Minority Group in Hawaii
By William C. Smith

Even though there may be reason to believe that Dutch and Spanish ships touched the Hawaiian Islands as early as the sixteenth century that the islands were called to the attention of the world by the English explorer, Captain James Cook. Shortly after his discovery of the archipelago on January 18,1778, epochal changes came as Cook's voyage played an important part in the development of the fur trade between China and Pacific coast of North America. Fur traders came from many lands and made Honolulu a way station, and this was Hawaii's first significant contact with the outside commercial world.

As a by-product of the fur trade came the commerce in sandalwood with China, which began about 1810. As the islands were being rapidly stripped of sandalwood, the whalers began to use Honolulu as a supply station. This brought a new source of revenue for some twenty years (1840-60), when in turn it begin to recede. The end of the whaling business was foreseen and attention was directed increasingly to agriculture. The first missionaries, who came in 1820, encouraged agriculture. They brought a new seeds, plants, tools, and a farmer to help the Hawaiians.

Sugar cane grew luxuriantly in the islands and gradually its value was recognized. A Chinese resident made sugar as early as 1802, but it was not before 1835, when an American firm planted a considerable acreage, that sugar production assumed any important. When sugar of a fair quality was made in1842, it actually became a commercial product. The first important advance came in 1951 with the invention of the centrifugal drying process. '

Labor Problem and Immigration

As early as 1850 the sugar industry began to face problems, and one was that of a labor supply.-2 The native population had decreased through ravages of the white man's diseases, because many men had become sailors on the fur, sandalwood, and whaling ships. Moreover, the Hawaiians were disinclined to the steady, monotonous labor in the cane fields, and when they demanded wages which the planters could not pay, Chinese coolies on contract were sought, and in January 1852 the first installment of some two hundred was brought over. Seven months later one hundred more arrived.

There was disagreement concerning the recruiting of labor. The Government was desirous of securing South Sea Islanders. who were of the same racial stock,, to build up the declining Hawaiians population. In 1859 a small contingent was brought from the South Seas. In December 1864 the Bureau of Immigration was created to deal with the labor situation. The Bureau investigated India and Malaysia, but decured no recruits from either area. Europe was also considered. The planters, however, wanted cheap labor, and while the Bureau was canvassing the various possibilities, the improtation of Chinese coolies went steadily on. In 1865 five hundred more Chinese were brought. The first shipment of 148 Japanese came in 1868, but there were no additions from this source for some twenty years. In the first nine years following the organization of the Bureau of Immigration in 1864, nearly 1,700 Chinese and about 200 South Sea Islanders were admitted.

The treaty of reciprocity with the United States in 1875 was a great stimulus to sugar production, and after that date this industry assumed a dominant position in the economic life of the islands. In 1890 the export of sugar was ten times that of 1875. This enlarged American market increased the demand for workers. The planters still insisted on cheap labor, while the Goverment sought immigrants who would assimilate and amalgamate readily with the native Hawaiians.

Fears of Chinese and Japanese

The influx of Chinese in the 1877-90 period was sufficiently large to produce a feeling of uneasinesss It was feared that the islands would become a Chinese colony, and to forestall such an eventuality, labor recuiting was shifted to other lands. There were some four hundred Portuguese in Hawaii. Most of them had come with the whaling ships and had married Hawaiian women. Because of their industry and thrift, both the planters and the immigration officials agreed that they would be desirable. Several thousand Portuguese were induced to come, but in those pre-Panama-Canal days the expense of transportation was all but prohibitive. Small groups were brought from Germany, Scandinavia, and the South Sea Islands, but in sufficient numbers to supply the demand.

Attention was again directed to the Orient, this time to Japan, but at first the Japanese Goverment was unwilling to permit her nationals to go under the then existent conditions. In 1885 the first shipment of Japanese coolies--616 men, 159 women, and 108 children--arrived. In 1886 a treaty was negotiated with Japan which tapped a new labor reservoir, and under this agreement 62,000 Japanese came, of which one-fourth were women. The Japanese Goverment insisted on a minimum percentage of women in each shipment.

When the Hawaiian Islands were annexed on June 16, 1897, Chinese immigration was automatically prohibited because the Chinese had already been excluded from the United States. The Japanese inflow of coolie labor then increased until 1907, when it was checked.

