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AMERICAN ANNEXATION PROPOSALS
AND
ACQUISITIONS IN POLYNESIA, 1842-1872

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PREFACE

While much has been written with regard to American interests in Polynesia, a concentrated effort has not been made to assemble and examine the various annexation proposals which grew out of these interests. Between 1842 and 1872 a number of such expansive plans were prepared by Americans from varied motives.

This study seeks to show why these proposals were made, who made them, and why the proposals, for the most part, did not culminate in actual acquisition. It deals primarily with proposals for annexation in southern Polynesia and the Fiji Islands. American relations with the Hawaiian Islands, where the first serious proposal for annexation resulted in the abortive treaty of 1854, are too well known to be included here. An attempt has been made, however, to indicate the influence of the Guano Act of 1856 and consequent acquisitions upon American relations with the Kingdom of Hawaii.

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CHAPTER I

EARLY INTERESTS AND OFFICIAL EXPEDITIONS

During the middle period of the nineteenth century, commercial interests brought many Americans into the Central Pacific. Demands for the protection and extension of these interests influenced Pacific policy in Washington and frequently alarmed the British and the French, who regarded any proposed American territorial expansion in the Pacific with considerable anxiety. In Washington, however, there was no official policy or program for the acquisition of insular territory, even though official expeditions were sent out to explore the Pacific and protect the interests of American citizens. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to determine why proposals for annexation were made, who made them, and why these proposals did not culminate in annexation.

Before 1842, an American policy developed slowly, under mild public pressure, for the protection and development of American foreign commerce. Some progress was made by sending out naval expeditions and by making agreements with native chieftains. The most important and extensive of these expeditions was that led by Lt. Charles Wilkes who explored the Polynesian triangle, parts of Melanesia and Antarctica between 1838 and 1842.

William H. Seward, Secretary of State during and after the Lincoln Administration, introduced a brief period of American expansionism with the purchase of Alaska and the acquisition of Midway Island. The twenty years between Wilkes and Seward may now be recognized as a temporary period of expanding American interest in the Central Pacific. By 1872, the idea of further consolidation of power in the Pacific was not completely forgotten by the United States, but the events leading up to

the Pacific imperialism of a later date were allowed to form spontaneously.

Proposals for American expansion in the Pacific far antedate the Wilkes expedition. Many years earlier several abortive attempts were made by American sea captains to acquire territory. In 1791, Captain Joseph Ingraham, an American trader commanding the brig Hope of Boston, discovered the western group of the Marquesas and claimed them for the United States.¹

In 1812, President James Madison commissioned an officer to take two ships to the South Seas, but the war with England prevented them from sailing. In 1813, Captain David Porter's subsequent raids on the British whaling fleet took an American man-of-war into the Pacific for the first time. Porter, commanding the American frigate Essex, took possession of Nukuhiva, one of the Marquesas islands, on November 19, 1813. Here he set up a fort and named the island Madison.² There is no record of discussion or official action at Washington with regard to Porter's proposed annexation.

A few years later another vessel, the U.S.S. Dolphin, called at Nukuhiva and found that all traces of American occupation had disappeared. No other attempt was made to acquire a permanent base of operations in

¹ Captain David Porter, Journal of a Cruise Made to the Pacific Ocean (Philadelphia, 1815), 2 Vols., II, 7-8. Hereafter cited as Porter, Journal. Foster R. Dulles, America in the Pacific (N.Y., 1932), p. 99. Hereafter cited as Dulles, America in Pacific.

² Porter, Journal, II, 82. Jean I. Brookes, International Rivalry in the Pacific: 1800-1875 (Berkeley, 1941), p. 24. Hereafter cited as Brooks, International Rivalry.

the South Seas for several years. The Navy, however, established a Pacific Station by 1820, on the west coast of South America. In the interests of American commerce, American war vessels called at many ports in the western ocean during the next two decades.

