

EDUCATION IN PACIFIC COUNTRIES

*Interpreting a
Seminar-Conference of Educators and Social Scientists
conducted by the
University of Hawaii and Yale University,
Honolulu, Hawaii, 1936*

By

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KELLY AND WALSH, LIMITED

SHANGHAI — HONG KONG — SINGAPORE

1937

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First Published, 1937

Printed in China
By Kelly and Walsh, Limited, Shanghai

PREFACE

This "interpretation" of the Hawaii Seminar-Conference on "Education in Pacific Countries" brings together the ideas, agreements, and disagreements forthcoming during five weeks of intensive study and discussion by an international group of scholars. For such a gathering any full "proceedings" or conventional report is virtually out of the question: the papers and addresses introducing the various topics for daily discussion alone comprised close to a thousand pages.

An introductory section of the book tells of the origin and nature of the seminar-conference. The rest is devoted to exposition of the various problems which came before it. No attempt has been made to follow the exact order in which issues emerged (see the formal program in Appendix B). Indeed, some topics came up again and again. Rather the whole conference thought, as represented both in prepared statements and in the play of informal discussion as taken by recorders, has been analysed in detail, and fitted together in what seemed to the author the most unified and useful order. No names of members appear in the text; it has been felt wise to minimize personalities. A "Who's Who" of the gathering is given in Appendix A.

A first draft of this work was checked over by a selected group of the seminar-conference members, to whom thanks are due for their careful criticisms and suggestions. The author, while disclaiming responsibility for the complete accuracy of statistical and other facts presented by members and incorporated into the text, nevertheless counts himself and not the members or the institutions concerned responsible for the general weighting and synthesis of material.

Special acknowledgments are due to President David L. Crawford, of the University of Hawaii, who initiated the seminar-conference; to Professor Charles T. Loram, head of the department of race relations in Yale University, its co-director along with the author; to Mr. W. L. Holland, research secretary of the Institute

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of Pacific Relations, who has assisted greatly with publication plans; and to Marie M. Keesing, the author's wife, who supervised the recording at the seminar-conference and aided in preparing this work.

Though it has been impossible to print in full the papers and addresses presented to the gathering, a number of sets of these in mimeographed form were lodged in central libraries and institutions for the convenience of students. The following is a list of these: University of Sydney Library, Australia; Ministry of Education, Nanking, China; National Library, Peiping, China; Conseil de l'Instruction publique au Ministere des Colonies, Paris, France; Direction de l'Instruction publique, French Indo-China; British Colonial Office, London, England; Institute of Education, London University, England; New Education Fellowship, London, England; Department of Education, British Malaya; Tokyo Imperial University, Tokyo, Japan; Department of Education, Mexico City, Mexico; Colonial Office, The Hague, Netherlands; Department of Education, Batavia, Netherlands East Indies; Philippine National Library, Manila; Parliamentary Library, Wellington, New Zealand; National Bureau of Education, Pretoria, South Africa; World Federation of Educational Associations, Washington, D. C.; Progressive Educational Association, Washington, D. C.; International Institute of Education, Columbia University, New York; Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.; Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut.

Finally, on behalf of the University of Hawaii and Yale University, acknowledgment is made to the Carnegie Corporation of New York, which appropriated a substantial sum, making possible the assembling of this international group.

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INTRODUCTORY

THE HAWAII SEMINAR-CONFERENCE

Sixty-six educators and social scientists drawn from twenty-seven national and racial groups met in Honolulu, Hawaii, from July 3 to August 7, 1936, to study for five weeks the common problems of education and cultural adjustment among peoples living within the Pacific Ocean area. Called a "seminar-conference" to emphasize the scholarly nature of its discussions, the gathering was sponsored jointly by the University of Hawaii and Yale University, and was held in conjunction with the annual summer session of the former institution.