With this virtual wave aweeping in from a single source since 1886, another fear was aroused--that of a Japanization of the islands. To checkmate this, attempts were made to recruit other nationals in order to diversify the labor group. In 1900-1901 about 5,000 Puerto Ricans came. Partly with this in view and partly because of the reduction in the supply from Japan on account of the Russo-Japanese War, some Koreans were recruited. In June 1903 there were 515 Koreans in the Territory, and in June 1905 there were 7,296. When the war ended, the Japanese inflow was resumed and the Korean immigration ended.

Between 1905 and 1912 there were further attempts to secure Portuguese, and more than 5,000 came, but they did not remain long on the plantations; many of them went to California. In 1907 President Theodore Roosevelt negotiated the Gentlemen's Agreement with Japan which ended the movement of Japanese laborers to continental United States. Hawaii was not included in the agreement, but the Japanese Goverment voluntarily extended the prohibition to include the Territory. Recruiting then shifted to the Philippine Islands, and in a comparatively short time the Filipinos were occupying first place in the labor picture of Hawaii. This was the third of the great inundations from the Orient-the Chinese, the Japanese, and the Filipinos.

Population Data

The population data presented in Table 1 visualizes an a rough way the situation in the islands. The table shows approximately when the different groups began to arrive and in what numbers. For more accurate details, however, it is necessary to study the intercensal period.-3 According to this table, the Japanese constitute the largest group in the islands, with the Caucasians occupying second place. The Filipino group is third in size, and that is followed by the Part-Hawaiians.

Table 2 gives the percentage of native-born in the several groups and this is almost identical with citizenship. There is a discrepancy in certain groups where naturalization has been permissible. The figure for 1940 give "citizenship" and not "nativity." It is evident from these data that the alien element in the population is rapidly receding into the background. In 1896 only 10.3

per cent of the Chinese were native-born and citizens, while in 1940 the percentage was 86.89. In 1896 only 8.5 per cent of the Japanese were native-born, while in 1940 their citizenship (identical with nativity) rose to 77.9 per cent. The Chinese and Japanese aliens are reaching the age bracket in which the death rate is high. The Korean immigration was later than the bulk of the Chinese and Japanese influx, and as a consequence their percentage of citizens is lower than that of the Oriental groups .

Some years ago predictions were frequently made that the Japanese would have a voting majority ora near majority by 1940. The data for 1940, however, do not support those prognostications. According to the Governor's Report for 1940 the Japanese had 35 per cent of the citizens the Chinese 7 per cent, the Hawaiians and Part-Hawaiians 19 per cent, the Caucasians 33 per cent, the Koreans 1 per cent, and the Filipinos 5 per cent.

Race Relations in Hawaii

Visitors to Hawaii characteristically comment on the friendly relations existing among the several ethnic groups. An American sociologist who had spent several years in the Old South said, "Humanly speaking, you have no race prejudice in Hawaii." On the whole, it may be said that the several races live together in relationships which are characterized by harmony and friendliness.

The visitor from the Pacific coast or from the South does not see in Hawaii the behavior to which he is accustomed. A dean of a white college in the South will address a Negro high school teacher as "Professor," but never as "Mister. " In Hawaii the term is applied indiscriminately to men of all races. In the South, Negroes may enter banks and stores with white folks, but they are not admitted as guests in hotels and restaurants for white men. In Honolulu, members of all races are admitted to such places. If a Southerner boards a street car in Honolulu he may be pertubed, for he will look in vain for the famliar movable sign which serves as a boundary line between the blacks and the whites. Service clubs in Hawaii draw their members from all races, and the white man sits down by the Negro at the luncheon table.

These common practices in Hawaii symbolize an equality in social status. In such a situation men of superior ability and character, no matter of what race, can rise to positions of dignity and even of power--and they do.

But our tourist friend must remind himself that Hawaii is neither California nor Alabama, and all too often he does not appreciate the real situation. He has grown accustomed to behavior in certain areas, and when that does not appear on the surface in the famliar forms, he concludes that in Hawaii there is neither prejucice nor discrimination and that all is beautifully idyllic.

Factors in Race Friendliness

A number of factors have entered into the warp and woof of Hawaiian life to make it what it is, but there is no such thing as an unchangeable pattern in the islands. Life is in process. The data presented in Table 1 show that tremendous changes have come in the composition of the population. The successive waves of immigration have brought changes, and no one can predict the future with accuracy.

The early contacts of Americans and Europeans with the Hawaiians were of such a nature as to make for friendliness and associations on a basis of equality. The Hawaiians had never been slaves and they felt no sense of racial inferiority because of skin color. Romanzo Adams calls the Hawaiians "an amalgamating race".-4 They have entered freely into outside marriages and have not raised barriers against the several immigrant groups. The Hawaiians have exerted a wholesome influence and have tended to keep down any incipient anti-race feeling. When the Chinese came upon the scene, because of their marked differences, the setting

was favorable for development of race feeling; but if white men had turned upon the Chinese because of race differences the Hawaiians would have been offended. In this favorable atmosphere the Chinese made their adjustments, and they were never subjected to the treatment experienced by their fellow nationals in California.