Under continued pressure from trading and whaling interests, the United States sent out Captain Thomas ap Catesby Jones, commander of the U.S.S. Peacock, in 1826. Jones offered treaties of commerce and amity to the rulers of Tahiti, Raiatea and Hawaii, but in the case of Raiatea, the interference of British subjects prevented his achieving as much as he had desired. John Williams, the well-known English missionary, made the following report to the Foreign Office shortly after Jones' visit to the Society Islands,

I beg to inform you that the United States sloop of war Peacock, commanded by Thomas Catesby Jones Esq., has visited the island of Raiatea during his stay. Captain Jones presented me with a copy of a Treaty he insisted to enter into with the King and chiefs of the island of Raiatea and Tohaa, requesting me to look over, translate, and explain the articles it contained, there being no other English resident on the island of Raiatea capable of doing it. The King and Chiefs applied for advice on so important a subject . . . I suggested a mode of procedure that appeared to me most conducive to the British interests.³

While the Foreign Office was silent with regard to Williams' report on the Jones Treaty, there were others who expressed great concern with the rise of American interest in the Pacific. British Rear-Admiral Hamond in 1836 reported, from Honolulu, that an increase in the American Pacific Squadron implied a design on Hawaii. Shortly afterwards he expressed fear that other preparations in the United States fleet were

³ Williams to Bathurst, September 21, 1826, Great Britain, Foreign Office, Public Records Office: Hawaii and Pacific Islands, Group No. 58, Vol. 14, Raiatea. Hereafter cited as BPRO: FO 58.

leading towards the annexation of Tahiti.⁴

By 1836 the American government had shown enough interest in the Pacific to be suspected by its rivals of harboring plans for various annexations. The Sydney Gazette, in a leading article entitled, "The Society Islands--The Americans and the French," expressed the fear that the American wish to obtain bases in the Pacific was not unconnected with an intention of attacking the Australian settlements. The United States was also accused of encroaching on "innumerable isles that bespeck that ocean of which Australia is destined to hold the imperial sway." The Gazette recommended prompt action to maintain British predominance in the Pacific against possible American threats.⁵ Prompt action was not taken, nor was it needed, for it soon became evident that these expressions of concern and fear of American aggression were not well founded.

The phrase "trade follows the flag" has often been used to describe the early maritime activities of the great European powers that preceded the United States into the Pacific. If applied to the United States, however, the reverse, or, "old glory follows trade," would be more nearly correct. The early naval expeditions of the United States were, in reality, prompted by the commercial ventures that preceded them. The Western Pacific was discovered for America by the old China traders. Interest in the Pacific was then kept alive by merchantmen who made the stormy passage around Cape Horn and founded the American fur trade along the

⁴ Hamond to Wood, Dec. 10, 1836, Enclosed in Wood to Strangways, Jan. 25, 1837, BPRO: FO 58/9.

⁵ John M. Ward, British Policy in the South Pacific (Sydney, 1948), p. 118. Hereafter cited as Ward, British Policy.

Northwest coast. Close on the heels of the merchantmen were the whale-ships that were soon to be found throughout the Pacific. Through all this activity there was no indication that Washington had any designs on insular territory. Individual Americans, however, found many areas to their liking and hoped to forestall other governments and their nationals.

The principal items of trade to be found in the Pacific in addition to whale products during the first three decades of the nineteenth century, were sandalwood, tortoise shell, and beche-de-mer, a sea slug much in demand in China where it was used as a chief ingredient in soup. In addition to these things, coconut oil, valuable for the manufacture of candles and soap, became the principal item of export for many South Pacific islands by 1850. This became more profitable when the practice of shipping copra superceded the laborious coconut oil pressing about 1870.⁶ But in the beginning American merchantmen went anywhere they might find a cargo for the markets of China.

The demand for illuminating oil to be burned in lamps or made into candles contributed to the rapid development of a vast whaling industry in the Pacific. The first of American whaleships to round Cape Horn was the Beaver, which sailed from Nantucket under the command of Captain Paul Worth in 1791.⁷ The success of this venture prompted other whalers to follow, and soon whaleships could be found among the islands reefs and shoals of the Pacific, some of which were discovered, charted and claimed by the whalers for the first time. In fact, according to Foster Rhea

⁶ Sylvia Masterman, The Origins of International Rivalry in Samoa, 1845-1884. (London, 1934), p. 58. Hereafter cited as Masterman, Rivalry.

⁷ Foster R. Dulles, Lowered Boats: A Chronicle of American Whaling (N.Y., 1933), p. 46. Hereafter cited as Dulles, Lowered Boats.

