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► **To cite this version:**

J. Barette. Early contacts in Oceania, or history as anthropology. *Reviews in Anthropology*, 2009, 38 (2), pp.111-131. 10.1080/00938150902889716 . ird-00391578

HAL Id: ird-00391578

<https://ird.hal.science/ird-00391578>

Submitted on 4 Jun 2009

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Early contacts in Oceania, or history as anthropology

Jean-François Baré

(Pre-publication version of an article prepared on demand for *Reviews in Anthropology*, Routledge, Taylor and Francis publishers, published in a slightly different version in *Reviews in Anthropology* 38: 111-131).

Clendinnen, Inga , *Dancing with Strangers. Europeans and Australians at First Contact* Cambridge University Press, New-York 2004

Dening, Greg *Beach Crossings. Voyaging Across Times, Cultures and Self* The Miegunah Press, Melbourne University Publishing Ltd, 2004,

Salmond, Anne *The Trial of the Cannibal Dog. The remarkable Story of Captain Cook's Encounters in the South Sea* Yale University Press 2003

Tcherkézoff, Serge 'First Contacts' in *Polynesia: The Samoan Case (1722-1848). Western Misunderstandings about Sexuality and Divinity*, Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies, The Journal of Pacific History Inc. 2004

This article comments the problems of analysis encountered by both anthropologists and historians to decipher situations of first encounters between Europeans and Oceanians, and the long-term historical processes they triggered. It stresses therefore the necessity, in Oceanian situations and probably elsewhere, to integrate anthropology and history, generally split up in traditional academia.

Key words: anthropology, history, Oceania, cultural encounters.

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1987 Tahiti, les Temps et les Pouvoirs. Pour une anthropologie historique du Tahiti post-européen. Editions de l'ORSTOM, Paris, *He is also the author of two books on Madagascar political and historical anthropology, and has edited several books on development studies and applied anthropology in France.* Address correspondance to Jean-François Baré at U.M.R. DES Paris I-I.R.D, 45 avenue de la Belle Gabrielle 94160 Nogent sur Marne, France. E-mail: bare@ades.cnrs.fr.

It is quite striking that four books devoted to the topic of the first encounters between Europeans and Oceanians be published almost at the same time, by anthropologists and historians. They approach the topic from different perspectives. Oceania or “the South Seas” as a whole as in Dening and Salmond, more localized settings as in Tcherkezoff, (Samoa) and Clendinnen (Australia 's New South Wales in the late XVIIIth century), but they all confront the obvious inter-cultural dimensions without which any descriptive approach of the reciprocal discovery of Europeans by Oceanians, and of the latter by the former, does not make much sense. But the reserve is also true: all of these works seem to say that any anthropology of Oceania is bound to be historical, in the famous Braudel's “long term” perspective (See for instance Braudel 1958), not as in the common rendering of an historical event, and history itself, as coined ironically by the French historian Paul Veyne (1971),

“things that just happen once”. And indeed the first Euro-Oceanian contacts *as historical situations* triggered /set in *specific* historical processes.

The authors would I hope accept that I remind here an inspiration dating back notably to Sahlins’ now famous work on Cook’s death in Hawaii, or on the “Fijian wars”. (for instance 1981, 1985, 1995). It found a direct echo in my own work when I was writing *le Malentendu Pacifique* about the Tahitian case-study (1985/ 2002), at a time when his *Historical Metaphors* had just been published (For the sake of simplicity I will use “Tahiti” for the Tahitian central archipelago, the “Society Islands” and to a lesser extent the Australes Islands or *tuha’a pae*, and “Tahitian” for the *ma’ohi* language as spoken at the time.).

This personal allusion is just to testify to the extraordinary similarity of “scenarios” between what Sahlins was seeing in the processes of Hawaiian society transformation and decline, and the Tahitian ones, let aside the specificity of both contexts. In both cases after years of extraordinary and baroque exchanges of goods and services with the British navy, when British officers would be treated as metaphors for Polynesian chiefs (hence more or less “godly” beings) by the Polynesians, and chiefs as metaphors for kings (by the British), after James Cook’s or the paramount Tahitian god ‘Oro ‘s “sacrifice”, the chiefs *in both places* would consider for years that they were partaking of *Peretane* (the Polynesian rendering of “Britain”), would keep asking to meet their “friend King George” and enquire whether they were living as well as he ; most of them until late in the 19th century would keep asking for a British protectorate, regularly denied in both cases too; and the London Missionary Society missionaries be put in a surrealistic organic interaction with chiefs, often at their great unease. In other words nothing was working as it should have been; hence the real destructuring, *suffered by the missionaries as well as by the Tahitians* (in the case). The main point of this

digression is on the similarity of historical scenarios between Tahiti and Hawaii, that one could find, to a lesser extent, in the Samoan case as dealt with by Tchekezoff. History has something to do with culture, insofar as cultures produce specific historical situations; hence the main argument of Pacific history (if not, to my opinion at least, the only one) is Sahlins' "putting culture back into history" (1981).

The majority of these books refer to Sahlins' inspiration but at a very variable extent. In the Australian case-study it is not quoted at all. Denig quotes Sahlins just to recall how their dialogue helped him long ago to go into anthropology (175). But Tcherkezoff and Salmond had to confront the wide theoretical ambition put forward by the author of Islands of History: "Now it seems to me there is something more to this tempest in a South Pacific teapot than a possible theory of history. There is also a criticism of basic Western distinctions by which culture is usually thought, such as the supposed opposition between history and structure, or stability and change." (1985: 143). Although Tcherkezoff is mainly a documented and critic essay about Western interpretation of the first encounters in Samoa, his conclusion is precisely devoted to re-thinking the use of Europeans notions such as "divinity" to write Oceanian history; Salmond is a wonderful historiographical monument to James Cook's memory –hence to the Pacific islands as seen from his eyes and to the Pacific islanders' way of looking at him and his crew, but goes much further than pure bland "historiography". While deciphering the historical events through the underlying cultural frameworks at hand, Salmond illustrates in a crystalline way the necessity to integrate anthropology and history instead, as is often the case, to merely paying lip homage to this project. As to Clendinnen, she defines her project modestly as "a telling of a story of what happened when a thousand British men and women, some of them convicts and some of them free, made a settlement on the East Coast of Australia" (2005: 1); but she keeps pointing out the cross-cultural dynamics

at hand in intriguing historical events. Dening's subtitle "Voyaging Across Times, Cultures, and Self" is anything but a theoretical argument, whereas his book keeps exploring voyaging and encounters in both the Pacific islanders and Europeans sense of the word voyage. Then appears again a theoretical issue in the very notion of "voyaging" in the different cultures at hand.