The New England missionary element has not been without its influence. At first the Puritan consciences of the missionaries were placed under a severe strain as they came into contact with these naive and simple people, but gradually they came to accept the Hawaiians on a basis of wquality, and this attitude has been transmitted through several generatins. The economic life of Hawaii is largely controlled by descendants of the old missionaries, and not being unmindful of the semiannual dividends, they observe the ritual, at least, of race equality.

The multiplicity of ethnic groups in Hawaii has been a factor of no small importance. The Chinese were the single group of different race in the early days of California. Hence it was easy to attack in one direction. Many years later the Japanese became the single target. In Hawaii the several races and race mixtures have made it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to direct a concerted attack upon any single group.

The mixed-blood group in Hawaii has played a significant role and will probably become increasingly important. Race crosses ordinarily come on the fringes, where the undesirable elements on both sides mix their blood. In Hawaii it has been far different. In the early days of European contact, Hawaiian women of royal lineage became the wives of white men, and this set the stamp of approval upon intermarriage. Consequently the racial hybrids in Hawaii who come from socially sanctioned marriage relationships have a status far superior to those in areas where interracial marriages are forbidden and where mixed-bloods result from illicit relationships. The mixed-blood is accepted in Hawaii and many of them are rated highly--the superiority of the Chinese-Hawaiian is accepted almost as a religious creed is most circles.

The hybrids have been a factor in keeping down race prejudice. In hybrids the characteristic physical features are rubbed off and it is less easy to classify and categorize them. The hybrid group is intermediary and many have attained positions of leadership. They have an advantage in that they can represent several groups. On the whole, the hybrids seem to be closer to the Hawaiians than to any other group. The Hawaiians form a sort of magnetic core which attracts all varieties of mixed-bloods. The group of mixed-bloods, which is increasing both in size and in prestige, will continue to stand for race equality.

The Plantation System and Race Relations

Life in Hawaii and race relations cannot be understood apart from the plantation system. In this system white men provide the capital and a high-grade technology, while those of different color supply the necessary brawn. There are marked diffeences in the roles played by these two groups. The white group has the power and exercises the control, while the manual laborers are accorded a status of inferiority. Status is inextricably intertwined with the plantation system and is not necessarily dependent upon race. The Portuguese have been classified as Caucasian, but not as Haole.-5 They came as plantation laborers, and were for that reason accorded a status

inferior to that of the "Other Caucasians, " or Haoles. They were, to be sure, given some of the better jobs on the plantations--they became the teamsters and truck drivers. The Portuguese have resented this imputation of inferiority a nd have been struggling to rise above it.

A historical survey of sugar production in Hawaii brings to light a series of cycles. The planters have imported laborers, they have exploited these workers for a number of years, and then the laborers have left the plantations. This cycle has been repeated several times. When one source of labor would for one reason or another be cut off, the planters always managed to find another until recently when immigration from the Philippine Islands was restrited. About 1932 the planters began to adjust themselves to that situation and turned increasingly to the native-born Chinese and Japanese.-6

The planters guarded well their interests lest they lose control. When the large influx of Chinese in the early days of sugar production endangered the scheme, they brought Portuguese and Japanese to checkmate them; and later, when the Japanese became dangerously numerous, they relieved the tension by the importation of Koreans, Puerto Ricans, Spanish, and more Portuguese. There has been an unceasing flow of laborers into the plantations, from which, in a comparatively short time, they would go into nonplantation activities in Honolulu, migrate to continental United States, or return to their homelands.

Influence of immigrant groups

Each successive labor contignet has made some particular impression upon the island life. Small groups like the Koreans and the Puerto Ricans have brought less modification than the numerous Japanese. Because the Japanese Goverment insisted on a minimum percentage of women among her emigrants, the Japanese have married out far less than the Chinese, who had few of their own women. Hence in the Asiatic-Hawaiian group there are comparatively few Japanese-Hawaiians. The Filipinos, with their Catholic religion, have left a different inprint from that of the Japanese Buddhists. The close tie-up of the plantation system with the racial situation is stated thus by Lind:

The ever changing hues of Hawaii's polyglot and polychrome population and the warp and woof of its perplexing interracial problems are largely to be traced in the flux and flow of its ethnic labor groups.-7