Dalles, "whaling should not be remembered primarily because of its part in our commercial development or because of the prosperity it brought to the whaling ports. It should be remembered because it led to the opening up of new seas and the discovery of new islands . . . and widened our national horizons."⁸

Certain islands in the South Pacific still bear the names of the Nantucket or New Bedford captains who discovered or visited them. These two Eastern seaports thrived on the new Pacific whale trade. They became headquarters for the world's largest whaling fleets. From these two ports, primarily, came the New England whalers that frequented the Phoenix, Gilbert, Ellice, and Caroline islands between 1791 and 1828. These islands were sometimes used as bases of supply and refreshment.

Among the numerous ports of call, Hawaii became the most important outpost shortly after 1820. Here supplies were readily available, and the whalers were able to find entertainment on shore. Another favorite port was Papeete, in Tahiti. All but seven of the fifty whalers that put in here in 1846 were Americans.⁹ A decade before this, American whalers in rather larger numbers were to be found as far South and West as New Zealand. In 1836, forty-nine American whalers were to be found in New Zealand waters, where they far outnumbered the British. "The British whaler never was a serious rival of the American,¹ and no other flag even approached these two. According to consular reports, American shipping in the Bay of Islands, major port of the North Island, totaled for 1839, sixty-two ships . . . American capital was invested in the

⁸ Ibid., pp. 9-10.

⁹ Brookes, International Rivalry, p. 170.

timber trade, and Americans were found among both the sperm whalers . . . and the shopkeepers who supplied their wants."¹⁰ Other popular ports of call, in addition to Hawaii, Tahiti, and New Zealand, were to be found in Samoa, Fiji, Tonga, and in the Marquesas Islands. No claim to any of these ports was made by the United States at this time.

American whaling soon eclipsed that of all the rest of the world. Lt. Charles Wilkes, during his expedition into the Pacific, reported that "our whaling fleet may be said at this very day to whiten the Pacific Ocean with its canvass."¹¹ By 1840 the supremacy of American whaling had been established beyond question. In 1847 it was estimated that the whaling fleet of the entire world consisted of about nine hundred vessels, and of these seven hundred and twenty-two belonged to the United States.¹²

To the natives of Polynesia the American whaler became a familiar sight. After spending months on the drab, slow-moving whaleship, the South Sea islands undoubtedly had a powerful appeal for the sailors. Once ashore, their relations with native people were not always of a harmonious or wholesome nature.

Disease and liquor contributed to the unfavorable reception the whaleships sometimes received. In 1841, Pomare, Queen of Tahiti, wrote

. . . an American ship anchored here with a contagious disease on board. The captain did not conceal it but told

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 29, 102-103.

¹¹ Charles Wilkes, Narrative of the United States Exploring Expedition: 1838-1842 (Philadelphia, 1845), 5 vols., V, 514. Hereafter cited as Wilkes, Narrative.

¹² Elmo Paul Hohman, The American Whaleman (N.Y., 1928) p. 110. Hereafter cited as Hohman, The American Whaleman.

the pilot not to go on board . . . the pilot returned and reported the disease on board was small pox. It was agreed by the chiefs of the land and the people that the vessel /sic/ should not be brought into port. The American consul /Blackler/ would have that ship come in and applied to us to have it brought to Papeete, which we would not consent to--he insisted and had her anchored in Papeete and got goods out of her, which he sold and received money on account. Shortly after the vessel /sic/ sailed and a white man died of the disease and soon after two Tahitians died. The disease is spreading fast on Tahiti. This /sic/ our speech to you . . . What will you think of your consul? Does he not become as a man killer?¹³

Wilkes found Americans on different islands who had been left ashore, or who had deserted. Some had married native wives and appeared to be in comfortable circumstances; others were found to be in destitute condition, having been purposely left in isolated areas in order to avoid payment of wages and thereby increase the profits of the ship-master or owners.¹⁴ Thirty-six voyages made by thirteen vessels during the period from 1839-1879 were responsible for three hundred and twenty-six desertions, or an average of nine per voyage.¹⁵ Many of these became unruly, unwanted, and obnoxious visitors on the islands they selected as their home.