All of these works account for the cross-cultural misunderstandings at hand, but unfortunately to a much lesser extent for the specific historical processes created: because the problem is not so much to talk about first encounters for the sake of it, than to describe in an argued (analytical?) way what historical processes began at that time: in the Pacific islands, as elsewhere, "history" is describing destructure and recomposition of social and cultural orders. I will get back to that. So it can seem, at least from France, that Sahlins' work on the encounters between Europe and the "South Sea" created a new duration—a new "durée" in Braudel's words, but in Pacific studies. In Pacific studies until 20 years ago "discovery", glaringly worthy of a specific anthropological *and* historical approach, indeed seems to have been relegated by anthropologist's to a kind of sub-subject of historiography (bizarre things happened in the first encounters, let us keep them randomly in a drawer, and forget about them), whereas the attention would be almost entirely caught by the project of catching "contemporary" societies or at the contrary the "authentic" ones from the past.

Greg Dening left us in March 2008. So his book seems to be the last work he published in his lifetime, completed to leave to posterity a testimony for his famous deep involvement in Pacific matters, and insular Pacific civilization as a whole, as well as a sort of phenomenological approach of "Oceania", as epitomized mainly by the Marquesan islands. This is possibly why this work seems to me the most difficult to grasp as a whole, since it

consists of a multidimensional meditation dealing at the same time with a thorough biography of two beach combers and castaways, the British Edward Robarts and the French Joseph Kabris (mainly in the Marquesas or *hemua'enata*, “land of the human beings”), and of their encounter with the Marquesans, (chap. 1. “Writing the Beach”), a no less thorough historiographical accompaniment of the famous LMS missionary William Crook, whose journal is alluded to throughout the book, his own conceptions of voyaging and space as “existence”, which he partakes with the Oceanians; his own itinerary including the Jesuit society where he got his training as a priest, as well as his reknowned experience of teaching in Australia (like in chap. 2. “Being there. An archaeology of believing” or in chap. 3. ““By Sea to the Beach. Crossings; An archaeology of learning”), chap. 4 to 6 being mainly devoted to the state of Marquesan society at the time when Kabris and Robart wrote their journals (beginning of the 19th century), not forgetting the French now-famous painter Paul Gauguin at the end of the 19th century.

Kabris, Robarts, Crook’s and Gauguin’s biographies are certainly fascinating in themselves, as individual elements of Europe spreading into the world, Robart’s journal, edited by Dening in 1974 shows one of these extraordinary lives as invented by a time when voyage meant something directly perceived in the minds and bodies: “(...) saild from Blackwall in 1797 on board the Ship Euphrates, bound round Cape Horn in search of sperm whales” (28). Later he would be amongst other occupations a “pearler, trader, deserter, slaver and Marquesan warrior” (ibid.); husband to a Marquesan daughter of a chief in Nuku-Hiva; butler to Sir Thomas Raffle’s sister in Penang, then employed in Calcutta by the famous governor to “tell his story”.

Joseph Kabris’ biography is no less fascinating than Dening’s efforts to assess on it. Kabris was another runaway from a French whaler; he stayed in the Marquesas for years, and was

tattooed in the Marquesan fashion. For that matter Denig wonderfully tells how Kabris would see this sign as definite proof of what he was writing (Robarts journal and his own would be under close scrutiny after their return to Europe), when selling his pamphlet on the Marquesas to the populace in European fairs. Kabris returned from the Marquesas –against his own will- with the Russian Admiral Kruzenstern, but to Moscow, and was later exhibited in the courts of Europe after walking back to France with the remnants of Napoléon’s “Grande Armée” in 1812.

But in Denig’s book multiple prospects, the primary usefulness of these journals is to provide transversal insight into Marquesan society of the time, through their own historiographic content: stratification, wars, territorial organizations by “valleys”, affinity, rituals and women, that they directly experimented. One might think of Victor Turner’s notion of “social drama” as “a limited area of transparency in an otherwise uneventful and opaque social life” (1956: 73)) since any arrival of a foreigner, especially in remote isolated areas such as the Marquesas, brings about metaphorical reactions, in the sense of dealing with “strangers” or “otherness” as a specific kind of the self. Amongst many relevant observations (involvement in war and competition, hierarchical dealings with women) I would note the recurrent one on cannibalism (“going for fish” or *e’ika*), and the interesting allusion to a collective “suicide” in the 1860s, due to a collective paranoid syndrome itself resulting from the irruption of European diseases (60-61). Then “going for fish” was back on the ground of sorcery and counter-sorcery (interestingly rendered in Tahitian at the time by *ha’afifi*, literally “complicating “, one of the critical remarks made to the L.M.S.).

Being by no means a specialist of Marquesan matters, and given the genuine respect I feel for this book and for its author I should point at least two surprising errors and some perplexities about the philosophical framework at hand. About two minor errors, possibly editing

mistakes: the “kamaiana” of Hawai’I (as quoted on p.16) are in fact kama’aina literally something like “children (*kama*, Tahitian root *tama* as in *tama’iti*) of the land (‘*aina*, Tahitian root ‘*ai’*a or Maori *kainga’*a). This is surprising for an author so well acquainted with Oceania, since both roots (*tama/kama* and *aina’*a/ ‘*ai’*a /or *kaina’*a/*kainga*) are fairly frequent in Polynesian languages (but not in Marquesan it is true). On p. 273, Denning recounts that a runaway “had run from the *Daedalus* when it called at Tahiti on his first visit on Botany Bay” (273). As Denning probably knew, there is no such thing as “Botany Bay” in Tahiti.