The members of the seminar-conference came mainly as a result of personal invitation, being experts known to have information and experience which would be useful. Some, however, were nominated by governments, especially those from dependencies where the personnel was not known to those organizing the group. Though the gathering was quite unofficial, the British, French and Dutch Colonial Offices and the Japanese Foreign Office gave fullest cooperation; a number of governments released members of their educational or research staffs, not only allowing them leave of absence with full pay, but also in some cases meeting their travel expenses. Such persons, however, spoke as individuals, not as official representatives. Various other organizations aided in assembling the members, including the Institute of Pacific Relations, the Councils for Educational Research in Australia and New Zealand, the Julius Rosenwald Fund, the General Education Board, the Phelps-Stokes Fund, and the Committee on Cooperation in Latin America.

In all there were five members from Australia and its tropical dependencies, Papua and New Guinea; four from China; two from French Indo-China; five from Great Britain and certain of its Pacific colonies, British Malaya, Hong Kong, Fiji, and the Gilbert and Ellice islands; one from India; three from Japan; three from Latin America; two from the Netherlands East Indies; six from

New Zealand and its mandated territory, Western Samoa; three from South Africa; ten from mainland United States, including spokesmen for the Negro and American Indian; four from the Philippines and American Samoa; and eighteen from Hawaii.

Five of the members were heads of educational and scientific foundations, eleven were directors of education or school inspectors, twenty were university professors, eleven were high school principals and teachers, five were elementary school principals and teachers, ten were engaged in full-time scientific research, two were missionaries, one a colonial administrator, and one a government anthropologist. Of the social scientists present, fourteen were anthropologists, three sociologists, and one a psychologist specializing in racial studies. Eight younger members were admitted, all carefully selected graduate students and nearly all teachers; these acted as "recorders" of the discussions. For a "Who's Who" see Appendix A.

The idea of bringing together such a group originated with President David L. Crawford of the University of Hawaii. At his request Dr. Felix M. Keesing, professor and head of the department of anthropology in that university, assumed the responsibilities of organization. In March 1935 a preliminary approach was made to governments and to key individuals. The plan met with encouraging support, and the Carnegie Corporation gave substantial financial assistance which made the gathering possible. The graduate department of race relations at Yale University happened to be considering a somewhat similar undertaking, and graciously offered to cooperate with the University of Hawaii. Yale thus became co-sponsor of the seminar-conference, and Professor Charles T. Loram, head of its race relations department, became co-director along with Dr. Keesing.

At first the subject was to have been confined to the educational problems in dependencies and among indigenous minorities of the Pacific area: the so-called backward peoples whose lives are now being drastically influenced by western, or modern civilization. Later, certain educational leaders in autonomous countries where fairly similar problems existed, such as China and Mexico, expressed a desire to take part, so that the scope of the seminar-conference was expanded. Indeed, several members came from Africa and one from India, and their experience was valuable as giving com-

parisons from outside the Pacific. No attempt was made, however, to have all countries and educational situations included—notably absent were spokesmen for the general school systems of the United States and British Dominions, and for Soviet Russia—partly because the program was widened out too late to issue further invitations, and partly because the problem of the backward groups was held to as the main theme.

The sessions of the seminar-conference were closed to the public and the press, except for a series of evening addresses. This made possible intimate and informal discussion. A newly built wing in the University of Hawaii library was set aside for the exclusive use of the group, and included a large seminar room, a library, offices, smaller meeting rooms, and a lounge. The main sessions were held for three hours each morning from Mondays to Fridays, with the first hour usually devoted to introductory papers and addresses and the rest to free discussion. Smaller groups met on certain afternoons and evenings to deal with problems of special interest. Practically all of the members from outside Hawaii lived together in a hostel on the campus, Atherton House, and thus had ample opportunity for friendly contacts and further exchange of views. As one member wrote afterwards, they came to “know and trust one another”, a necessary factor in view of their diverse racial and cultural backgrounds. There was a notable absence of “window dressing” and of any kind of nationalistic feeling.

While the Hawaii seminar-conference was by no means the first international gathering of persons interested in Pacific education, it was unique in a number of respects. Its membership was limited and carefully selected. Those coming were called upon to discuss not their own specialties of interest or research, but the significant problems of their region. The emphasis was less upon the processes, techniques, or administration of education than upon the results; less upon finding solutions than upon understanding the human scene within which education operates, and evaluating the effects of educational experiments to date in the different areas. The spirit was one of critical scholarship and frank self-examination, with little of the usual conference or convention atmosphere. No resolutions were passed, no official findings formulated, no continuing organization established. What one member called “the cocktails of socialism and anthropology, the mellow wine of

Christianity and idealism, and the good old-fashioned whiskey of nationalism, imperialism, and self-determination" were mingled with extraordinarily happy results.

