sydney Morning Herald. In this role he supplied twenty-six long and informative articles, four of which became topics for editorials. I fail to see how anyone could write on the economics of the first decade of colonial Fiji without using this

primary source.

Another of Fison's significant contributions to the preservation of knowledge about old Fiji was his encouragement of island converts to write their autobiographies. Some of these he translated. Joel Bulu (1871), a straight translation, and Old Sefanaia (ca. 1895), assembled from vernacular material, are Fison's work under the pseudonym "A Friend of His."

After Fison had received his M.A. from the University of Rochester (New York) for work on the Australian aborigines, he gave up writing under pseudonyms. The pseudonym period lasted for a quarter-century (1857-1883) and covers material of prime value for any ethnohistorical reconstruction in the anthropology of Fiji.

Recent Dissertations

Since dissertations are not always easily accessible, we will in the future, as space permits, include brief summaries when these are provided by the authors.

Banks, Judith Judd (M.A., anthropology, University of British Columbia, 1970) "Comparative Biographies of Two British Columbia Anthropologists: Charles Hill-Tout and James A. Teit."

Bynum, William F., M.D. (Ph.D., history of science, Cambridge University, 1974) "Time's Noblest Offspring: The Problem of Man in the British Natural Historical Sciences, 1800-1863." The dissertation treats the work of William Lawrence, J. C. Prichard, George Combe, Robert Chambers, Richard Owen, Robert Knox, Thomas Huxley and Charles Lyell, with specific reference to two related sets of queries: 1) What is the significance of the anatomical similarities between man and the anthropoid apes? Do animals possess minds? Is the difference between men and other animals qualitative or quantitative? What are the implications of classifying man as a member of the animal kingdom? 2) Why are some men white and some black? Are all men descended from a single pair, or are racial characteristics aboriginal? Are the different races members of the same species? If so, how have the striking racial variations occurred? Despite good theological, scientific and humanistic reasons for considering man a single species, there was little direct historical evidence on the formation of human varieties, and the major racial types existed at the time of the earliest written and pictorial records. Therefore, anthropologists commonly appealed to the "analogy of nature," pointing out that domestic animals also exhibited marked variation, and since man was also a domestic animal, it could be proved analogically that human varieties were "accidental," not aboriginal. Medical anatomy and physiology also depended on this analogy, since many