So much for the minor errors, easily drowned out by such a huge and rich essay. The repetition of very general and, to be sincere, void assertions to my opinion is more perplexing, insofar as having perhaps a philosophical or poetical intention they do not seem to me to enhance the interest of the book whatsoever, and on the contrary obscure its main purpose – i.e., as far as I understand, that writing now about “Oceania” as writing an intermix of encounters, history, and anthropology, (mainly from case studies in the Marquesas in this case). Take for instance the image of “beaches” that gives its heading to the book: “‘Life is a Beach’ the T-shirts in every seaside resort proclaims. Yes life is a beach (...). Life is a marginal space between two unknowables –its before and its afters”” (18). Do we need Greg Denning to tell us this? See now for instance that “culture is talk and living is story” (49). This claim refers to the obsessional stars of Anglo-American academia “Geertz, Derrida, Foucault, Roland Barthes (!!), Ricoeur” and for good measure...Ludwig Wittgenstein !(*ibid.*), in an allusion closer to a neo-*mantra* in the Californian style than to an argumentation. Geertz, (or at least the pre-post-modern Geertz) would certainly suffice to talk about culture in general, but would that mean that “living” is *not* “cultural”? Denning’s entire rich empirical material, showing for instance how a native from Bordeaux, runaway from a whaler became a

Marquesan warrior and a tattooed one shown in the courts of Europe, shows the exact contrary.

So we should welcome this book as an essay unveiling important aspects of the Marquesans' encounter with Europe, and in doing so, pay an homage to a teacher respected and renowned and researcher throughout the entire Pacific, leaving the reader himself to meditate on Greg Denning's personal and poetical meditation.

Clendinnen's book on the contrary indulges very little in personal thoughts. Its great quality is to bring out a contrasted case study about the first Australians' encounter with Europe. What happened between Europeans and Marquesans, and Polynesians as a whole, is quite contrasted to the Australian situation. In the Australian case assimilation of both hierarchies, even metaphorical, does not seem possible; the tragedies happening are of a different nature; one can see almost totally foreign universes trying to communicate, whatever the efforts deployed by both sides at the time, and everything ends up, already in these early times, (1788-1789) in chaos. As soon as 1836 Charles Darwin would observe for New South Wales "the Australian's infants are dying because of the difficulty, in these changed times, of procuring sufficient food, so their wandering habits increase (...) and the population, without apparent death from famine, is repressed in a manner extremely sudden." (279). In other words the First Fleet (as was named the first British expedition to Australia carrying convicts), despite the strict and enforced regulations on "respecting the natives" would have taken for granted that the land resources being relatively "free" would be hers to use and abuse, as opposed to many of the Polynesian encounters until late in the 19th century. This kind of total misunderstanding endured in many transformed ways till modern Australia's present time, as Clendinnen stresses after many others (288). Not to say that Polynesians of

the time did not suffer violence (as well as, sometimes, the Europeans would). The point is the social organizations at hand and the issues, as revealed by Clendinnen, are of a totally different nature: between skilled hunters and gatherers, wandering from “sacred” spaces and territories to the other, and envoys of His Gracious Majesty King George, in ships themselves commanded and managed in a hierarchical way, and having the undecipherable project to Aboriginal Australians’ eyes to people a “colony” with “convicts” sent from Great Britain.

Also, as opposed to Denning, Clendinnen meditates personally only briefly throughout the book, and generally to show the difficulty of sources’ deciphering: “ the historian’s situation is complicated because we have to look through other people’s mask (13)”, and also “the trick is to cultivate deliberate double vision: to retrieve from British descriptions clues to autonomous Australian action “ (119). “History”, she recalls, “is a secular discipline” and not “ a balm to hurt minds” (287).

“Dancing with Strangers” alludes to the 1832 visit of Charles Darwin’s ship *Beagle* to Tierra del Fuego, when British and Fuegians would first exchange singing and dancing, “and one of the young men, when asked, had no objections to a little waltzing” (Darwin as quoted by Clendinnen: 7). To this echoes the “remarkably friendly encounter” in the recently baptized “Botany bay” in late January 1788 after a first British landing, with “men paddling in and proceeding to more dancing and otherwise amusing themselves” (8). But later on, “Surgeon-General John White fell in with a large body of Australians (...) he was anxious to make them to realize the fatal power of the short metal sticks(...) and fired at a warrior’s shield” (9). The marine Watkin Tench recalls having whistled “ Malbrooke has gone to the wars”, and in Clendinnen’s terms “Malbrooke became a favourite item in the Australians’s expanding repertoire” (9) This song and the Australian ones would mean later the situation’s passing from hostility to peacefulness. If one adds on the Australian’s side “the combing of never-

before-combed ‘clotted with dirt and vermin’” (8), the flabbergasting discovery of cloth (11), “clowning pantomimes” catching in Clendinnen terms “the mood of these early encounters exactly” (ibid.) one can see a first ensemble of cross-cultural schemes to emerge, very often alluded to in the book, but prudently left opened for the interpretation of Australian anthropology specialists.

These very early contacts (the two first days) as patiently retraced by Clendinnen show much less “massive” ritualization than in the Polynesian case – throngs of canoes approaching the so called “floating islands” with pretty women on board, bearing plantain trees shoots-, but on the contrary land confrontations. Large “bands” (sometimes reaching more than a thousand people) –to use I hope a not too inadequate word- meet with crews on special occasions then fade away for a moment.

The great interest in Clendinnen’s book is precisely this progressive historiography as the first contacts unfold, at first in a chapter opening the book “Meeting the Informants”, unavoidably on the British side. These first encounters were certainly not limited to pantomime and dancing, complicated exchanges and tragic consequences followed. The shapes taken by exchanges of goods from the British side are certainly noteworthy, given that they contrast almost entirely with the exchanges in fashion for Polynesian early contacts, one exception being iron tools: “they coveted” says Clendinnen “only those British products which replicated the functions of their own tools, like metal hatchets or fish hooks” (32), which, surprisingly enough, reproduced almost perfectly the early Tahitian situation (Baré 1985/2002, chap IV). (By the way, the “British ships in Tahiti” -or more exactly the first one, H.M.S. *Dolphin* were not “surreptitiously denailed” by the Tahitians as Clendinnen implies p.31 but by the *British crew*, given the affluence of goods and services including sexual ones, that they could get in return, Baré 1985 / 2002, notably chap. IV, quoting Robertson and Wallis). Otherwise, as totally contrasting with the Tahitian situation, “gifts of ribbons or neck

cloths were accepted worn for a day then hung in a bush or forgotten' (32). Same for cloth and clothing, of which the Tahitians had, if I may say, a metaphorical "craving", as opposed to the Australians. I cannot resist Clendinnen's rendering of the famous William Dampier, one hundred years before Cook, whom she says could define them "only by the negatives of all the things they did not have: no clothes, no houses, no bed, no goods; no sheep, no poultry, no cultivated food. And no decorum, either (...) They were in his opinion 'the miserablest People in the World'" (32-33).