The Hawaii seminar-conference was able to build to some extent upon several gatherings dealing with education in areas other than the Pacific. Africa, particularly, has been the locale for conferences of educators and other folk interested in "native" problems. The natural precursor of the Hawaii meeting was a seminar on "education and culture contacts" held in the department of race relations at Yale University during the 1935 summer session. Nearly a hundred educators and graduate students met there with a distinguished faculty to discuss educational problems, especially as they worked out among racial minorities in the United States, and among the peoples of the West Indies, Africa, British India, and China.

With so many political areas and racial groups represented in the Hawaii gathering, it would have been easy for the members to become lost in a mass of inchoate fact. To avoid this, a syllabus was worked out well beforehand in which the emphasis was placed upon what seemed to be the *common problems* facing educators in Pacific countries. The members from each area were asked to contribute a statement on the history, aims, organization and problems of education in their locality, and these were mimeographed and distributed. Members also prepared papers of a more detailed nature upon certain problems which have special importance in their areas, and these were presented as illustrative material prefacing each problem as it was broached. The subject of nationalism, for example, was introduced by statements from spokesmen for the Netherlands East Indies, British India, and the New Zealand Maori; language problems by papers dealing with the Philippines and Papua where there is notable linguistic complexity; and so on.

Appendix B sets out the day to day syllabus or program of the seminar-conference, and also lists the papers given. The topics covered can be outlined here as follows:

1. Education in its wider human setting (seven half-morning sessions giving illustrations from type places, Hawaii, China, the Australian Aborigine, Mexico, the Gilbert and Ellice islands and the Philippines, closing with a general "seminar" on the topic);

2. National educational policies (seven half-morning periods, analysing the national, and especially the colonial approaches of Great Britain, Japan, France, the Netherlands, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand, this also closing with a general seminar);
3. Education in relation to economic conditions and opportunities;
4. Assimilation versus indigenous development in education;
5. Education and nationalism;
6. Education and indigenous social systems;
7. Problems arising from conflicts in morality, religion, and philosophy;
8. The significance of racial differences, particularly as applying to education; the comparative educability of peoples;
9. Persons of racially mixed descent and their educational problems;
10. Non-government educational enterprises: missions, philanthropic organizations, etc.;
11. The education of migrant groups (Chinese, Japanese, Indians, and others) who have moved into new regions from their ancestral lands;
12. Language problems, including the place of vernaculars;
13. Education in secondary and university institutions;
14. Adult education;
15. Health education;
16. Education for leisure;
17. Teacher selection and training;
18. Educational administration;
19. A philosophy of education;
20. Possibilities of increased international collaboration.

At every session at least two recorders took a close running account of the discussions. Their records, together with the more formal papers, form the basis of this interpretation.

I. THE PACIFIC SCENE

Nearly fourteen hundred million people live in the countries within, or bordering the Pacific Ocean. They include the most diverse types of humanity, with almost infinite varieties in physique, speech, custom, and belief. Of their number, close to one hundred and thirty millions (about 129,800,000) are today ruled by alien peoples who have occupied their territories in the course of modern empire-building. Holland has nearly one-half of these under her flag, while Japan controls about one-fifth, France one-sixth, the United States one-ninth, Great Britain and her Dominions one-thirtieth, and Portugal a much smaller fraction. Many millions of Pacific dwellers are very recent migrants to the lands where they now live, especially Chinese, whites, Japanese, and British Indians. Such is the numerical scope of Pacific education.