The common seaman was not always at fault. Some ship masters were a law unto themselves and mistreated both their crews and the natives without any regard for local law or custom. In some cases wholesale confiscation of livestock and supplies took place. While not many whaling masters followed such unsavory practices, J. Ross Browne in his Etchings of a Whaling Cruise, written in 1846, states, "There has been more done

¹³ U.S. Consular Dispatches, United States Department of State, Aug. 18, 1841, Tahiti, V. 2. Hereafter cited as USDS:CD, Tahiti, Vol. II.

¹⁴ Wilkes, Narrative, V, 529.

¹⁵ Hohman, The American Whaleman, p. 63.

to destroy the friendly feelings of the inhabitants of the island toward Americans, by the meanness and rascality of the whaling captains than all the missionaries and embassies from the United States can ever atone for."¹⁶ "Taken all in all, the atrocious behavior of the whaling crews in the South Seas constituted one of the most shameful chapters in the long story of Anglo-Saxon expansion."¹⁷

As the Pacific whaling fleet grew, demands for an exploring expedition to chart the numerous islands and atolls increased. During the 1820's and 1830's citizens and legislatures in several states urged the government to begin this survey without delay. Secretary of the Navy, Samuel L. Southard, was sympathetic with the project, and in 1827 the Navy Department recommended that the United States Government maintain a squadron of six vessels in the Pacific Ocean. In 1828 the House adopted a resolution requesting the president to send this small fleet into the Pacific, but the Senate was opposed to the project. The opposition felt that the discovery of distant islands might lead to emigration and to the establishment of Distant colonies "which could only be defended at an expense not to be estimated, and which could not be taken under the protection of the United States without an abandonment of the fundamental principles of our policy and a departure from those wise and prudent maxims which have hitherto restrained us from forming unnecessary connections abroad."¹⁸ Members of the Senate further pointed out that

¹⁶ Dulles, Lowered Boats, p. 59.

¹⁷ Hohman, The American Whaleman, p. 110.

¹⁸ Congressional Globe, 20 Cong., 1 sess., p. 440. House Ex. Doc. 88. Senate Reports No. 94, 20 Cong., 2 sess., May 9, 1836.

such a survey of Pacific Islands should be left to individual enterprise, since commercial expansion was the reason for sending the expedition in the first place.

No final action in Congress with regard to the sending of an exploring expedition into the Pacific took place until 1836 when the proponents, led among others, by John Quincy Adams were successful in having an act passed authorizing the expedition. Representative Hawes of Kentucky, who opposed the project, thought that sending a fleet across the distant South Seas was more monstrous than the idea of establishing light houses in the skies.¹⁹ Among the proponents of the proposed expedition was J. M. Reynolds, who in the 1820's, had been appointed to make a study of American Pacific Commerce. He found that between 1815 and 1824 Yankee whaling, sealing and trading ships made one hundred and seventy-eight trips into the Pacific and were responsible, he said, for the discovery of Kure, Canton, Palmyra, Howland, Baker, and Wake islands, some of the Phoenix and Ellice groups, and others. In his report Reynolds said: "The English charts and those of other countries are as yet imperfect. Much of their information has been obtained from loose accounts from whalers . . . which were seized with greediness by the makers of maps and charts, in order to be the first to make these discoveries known . . . the Navy Department is in possession of more information of these seas than the Admiralty of any other nation . . . for those Seas are truly our field of fame."²⁰

¹⁹ Cong. Globe, 20 Cong., 2 sess., p. 423. Joseph W. Ellison, Opening and Penetration of Foreign Influence in Samoa to 1880 (Oregon, 1938), p. 25. Hereafter cited as Ellison, Penetration.

²⁰ David Leff, Uncle Sam's Pacific Islets (Stanford, 1940), p. 5. Hereafter cited as Leff, Pacific Islets.