But these hunters and gatherers were sometimes described also by some of the British themselves, as "lilies of the field" - not to say members, to quote a well-known Sahlins article, of the "original affluent society" (1972). So the problem of access to resources between British and Australian is certainly recurrent in Clendinnen's decyphering of the sources. After an admirable sketch of a British meal taken on the beach while Australians surround them silently, she notes that Governor Arthur Phillip "knew nothing of nomad protocol food-sharing"; and "how could he?" (36). These issues are evoked, with Clendinnen's measured expression, in "What the Australians Saw" (83-93), situated notably from the Sydney Cove events, as a result of Phillip's "usurpation" (87) . For instance, after a first good humour "romping" and dancing was going on, convicts would merely take spears and other artefacts "abandoned" on the beach to trade them with home-bound sailors, in supposed return of the spirits offered: the *curios* fashion was already on its way, as in 1792 Tahiti (Vancouver 1967/1798). Convicts in search of "native tea" (sarsaparilla) would be threatened, or even killed. When the British would fish in big quantities with their own nets, the Australians would merely take their share.

As to women, they would (rarely though) be offered "with every appearance of cautious hospitality" but unlike Polynesian cases "nobody took them up on the offer, if offer it really was" (87). Still, convicts did take some Australian mistresses in 1791 against money or other

goods (152). The sexuality matter, prominent in the early European-Pacific islanders contacts, is interestingly dealt with for Australia in two chapters “British Sexual Politics” and “Australian Sexual politics” (152-167).

THIS LINE TO BE SUPPRESSED

As to ontology let us say, Clendinnen wonders whether the British the people were “visiting ghosts” to Australians’ eyes, testing their “corporeality” when offering women (Similar situations can still be spotted in the Polynesian world: Bougainville’s cook was politely asked to get naked, (Bougainville 1966 / 1771: 192), and even the Rev. William Crook in the Marquesas (Gunson 1978). It is true that we seem to lack more decisive testimony here, by an anthropologist, on whatever could be things foreign at the time to Australians’ minds.

Europeans were lousy hunters, for sure, and predators of resources. Still “these people’s probably defective bodies kept wrapped and hidden from sight,” hence the strangers were human too”, concludes Clendinnen (93). An interesting statement, as far as it sums up a good part of the whole early contact situation, given the cultural effort involved on both sides.

In short, *Dancing With Strangers* is certainly a model in historiographical research about the very first years of the British settlement in the Port Jackson area, that should retain all the attention of Pacific historians and anthropologists. This is precisely why it is impossible to sum it up, if only sketchily: a unique historical story unfolds from her work, with some possible scenarios left open.

One should stress the thorough work on biographies of foremost British actors: the first Governor Arthur Phillip, Captain John Hunter commander of HMS *Sirius* (for whom Clendinnen, as measured as she can be, confesses her “admiration”, 37), Surgeon General John White, especially Judge Advocate David Collins whose fascinating testimony she quotes extensively, and Captain-Lieutenant of Marines Watkin Tench. Most of them are “sons of the English scientific enlightenment (39)” (as well as James Cook and, for example, Joseph

Banks). This means that the tragic results of these first Euro-Australian encounters as commented by Darwin in 1836 were not entirely dependent on the good will and peaceful intentions of the British side, as often commented in Phillip's and Collins' case.

One should note the equivalent quality of the case-studies deployed, generally from recurrent incidents between convicts and Australians: the Australian Arabanoo kidnapped by Phillip in order to "treat him kindly and teach them English" (97) (a "desperate strategy to kidnap in order to make friends", notes Clendinnen), two other Australian equally kidnapped, amongst them the then famous "Banneelon" who would later spend years in Britain, and think when back that his countrymen were not distinguished enough; the terrifying damage of the "venereal" but especially small-pox, which left hundreds of corpses scattered around the bays and coves. Case studies on the simultaneity of war and exchange, "Discipline", "Potato thieves", "Crime and Punishment" are commented with an equal interest. Note the testimony by Collins of a pidgin's existence already in 1796 "A barbarous mixture of English with the Port Jackson dialect is spoken by either party" (112). A remarkable book, indeed, sometimes austere but always witty, and generally read with fascination by a non-specialist in Australian.

Tcherkezoff's essay on first contacts is entitled "The Samoan case" but expands largely to other Polynesian cases (mainly Tahiti and Hawaii). It bears the subtitle "Western misunderstandings about Sexuality and Divinity", but not *Polynesian* misunderstandings surprisingly enough, which leads to a tricky interrogation not dealt with in the book: what would be an *understanding* of sexuality and divinity independently of cultural contexts? Or, in other words, would only Samoan and Polynesian patterns of sexuality and divinity be "true"? This remark can of course be extended to every case of cultural first encounters in the

Pacific and elsewhere: historical situations produced cannot be assigned to the action of one of the parties only: the history produced is a inter-mixing of cultural processes.

This book, by a well-known specialist of Samoa deeply involved in field-work and mastering the language as far as I can tell, takes us back to Polynesia, or the *maori/ma'ohi/maoli* civilization let us say, . Two conditions he stresses rightly in his appeal for an “ethno-historical” approach, notably in his conclusion about “Ethno-history-in-the field”. (197). The Polynesian early contact situation is of course different from the Australian one, although, as already noted, a few topics of the Australian encounter are reminiscent of Polynesian ones (regarding iron tools for instance).