Each importation of labor brought new realignments of the various population groups. The Japanese accepted the plantation conditions for some time, and this made the situation less tolersble for the Chinese and accelerated theiroutflow into the cities. Each new group took its place at the bottom of the occupational pyramid and for a time all would be well. But gradually they would become restless and demand a share of the positions of responsibility and dignity. Such intrusions into tabooed territory were not accepted graciously. The Portuguese, because of less culture difference, had certain advantages, however, and particularly the citizens, who have used the educational opportunities, have become conscious rivals of the Portuguese in some of the preferred occupations. As the position of the Portuguese has been threatened by the advances of the Japanese, the Portuguese have developed a dislike for these disturbers. This prejudice is a defense against the inroads of the Japanese.

Paradox in Hawaii

When race relations in Hawaii are examined with care, a paradoxical situation becomes evident. It is a matter of tradition and principle that there is or should be no prejudice. That is a doctorine to which the leading spokesmen for the Territory subscribe, and practically all members of the community feel bound to maintain it. Race equality is visible on every hand--in the freedom of intermarriage, in the abs ence of legal segregation in school or in residential areas, and in the ease with which members of the different races mingle at various social functions.

Beneath this apparently calm surface, however, are found inequality, discrimination, prejudice, cynicism, and bitterness. The plantation system, in spite of the doctrine of race equality, has manipulated the importation of laborers from the several sources so that a small group of white Americans are in control not only of the sugar industry but of all aspects of life in the Territory.

Much is said about the educational opportunities in the islands, and the young people are urged to use them in order to become good Americans. They are told about the "room at the top" that is open to all on an equal basis. The children go through the schools and even through the university looking forward to the days when they will play important roles in the further unfolding of the great American epic of which they have read so hopefully in their schoolbooks. Many, however, are awakened quite rudely from their dreams when, with diplomas in hand, they seek employment. Then they find barriers, some of them very subtle, to be sure, while their Caucasian classmates, protected by vested rights, move unopposed into the preferred positions.

This disillusionment has brought mutation in the attitudes of many of the Hawaiian-born sons and daughters of Oriental ancestry "from one of unquestioning endorsement of the existing order to one of complete rejection of their former loyalties."-8

Hawaii Since Pearl Harbor

Evidence of prejudice and race consciousness have not been open and public in Hawaii. The outward show of equality and friendliness has been sufficient to keep the mutterings of dissatisfaction well underground. But what of the future? Very few on the United States mainland know what is going on in the Hawaiian Islands at present, because of a rigid censorship. The writer has endeavored to secure information, but has been informed that the significant materials would probably not pass the censor. He has been informed that many, if not most, of the stories published in mainland papers and magazines have been categorically denied in Hawaii. We do know that the authorities are on the alert in that they have appointed a director of civilian morale who is working with the several racial groups, and it may be said that this director is a high-grade man and not the usual barbershop politician.

Will the white man in Hawaii be able to rub the sugar out of his eyes so that he can see things as they are? Will he be able to change a surface friendliness and show of equality into something which is real and genuine? Can the white man of America learn from the recent experiences of the white man in Burma and in India? There, to be sure, the white man did not ever make a pretense toward equality. We are hopeful but not too confident.

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From The Annals of The American Academy of Political and Social Science
September 1942

1-For futher details on the history of Hawaii, see Ralph S. Kuykendall, THE HAWAIIAN KINGDOM, 1778-1854, Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 1938; R.S.Kuykendall and H.E.Gregory, A History of Hawaii, New York: The Macmillan Co., 1926.

2-See Katherine Coman, "The History of Contract Labor in the Hawaiian Islands," Publications of the American Economic Association, 3d series, Vol. IV, No. 3, Aug. 1903.

3-For a valuable compilation of statistical data, see Romanzo Adams, The People of Hawaii, Honolulu, 1933.

4-Interracial Marrage in Hawaii (New York: Macmillan Co., 1937), pp.69-84. This whole book is valuable for the light it throws on the race situation in Hawaii.

5-Haole is the Hawaiian word for "stranger," but has come to designate Caucasians of north European or American ancestry.

6-W. C. Smith, Americans in Process (Ann Arbor, 1937), pp. 65-75.

7-A. W. Lind, Economic Succession and Racial Invasion in Hawaii (University of Chicago, 1936),p.23. See also A. W. Lind, An Island Community, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1938.

8-A. W. Lind, Economic Succession and Racial Invasion in Hawaii (Chicago, 1936), p. 410.