Isolation and localism were the marks of the older Pacific. What might be called the most extreme fragmentation of humanity, resulting in specialization of race and culture, took place over the spreading continents of Australia and America, and among the hills, shore valleys, and islands of Malaysia, New Guinea, and the South Seas. Wave after wave of peoples, tall to pygmy, fair to dark, carrying with them the meagre equipment of Stone Age man, moved out in earlier times from their ancestral Asian homelands. Each little group developed along its own lines, usually being at war with even its closest neighbors: inbreeding, inventing, sending off migrant offshoots, adapting to environments ranging from tropic to arctic, and with passing millennia becoming set into the kaleidoscopic patterns found by the modern voyagers from Europe.

Perhaps the fifth century B.C. saw the beginnings of modern forms of expansion. From early centers of civilization in India, China, and the Near East traders, missionaries of the great Asian religions, emissaries of government, and settlers spread into Southeast Asia and the nearer islands, that is, the present Netherlands East Indies, the Philippines, and Formosa. A rich commerce sprang up, carried by Arab and Persian dhows, Chinese junks, and Malayan vintas. Brahmanism, followed by Buddhism, and much later by

Mohammedanism, replaced to quite an extent the earlier faiths based on nature and ancestor worship. Many new inventions and ideas, including the working of metals, and the use of writing and the calendar, enriched the local cultures. A remarkable group of "Indo-Malayan" states and empires emerged—Sri-Vishaya in Sumatra, Madjapahit in Java, Khmer in Cambodia, and others—some of which have lasted to the present day. In these centuries, too, China and Japan took form.

Much the same influences that were spreading eastward in this way were also passing in the opposite direction to transform the lives of the light-skinned "barbarians" of northwestern Europe. Here, however, the missionaries were bearers of a different faith, Christianity. Toward the end of the fifteenth century, the tremendous surge of development and invention which in its present totality is often labelled "western", or "modern civilization", began.

For the Pacific peoples this meant alien sails appearing over formerly blank horizons, the clank of military equipment in hitherto inviolate fastnesses. It brought in time an arbitrary carving out of empires, a sudden neighborliness as a result of ever more rapid communications, an influx of aliens, rapidly increasing racial mixture, extensive commercial and industrial development, aggressive missionary and philanthropic effort. With these came too an inevitable self-consciousness that tended to become an inferiority feeling, and in general a serious competition between the indigenous modes of thought and action and those introduced by the newcomers.

In reviewing and analysing these trends the members of the seminar-conference saw the Pacific today as having entered upon an entirely new era. Across its surface the East has become West, and the West, East. No people can remain wholly isolated. The Stone Age islander now has steel knives, a village store, a church, trousers, and "Mother Hubbards". The Filipino has been steeped successively in the potent tinctures of Spanish medievalism and American democracy. The Australian aborigine, dispossessed of his hunting grounds and water holes, is in such straits that he is likely to die out completely, or at least leave only mixed blood descendants; such, too, may be the fate of the jungle pygmy of Malaysia. The American Indian lives on a reservation often far from the territories of his forefathers, and belching factory smoke-

stacks give ghostly reminiscence of ancient signal fires. Recruiters comb Malaysian and Melanesian villages to enlist labor for the white man's plantations and mines. Depopulation, swarming overpopulation, a breaking down of traditional heritages, a reaching out for things western, revulsions of nationalism and "nativism", inert masses, small and sophisticated intelligentsias, a babel of authoritative voices, yet the greatest uncertainty as to the right way to turn—these reveal the upheaval and unbalance. It is, as a Chinese member said, a "modern nerve-wracking drama".

In the longer view, of course, the scene appears full of promise, pregnant with potentialities of a new world in the making. Judging from seminar-conference opinion, educators and social scientists are thorough optimists. Nevertheless few regions are without crucial difficulties in the present, involving a serious wastage of human life and happiness. Naturally this immediate strain and stress tended to dominate the thought of the conference—though with emphasis upon the ameliorative measures being undertaken from place to place.

For purposes of comparison, Pacific peoples and areas were seen to fall rather naturally into five main groups, or "type situations". While all have certain problems in common, each grouping has its own distinctive features.