This rich book is split in two parts, although rather awkwardly in my opinion (for instance there is a conclusion to Part One, but also a Conclusion to Part Two, and more generally many repetitions that sometimes look more like trial and error, making the reading of the book laborious at times). Part One, mostly historiographic but already committed to critical interpretation of European preconceptions, is on “the Samoan discovery of Europeans”. It is both a meticulous and critical account of the first encounters, as seen mainly from European sources: the Dutch “discovery” by Jacob Roggeveen (1722), the French “discovery” by Bougainville (1768) December 1787 Lapérouse (1787) (the author’s historiographical research effort is certainly noteworthy for having gained access to a copy of his journal detained by the French navy despite *la Boussole*’s wreckage in Vanikoro later on, in 1788, published in France in 1797 and then reedited in a scholarly edition by John Dunmore and Maurice de Brossard in 1985). Then Tcherkezoff analyzes Edward Edwards in 1791 (whose HMS *Pandora* was sent to the South Seas to find the *Bounty* mutineers), Otto Von Kotzebue (1824), Commercial vessels in the 1820-1830s, Dumont d’Urville and others in the late 1830s. One interesting point amongst the numerous critical remarks addressed to these early

accounts is the spotting of their reciprocal references to one another (for instance Lapérouse refers both to Bougainville and quotations of Roggeveen found in des Brosses' work) (29). This illustration of the famous *bis repetita placent* principle ("things repeated twice become true", from the Latin poet Horatius) is all too well known for the early history of European contact in Oceania, due, probably to the terrifying amount of literature induced by European fascination for the South Seas. For Tahiti, for instance, Caillot in 1909 imitates De Bovies (1855), who refers sometimes to Moerenhout (1835) quoting Ellis (1830) who himself refers to John Davies' *Journal* in 1808. Hence the necessity, also stressed by Tcherkezoff, of referring to primary sources and keep an "ethnohistorical" eye on them.

Part Two is on "Methodological comparisons", meaning reconsidering a few paramount topics of the early contacts situation as told by European accounts: "Humanity and Divinity" (chap. 9), an excursion into the Tahitian situation, already mentioned before, about "Sacred cloth and sacred women" (chap. 10), another discussion (already mentioned in Part One) of the very notion of *Papalangi* subsuming until today the Samoan notion of "Europeans", or "people who broke the dome of the sky" (a wrong translation for the author) and on "Etymology and Divinity" (chap 11).

Curiously enough, whereas Part One in its first shape was "dedicated to Professor Freeman who was the first to form the hypothesis of Western misconceptions about "Polynesian sexuality", since Derek Freeman and the author "agreed on an ethnographic critique of Mead's writings about Samoa" but disagreed on everything else (*Acknowledgements, VIII*), Freeman's critique of Mead's is dismissed a few pages later as "advanced within an unacceptable framework of quasi-sociobiology" (a strange discipline indeed), "anti-culturalism and methodological individualism" (7). A pretty contorted way to dedicate a book! Anyway, since this book alludes all throughout to the Polynesian sexuality question,

and the Freeman-Mead controversy being all too famous, I must mention a shattering episode of Freeman's professional *life* (not exactly work) as found by Judith M. Heimann (2005: 418) when he discovered in the 1960s that the Kuching Museum in Sarawak was exhibiting "pornographic" statues by "traditional" artists, which were actually pertaining to a very common Berawan erotic art from Borneo. (The Freeman-Mead controversy concerned a violent reevaluation of Mead's famous Coming of Age in Samoa as to sexual freedom of teenagers; see Tcherkezoff 2001)

To sum up in a nutshell all the topics dealt with in part Two, European visitors as seen through the Samoan eyes "were compared to sacred chiefs/gods and seen as envoys the divine world" (3), naked dances offered to them were not "wanton behavior" but a mark of ritual respect, in the prospect of begetting godly children (for instance 180); the specific attempts of exchange of goods would not be "barter" as the Europeans wrongly thought, but ceremonial exchange (for instance 122-123) and when Samoan people "dared to climb on board ship and seized everything and jumped into the sea" this would wrongly be taken as a 'theft' (...) by 'treacherous savages'" (2) . In many respects we find ourselves in a remarkably similar situation to the Tahitian and Hawaiian ones, except for an almost total and surprising contrast about sexual relationships with explorers. We will get back to this later. In Tahiti and Hawaii the "godly" or "chiefly" quality conferred on early explorers has been widely documented (for instance Baré 2002 / 1985; Sahlins 1985). As Tcherkezoff also stresses about Samoa, this was a metaphorical treatment as Europeans (*papalagi* or *papalangi* at least since Tasman time) were treated through an extension of local conceptions of chiefdom and divinity, hence the necessity of rediscussing at length this concept (chap. 9 and 10). Due to this metaphorical treatment, in Samoa too "King George" was a metaphorical Samoan tutelary

figure, and a “long standing relationship to England”, of a mythical order, was soon established also in Samoa.

As to the circulation of goods, anything “taken” aboard (or on the water, or close to shore, as the cutters) is an all too recurrent feature in the three situations as well as in the Maori one, as we will see. (For a synthesis see notably his chap. 9 “On the boat of Tangaroa”); pure “theft” alternates with proceedings that Tcherkezoff denies to be qualified as “barter” on the Samoan side.

This rich and worthy book, the first of his kind about Samoa, seemed to me nevertheless encumbered all throughout by a complicated and sometimes surprising way of dealing with the topic of sexuality, whose importance cannot of course be denied (Tcherkezoff already dedicated a whole book in French to *Le mythe occidental de la sexualité polynésienne* in 2001, the ideas of which are largely taken up again in this book). The Samoan situation seems quite contrasted in the history of the Pacific islands: sexual relationships would be a minor and purely ceremonial part of the communications involved. That there is no such thing as “Polynesian sexuality” as a whole, and especially no “sexual hospitality” (a cliché denounced all throughout the book) can be readily accepted, given a discussion on words. Samoa would give only a “ritual “ illustration of communicating sexually with foreigners, a view repeated in the book (notably *Introduction*, chaps 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10) especially through the offering of virgins.

This insistence sometimes leads to surprising analysis to my eye. To illustrate my surprise let me take an example, his analysis of “shaking the hips in a rotary motion” (165 sq.) to disqualify it as having any sexual connotation. This dancing style (as in the contemporary Hawaiian *hula* and the Tahitian *tamure*) is according to Tcherkezoff related in the Polynesian

view to a “dualist conception of the body” (166) (“a basis of Polynesian choreography”). In fact, European observers moved by this spectacle (alluded to here in the Tahitian case, but not in the Samoan one) should have noted that “the lower part of the body only marks the beat to the accompaniment of tambourine players (...) All of this consistent with the dual organization of domestic and ceremonial space with its implicit reference to a pre-Christian Sky / Earth cosmology (...)” (166-167).

Fair enough, but why “shaking the hips in a rotary motion” to “mark the beat “ instead of using the feet like in an Irish pub?

Tcherkezoff appeals then to two “leading authorities on Polynesian art”. Kaepler considers prudently that “ the hip motions /missionaries/ considered as so lascivious were often little more than a time keeping element (...) “ (1997:: 112, quoted by Tcherkezoff, 167). Yes, but how “often”?

Still, Kaepler has somewhat of a good point when saying that the “European form of dancing, in which bodies of men and women actually touched in public” were “lascivious” to Polynesian eyes. Fair enough, but if we do not accept the idea of “Polynesian sexuality” why should we accept “European dancing”? In a lot of would-be “European” *dances* there is no “touching in public” between males and females: take for instance the “*jerk*” or “*twist*” of the 1960s, or the old-time folk dancing, *or jigs* let us say, since the European Middle Ages.

Should we *not* think, now, that dancing has something to do with metaphorical sexuality?

Marquesan songs (mimicking the sounds of pleasure), erotic early Hawaiian chants as we will see with Sahlins’ work, even contemporary Tahitian *tamure* songs from the 1970-1980 always seemed to me to account on the contrary. (In the years 1975-1980 what we could call a famous “neo-*tamure*” went like this: “*tutu e maniota*” (cassava is cooking) continued by the words in French “*pousse la banane et mouds le café*” (push banana and grind coffee by rotation).

Tcherkezoff then invokes another “leading authority” in his words, a teacher of “traditional Hawaiian *hula* in Paris (...)” because she remarked that “Certain movements in Hawaiian dance are like the sign language used by people who are hearing impaired(...) particularly the shaking of the hips, supplied the basic rhythm” (167: translation from a 1997 interview). He appeals also to the “twist” and the hula hoop fashion in Europe “in the 1960 s” “in order to imagine these early visitors’ amazement and mistaken interpretations”, since the “older generation were shocked: they not could help themselves reading more into it” (166, note 14). I wonder whether there was not something more into it, as in dancing in general.

Anyway Hawaiian dancers of the 18th century did have the *hula*, but it was not a *hula hoop*. See now how Sahlins deals with the *hula* from earlier accounts: “(Samwell’s) allusion is to the famous hula, a dance considered blasphemous for its eroticism by later American missionaries, which is just what made it religious for the Hawaiians (...) The hula would sexually arouse the returning god of cosmic reproduction if it did not more directly signify the copulation of Lono with the living daughters of the goddess / Laka, sister and wife to Lono” (1985: 5).

As to Euro-Polynesian early history I would certainly not deny Tcherkezoff’s insistent assessments on Samoan specific sexual behavior all throughout the book, which would make it, to push it a little further, a semi-puritanical case in Polynesia. But I stay perplex when he extends surreptitiously the Samoan case to Tahiti for instance, in other words when he sees “Polynesia “ as his title goes, with Samoan eyes. He notes for instance abruptly that in the early periods of contact “Tahitian females disrobed in / the explorers’/ presence” (165). I am bound to say that, rituals or not, testimonies abound on the reality of “sexual “ relationships (call it metaphorical “affinity”, or affinity in short) since the reciprocal “discovery”. As Salmond reminds us, Joseph Banks himself (sponsor to Cook’s first expedition) would sleep

with a Tahitian mistress in the longboat off the *Endeavour* to get some privacy as early as 1769; at this time, many sailors had mistresses ashore or even on board since the *Dolphin* (1767), when they would try to denail the ship to exchange the then precious items (the nail's value would soon fall). Actually, as in the *Dolphin*'s case, James Cook himself was at a loss to prevent sexual relationships with the sailors as soon as 1769: "I had reason (...) to think that we had brought [VD] along with us which gave me no small uneasiness (...) the Women were so very liberal with their favours or else Nails, Shirts, Etc were temptations that they could not withstand, that this distemper spread it self over the greatest part of the Ship Compney but now I have the satisfaction to find that the Natives all agree that we did not bring it here" (in Beaglehole ed. 1955: 84, quoted by Salmond: 69-70). More interesting to me a woman's case: the Tahitian 1767 "Queen" Purea, Wallis's "Oberea", (a kin title chief in Douglas Oliver terminology) had at least close flirts with officers and petty officers from the account of midshipmen Robertson and Henry Ibbott. The latter notes "Women were far from being Coy. For when a Man found A Girl to his Mind, which he might Easly Do Amongst so Many, their was not much Cermony on Either Side ,and I belive Whoever Comes here hereafter will find that they are not will find Evident Proofs that they are not the first Discoverys" (Warner ed. 1955: 65). As I noted (Baré 2002 / 1985: 152) it is indeed surprising that given all these efforts on the Tahitian side, we would barely know of any offspring of the kind, the only example I know of being the well-known Christian family in Tahiti and Popora (from the *Bounty* mutineer Fletcher Christian), who, still, begot an offspring outside of Tahiti, and back.

For Tahiti one can actually point common and regular sexual exchanges with the visiting ships, that would gradually become "ungodly", well into the 19th century: a meaningful relationship would transform into a kind of "prostitution" (Baré 2002 / 1985, chap. VI; also 1987 chap.III 200-208, 1989: 344sq.). As to the Hawaiian situation, referred to pretty often by

Tcherkezoff, one can find strikingly similar situations. “(...) The Hawaiian women ‘s transcendental calculus of love was not something the British could understand. Neither did it merit at first the title of “prostitution” it was soon destined to receive” (Sahlins 1985: 6). And, further on: “Men brought their sisters, daughters, perhaps even their wives to the ships. *Call it hospitality. Or call it spiritual hypergamy*” (1985: 7, My italics).

I quite agree with that, although it is difficult to assess for Tahiti whether metaphorical affinity with the early explorers would be metaphorical “hypergamy” or isogamy rather, metaphorical affinity between persons of equal status (Baré 2002 / 1985, chap. IV) In other words the “sexual hospitality” cliché denounced by Tcherkezoff could well be in fact –except for Samoa- “sexual hospitality in the Polynesian way”, a basic sentence which leads us to surprising and profound detours into culture.

It would be sad that these highly contestable developments on the sexuality matter, at least for early Polynesia as a whole, cast a doubt on an otherwise worthy book, putting another documented case into Euro-Polynesian early history.