First, there are a scattering of peoples that are something in the nature of remnants: the Aborigines of Australia, the Ainus of northern Japan, the pygmy Negritos of Malaysia. These are descendants of the earliest migrants into the Pacific region, and have become very specialized as a result of long isolation. Physical anthropologists usually classify the Aborigine and Ainu as early offshoots of the White group of races. The modern story of these folk is a melancholy one. Ruthless extermination of many, neglect and indifference, and finally a belated protection have been their lot. Today there are only a few thousands in each group—not much over a hundred thousand in all. While their strain is being carried on through increasing numbers of mixed-blood descendants, the number of pure-blood folk is decreasing. The Australian members of the conference gave especially vivid pictures of how the delicate balance of life among the nomadic Aborigine hunters has been in most regions completely upset, affecting even the fundamentals of their social and religious organization; how disease has

taken toll; how the drift to the towns and sheep-stations of the white man has meant their doom; and how even yet both legislators and the public are on the whole indifferent as regards the welfare of the "damned old Abo".

To the seminar-conference, however, these remnant peoples were of the greatest interest and importance. They provided one end of a yardstick, the extreme case on many problems. As such they shook not a few over-glib generalizations that came from the study of peoples in the main streams of development only.

A second group of peoples, while not so deviant in physique and culture, are set apart by the fact that they live in isolated and inhospitable environments. These number between two or three millions in all. They include many mountain and hill peoples of Asia and Malaysia, the dark skinned Papuans and Melanesians of the malaria-ridden tropics north of Australia, the Polynesian and Micronesian islanders scattered along surf-bound coasts and a myriad coral atolls in the South Seas, the Eskimos and Indians of the arctic tundras, Pueblo and other Indians of the desert southwest United States, and many distant and little known Indian groups of the Amazon and Andes. At most their contacts with modernity are only intensive around a few outpost towns and ports. Some of these places have gold, oil, timber, and other resources that may bring more or less of an influx of aliens to certain centres. Practically all, too, have been touched in some degree by the larger world; through traders, officials, missionaries, the more hardy travellers, perhaps labor recruiters, and individuals from among their own number who have ventured out and returned. This has brought something of a cultural revolution, especially in the first years of contact. But the intrusion has been limited. The people themselves have for the most part been able to pick and choose what they might want of the new, and life has tended to shake down to a new equilibrium. In some regions—for example, a barren coral islet, a hilltop, or a malarial swamp—there is seemingly no prospect of the world ever breaking in much further, and unless the people move out of their own volition, or through pressure of overpopulation, they are likely to continue in the same round indefinitely.

Such places, the seminar-conference found, were the least touched by the moving problems of the day. To some members who felt the weight of profound difficulties, they seemed idyllic, if somewhat

unreal. An interesting split occurred between those who urged that at all costs they be "let well alone", and those who felt that the guardian countries should step in to stimulate changes, create new needs, bring them into world currents. In this, interestingly enough, even the anthropologists were divided: some from Melanesia, where customs and ideas deviate greatly from those of the whites, stood in general for controlled change, and others from the gentler Polynesian and Micronesian areas were chary of interference. The issue may be illustrated from the Gilbert islanders:

"The main stream (of western civilization) has passed them by . . . All they know of it is from the very specialized by-products, as it were, of civilization, who visit their islands with a particular end in view whether it happens to be their administration, conversion, exploitation, or even, in the case of the blackbirders, their abduction. The attitude of the Gilbertese towards the outside world is a sensible one; he recognizes the existence of foreigners and the fact that they differ from him in many respects, but he stoutly maintains his own group (of islands) to be the best for the Gilbertese and, what is probably true enough, his own cultural synthesis to be the best possible for his peculiar circumstances . . . The islander lives largely sheltered from modern civilization and its problems, yet leading a happy and full life, busy in the first place with the primal interests of his own immediate family group, the eternal problems of birth, marriage, and death, but at the same time finding a perfectly satisfying field for his energies and ambitions in the activities of his village and island."

A third type of situation is where peoples once isolated like those just discussed have happened to be in the direct pathways of western expansion, hence have been forced to readjust their lives drastically. The North American Indians of the temperate belt, the Maoris of New Zealand, the native Hawaiians, and the dwellers in and around the twenty or so harbors and capitals of the South Seas have felt strongly the weight of alien pressure. For the most part the ancestral lands and resources have passed from their hands, and they are by now minorities more or less submerged beneath vigorous immigrant groups who have transformed their territories. Close to a million and a quarter people come into this category.