With Salmond’s masterwork “on captain Cook’s encounters in the south seas” we stay mainly in Polynesia, because we follow almost day by day the steps of James Cook, his officers and sailors under his command. Whoever had to work on the invaluable but heterogeneous sources brought to light mainly by the Beaglehole’s editions (1955, 1961, 1967 notably) will know the priceless historiographical quality of a book succeeding to transform the famous “*Journals*” into a meaningful narrative, taking into account the indeed peculiar “encounters” of the HMS *Endeavour*, the *Resolution* and *Adventure* and then *Resolution* and *Discovery* with the Oceanians. A sharp way to point the essentials of the voyages derives from a discrete but definitive theoretical argument, which does not need to be repetitively and tediously assessed, since it is illustrated all throughout the book: “On the whole, the historians have studied the

European explorers, and the anthropologists have studied the islanders at those moments of contact, thus accomplishing a kind of interdisciplinary apartheid. Yet when the voyages are bisected in this way, understanding of their dynamics is radically impoverished. This book tries to avoid the trap of Cyclops, with his one-eyed vision. (...) Pacific islanders engaged with Cook's men in ways that were defined by their cosmology and culture, just as Cook's men were shaped by the cosmology and culture of Georgian England. With this idea in mind, *The Trial of the Cannibal Dog* investigates the social background of these voyages in England and Polynesia, and their cross-cultural dynamics over time" (Preface XX-XXi). *Ite, missa est*: "into the chapters that follow, the explosive cross-cultural processes that led to Captain Cook's disenchantment and death over his three Pacific voyages, from their beginnings in Georgian England to their violent climax in 1779, on a rock-strewn beach at Kealakekua Bay in Hawai'i" (ibid. Xxii).

This argument is stunningly illustrated by chapter I, "How Englishmen came to eat dogs" (which confers the book its title on "The Trying of the Cannibal Dog"), and does not comply with the generally chronological ordering of the book. About Cook's ship's second visit to Queen Charlotte's sound in New Zealand, in 1777, a master's mate of *Discovery* would recall a "moment of glorious fun" when "one of his messmates got hold of a New Zealand dog, as savage a devil as the savages from whom he got it. (...) A court-martial was held on the dog and it was agreed (...) that, as the dog was of cannibal origin and was completely a cannibal itself, having bit everyone of us(...) that he should be doomed and eat in his turn (as quoted in Salmond 1). Although the crew found this episode hilarious, "cannibalism", as Salmond puts it "was no laughing matter in New-Zealand": since Cook's men discovered that three years before, some sailors of the *Adventure*'s crew had been properly killed and eaten. Salmond gives us a striking analysis of the event's intricacy, since on the one hand "animal trials (...) had in fact been held in Europe for centuries" (6), but on the other hand "it may

have been that Cook's sailors (or some of them) were no longer purely 'European' (8)". A hint to the fact that whereas European cats and dogs were already "pets" and "tabooed" for that reason, Cook's crew were used to eat dogs as "feast food", as the Tahitians would (8). At the same time, eating this *kuri* (Tahitian 'uri, dog) was a kind of metaphorical *maori* response to the attack on the *Adventure*: a 'utu or feud in the Maori way, designed also to the attention of Cook who did not want, as pretty often, to seek revenge, blaming rather the behavior of the *Adventure*'s crew. "They had come under Polynesian influence" (8).

The rest of the book, in the whole 506 thick pages including a "Calendar of Punishments during Captain Cook's Three Pacific voyages", a Selected Bibliography of 5 pages, 48 pages of Notes, 13 pages of index, is of equal interest: it reads as "a true novel" as Paul Veyne calls history. Two other introductory chapters ("Rule Britannia" chap.2, the "Wooden world of the Endeavour" chap.3) tell us of the social context of "Georgian England" when in 1768 sailors and other social categories went on "strike", and of the technical aspects of the expeditions, wonderfully rendered also when the *Resolution* and *Adventure* succeeded to the *Endeavour*. Then the narrative is so compelling that we seem to embark ourselves not only with the famous captain but with his officers and crew (we will know of fits of temper for instance at the time of the second voyage in 1772 sq., of his opposition with Lieutenant Gore -a former officer of Samuel Wallis's *Dolphin*, the first European ship to reach Tahiti- in New Zealand due to his way of treating the islanders too benevolently even in case of incidents, generally due to thefts, but also to mere attacks). We will know in a vivid way of Joseph Banks' attitudes, Cook's quarrels with the naturalist Forster in Tahiti (chap 10) We embark to Tahiti (chap. 5 and 6), to New Zealand (chap. 7 and 8) then we prepare for the second voyage (chap 9.). Back to Tahiti again, New Zealand again (chap. 11) to Easter Island, the Marquesas, the Tuamotus, (ibid.), Tahiti, Huahine, Ra'iatea (chap.12) ; Vanuatu New Caledonia and Norfolk, back to Queen Charlotte Sound (chap.13); then back to the London Opera with the Tahitian

Mai's "experiences in Georgian England" (chap. 14); back from there to what would be later the "Cook Islands" (chap. 15). Then, from Tahiti again in a "Farewell to Elysium" (chap. 16) we reach Hawai'i where "Cook is treated with extreme veneration", we go for "a futile search for the Northwest passage" (chap. 17) and return to Hawai'i where "Kuki" (or *Tute* in Tahitian) would meet his death at Kealakekua bay, a name meaning as Sahlins pointed out "the path of the God" (1981 notably).

But Salmond's monumental book is certainly not summed up in the usual compendium of comings and goings through the Pacific's immensity, exhaustive as it may be. In every situation of encounter (or "re" encounter like in Tahiti and New Zealand) she shows an obvious talent to discern the cultural frameworks at hand. This is particularly true for the chapters devoted to the famous Tupaia's presence on board, this navigation expert *arioi* (or the paramount god 'Oro zelator) from Ra'iatea or *Hawai'iki* in the formal language of the time, who would exchange better with the Maori since the languages were almost mutually understandable: there, as elsewhere in Polynesia of the time mythical schemes of thought would be partly congruent with history-in-the making: a "floating island" from afar (as in Tahiti, Samoa and Hawai'i) would bring, in the Maori case, the legendary bird of Ruakapanga from Hawa'iki (113 and more generally chap. 7 "Travellers from Hawai'iki"). But when real events unfold, myth-oriented perceptions tend to destructure. Ritual exchanges alternate like elsewhere with scores of incidents including fire arms, attacks from Maori warriors, thefts, and misunderstandings stunningly similar to other Polynesian encounters. As Salmond points for example, for the recurrence question of gift giving "return gifts would be delayed", not due to ill-will but "in a counterpoint of chiefly generosity" (129).

Salmond had the talent of pointing out one of the more complete testimonies I know of about the Maori perception of the encounters, from a young boy helping then to collect plant samples and speaking a few years after the events: "the ship was an *atua* or God and the

people on board were *tupua* strange beings or goblins (...)” (131). (the goblins or gremlins image is attested at least also in Samoa). Since the sailors going ashore were rowing backwards ”the old people said: Yes it is so, these people are goblins; their eyes are at the back of their head (...)” (as quoted in 131). But, Tupaia’s look on the Maori world is not exempt of ethnocentrism and misunderstanding: he would mistake a Maori fortified village for a Tahitian *marae* (ritual stone building) (115), would apparently agree as a specialist with another Maori priest on religious matters (125) but would be utterly disgusted by Maori cannibalism in wars, abundantly attested. He would never have heard of it in Tahiti and would ask –in a missionary fashion?- the Maori to stop it immediately (136) (It is interesting to note that in rural contemporary Tahiti cannibalism (or *‘amu ta’ata*) is a “marker” of paganism, whereas it was probably contempt and feared well before christianity).

Space lacks to account for the riches of this book, and I would just point again the masterly quality of the chapter on Hawaii and Cook’s death (chap. 17 “Killing kuki”), and particularly the thoroughly documented statement about the “godly” quality of European visitors, summed up all too briefly here: “Although the identification of Cook with Lono has been hotly contested, the weight of supporting evidence from Cook’s journals, the accounts of subsequent European visitors and early Hawai’ian accounts is overwhelming” (390-391). So much for a “hot” and to my eyes ridiculous debate brought out by Gananath Obeyesekere and his academic followers (1992), refuted point by point by Sahlins in a somewhat heroic response (1995). According to her book’s jacket Salmond has been made “Dame commander of the British Empire in 1995 for services to literature and Maori people”. I would more than agree with the Queen, but respectfully suggest to add “to anthropologist and historians of the Pacific islands, and to anthropology and history as well”.

To end, I would like to return to the capital argument brought out by these four books, which can be summed up, to my eyes, in an apparently simple statement: history is basically a cultural, and most often, an *inter*-cultural process whatever the real issues at stake –resources, power over “people”, interests, force; cultural misunderstanding is not a curiosity, it is an intrinsic and random dimension of history. Hence, history is anthropology, not a really distinct discipline. It sometimes looks as if historians in the academic sense would be more conscious of this than “classical” anthropologists. To come back to a French context and the famous “Ecole des Annales”, it is interesting to note with Izard and Wachtel (1991) that the locution of “historical anthropology” (anthropology in short, to my eyes) was coined by famous historians (like Jacques Le Goff and Georges Duby) not by anthropologists. To defer to the editor’s demands, the world-famous French school of history, the *Ecole des Annales*, was founded in the 1950s by Marc Bloch, Lucien Febvre and Fernand Braudel around the periodical of the same name (*Annales. Histoire, Economie, Civilisations*) and to put it briefly did not consider that history was about “kings and battles”, but instead about the long-term evolution of *societies* as well.

For sure, the first Pacific encounters between Europeans and Oceanians are specific; still one can say also they provide an extraordinary case study of history in the making, as inter-cultural processes; but would this not be true of other parts of the world, like Europe, this phenomenal human inter-cultural mixture?

It seems to me that the emergence of a specific attention to Euro-Oceanians encounters brings along illuminating insights on deconstruction, post European history taking specific shapes. As Sahlins pointed out for Hawaii, the “spiritual hypergamy” with Europeans would pollute women eating with men, and later transform, during the 19th century, these exchanges into a relationship close to prostitution. One would understand here and there that Europeans were not really “gods”, but what were they really? The demand for manufactured items, iron tools

for instance, the recurrence of ships visits would transform the “floating islands from afar” into mere “ships”, or *pahi*. These exchanges of goods and services would slowly transform Polynesian hierarchies into an undifferentiated mass of “economic agents” let us say, where chiefs, once controllers and dispensators of the production, would be cast aside, and everybody would become a commoner (Tahiti); but this would probably less true for Samoa, where transformed versions of the early hierarchies do subsist. In Tahiti again, the Christian god, the “true God” as the Tahitian still put it (*te atua mau*, which means at the same time “evident” and “stable”, in a semantic field strikingly close to the Fijian *dina*) would not bring along the riches foreseen, but then it would be too late: a specific form of Protestantism would never leave the Tahitian archipelago. More generally *maohi* people would never partake of “King George’s” realm and become as the Hawaiians themselves used to say “kanaka no Peretane”, “people from Britain”; the Maori and the Cook Islanders, the Samoans possibly succeeded better in this peculiar prospect. As Sahlins wonderfully puts it in *Islands of History*, the Hawaiian message to the explorers was “make love, not history” (1985). Still, “history” in the sense of destructure and restructure processes won the game.

If Weber’s concept of *Disentzauberung*, “disenchantment”, taken as a transformation of different rationalities (and not as the irruption of “rationality”) (1959) had to find an illustration, the Pacific islands post-European history could be a surprising case. It is interesting to note with Salmond that this “disenchantment” reached James Cook himself, after the second voyage: “At first he was honoured as both European hero and Polynesian ancestor; later he was reviled as an imperial villain” (431). But it was the case of many actors deeply involved in the Pacific cultural context: see the contradictory James Muggridge Orsmond from the L.M.S., who spent most of his life in Tahiti, succeeded to gather a invaluable thesaurus of oral “pagan” treasures (in the further “Ancient Tahiti” published by

his grand-daughter after his death) and told of his despair in an incredibly sour and violent letter about “Tahiti” in general, to his original parish in Wales. (Letter to Reverend Cuzens and the deacons of the parish of Portsea, 1849, South Sea Odds, Council for World Mission Archives, London.)

THIS LINE TO BE SUPPRESSED

Hence, everything changed, but in a specific way; long-term structures had an echo late into our days, from one deconstruction process to the other. Alas Greg Denning left our company; but I would heartily invite these talented colleagues to dip into “what happened after”, with the same outlook of both anthropology and history.

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