An American Indian member of the seminar-conference quoted a saying that the early whites "first fell on their knees and then on the aborigines". Coercion both with guns and legislative enactments, accompanied by economic encroachment and other types of aggression, has had on the whole unfortunate results: depopulation, a numbness born of despair, cultural decay, and an unhealthy

condition of affairs in which at best the mass of indigenous folk became merely hangers-on to the alien group. "Your western civilization seems to go too fast for the Maori", said a member of that race. Another New Zealander quoted a Maori leader as follows:

"The individual of the Stone Age was suddenly projected into a world of dazzling brightness having a bewildering kaleidoscopic perspective. The sudden juxtaposition of two unequal systems of culture resulted in the production of a screen of uncertainty and confusion akin to disorder."

The last decade, however, has seen a profound change among most of the peoples of this type. Health work, an infusion of immigrant blood, and better adaptation to modern conditions are giving them a new vigor, so that there is a marked upswing in their numbers. Furthermore, many individuals are passing from the slough of mental despond. In building a new structure of life for themselves, they are incorporating worthwhile elements from their own ancestral heritages. Education, it will be seen, is playing an all-important part in this "renaissance" of peoples. They still face acute problems, and those responsible for their welfare cannot cease their ameliorative efforts. To the seminar-conference, however, their experience was tremendously significant as showing something of what might lie ahead of others less far on the pathways of modernity.

The fourth type-areas are geographically in a cluster: large dependencies with indigenous populations running into many millions, and governed by far smaller alien minorities. Hugest of these is the Netherlands East Indies, actually sixty times the size of the mother country in Europe, and having eight times as many inhabitants. Another, French Indo-China, is considerably larger than France, and has more than half as many people. Korea, though smaller geographically, has a population almost equalling that of Indo-China, that is, more than twenty-one millions. The Philippines has a land area almost equivalent to that of the British isles, and its inhabitants outnumber the combined populations of Norway, Sweden, and Denmark. British Malaya is comparable, though on a somewhat smaller scale.

From one point of view these countries are much like gigantic replicas of the small and scattered groupings already considered. They are made up of thousands of village communities each more

or less self-contained, autonomous, and providing a satisfying round of local activities and experience for their inhabitants. A member from Indo-China told of the typical Annamite village

“surrounded by a bamboo hedge or by walls pierced by narrow gates; leaving outside of this enclosure everything that could attract outsiders—markets, centers for pilgrimage, etc.—and containing always a *dinh* (temple and communal house), whose fine workmanship, carved beams, horned roofs with glazed tiles, contrast with the usual miserable shacks of tamped earth and thatch, and symbolize the predominance of the collective life . . . Up until now, our influence on the community has been of little consequence . . . (It) has remained for the most part autonomous behind its barriers.”

On the whole the larger authority of kings, rajahs and sultans such as are found over much of the region touches only the local “nobles”, rich men, and heads of families.

Today, however, this isolation is more and more being broken into, especially so in the areas nearer the urban centers and lines of communication. The government reaches out through its various departments to modify the traditional life; the press, movies, and the influence of those who have been outside the village brings change from within. An educated élite is stirring ambitiously and attaining power within the governing superstructure. This has gone farthest in the Philippines, a result of nearly four centuries of Spanish rule plus four decades of zealous Americanization; there, what were formerly a scattering of unrelated communities are being welded into an autonomous state. But Java, Annam, and once independent Korea are also manifesting strongly what Dutch scholars call the “awakening of the East”. What distinguishes these Asiatic dependencies more than anything else from the groups considered earlier is that they are potentially of the stuff from which autonomous nations can be made: large, rich in resources, populous and with at least something of a common heritage of culture. Already the alien rulers have been embarrassed by vigorous nationalistic movements aiming at political autonomy, and seemingly these will have an ever larger following. Actually the Philippines, according to present arrangements, is to have the American flag hauled down within a decade.

The fifth and last group of peoples are those whose destiny is fully in their own hands: China, Japan, Mexico, and the republics of South America. Western civilization, though thrust in upon