After continued agitation by Reynolds, Adams and others, Congress on May 18, 1836, authorized an official United States Exploring Expedition. After a good deal of Navy politics, Lt. Charles Wilkes was selected to lead this expedition and was assigned five ships. On August 11, 1838, after further delay, he received instructions from Secretary of the Navy J. K. Paulding to explore and survey the Pacific Ocean in the "interests of our commerce embarked in the whale fisheries and other adventures in the great South Ocean as well as to determine the existence of all doubtful islands and shoals." Wilkes was then warned that the expedition was "not for conquest, but discovery to extend the empire of commerce and science" and not to interfere with the native nor to "take part in their disputes, except as mediator; nor commit any act of hostility except in self defense."²¹

So it was that the flag followed trade into the Pacific. With the appointment of the Wilkes expedition, the United States had adopted the methods of the older maritime powers, which had been to send out government-financed expeditions to explore, and in some cases to acquire island territories. With regard to the matter of acquisition, however, as has been pointed out, Wilkes received specific instructions. He sailed in August, 1838, and before returning four years later he visited many of the islands of Polynesia, on the Pacific coast of North America and discovered the land in the Antarctic that bears his name.

In Samoa Wilkes discovered a lively commerce in progress in supplies and coconut oil. On the Island of Tutuila, where he noted the great possibilities of the bay of Pago Pago, he named an American trader

²¹ Wilkes, Narrative I, 25-31.

resident as agent of the United States.²² From Tutuila, Wilkes sailed to Upolu, where he concluded the first formal agreement ever made between representatives of the United States government and Samoan chiefs.²³ Wilkes proposed that the Samoan chiefs and the foreigners should agree upon rules and regulations that would protect both parties. The regulations, as adopted and signed by seven chiefs, November 5, 1839, were witnessed by John C. Williams, whom Wilkes had just appointed acting Consul. They were also signed by British consul W. C. Cunningham, and Wilkes. Consisting of sixteen articles, the regulations were designed to protect the whalers and traders while in port and to insure the natives against imposition.²⁴

In 1840, the Wilkes expedition visited Tonga where native wars were raging. King George was offered American mediation to help settle this unrest which Wilkes felt was the "result of the inordinate zeal of the Christians to force their tenets on the pagans."²⁵ In Tahiti, the year before, Wilkes had succeeded in getting a council of chiefs to hear complaints brought forward by the American consul, Moerenhout, who complained that Wilkes' amiability only encouraged an irresponsible attitude toward the rights of the white residents.²⁶ In New Zealand, where Wilkes anchored

²² Dulles, America in the Pacific, p. 103, The agent's name is not given. However, Wilkes in his Narrative, II, 67-68, refers to a white man by the name of William Gray, who assisted him in his relationships with the natives.

²³ George H. Ryden, The Foreign Policy of the United States in Relation to Samoa (Yale, 1933), p. 21. Hereafter cited as Ryden, Samoa.

²⁴ Wilkes, Narrative II, 428-430.

²⁵ Guy H. Scholefield, The Pacific, its Past and Future: and the Policy of the Great Powers from the Eighteenth Century (London, 1919), p. 198.

²⁶ Brookes, International Rivalry, p. 107.

about the time when the Treaty of Waitangi was being signed, he declined to recognize the new regime until instruction were received from his government, but he expressed the feeling that the British seizure of New Zealand was a blow to American interests there.²⁷ With regard to Hawaii Wilkes reported that these islands were likely to preserve a degree of freedom and neutrality because they had no easily defended harbor.²⁸ Wilkes spent three months in 1840 in the Fijian area where, on May 14, he concluded a treaty with the Bau chief 'Tanoa', regulating the treatment of visiting ships and the conditions under which they were to be supplied. An American named David Whippy translated the regulations for Wilkes.²⁹ While in Fiji, at Malolo, two officers were murdered, one of whom was Wilkes' nephew. To settle this uprising, Wilkes landed and burnt the villages of Yaro and Solevu, killing fifteen-seven natives.³⁰

The Wilkes expedition returned to the United States in 1842 after four years spent in the endeavor to carry out their instructions to "extend the empire of commerce and science." The appointment of consular or commercial agents had been made at several important Pacific ports, and other appointments were soon to follow. While no acquisition of island territory had taken place, the Wilkes expedition served as a notice to the maritime powers already probing into island affairs that the United States planned to protect the interests of her merchants. It was, however,

²⁷ Wilkes, Narrative V, 262-263.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 263.

²⁹ USDS; CD, Lauthala, Vol. 2. (A summary of the regulations may be found in R. A. Derrick, A History of Fiji (Suva, 1950) p. 91. Hereafter cited as Derrick, History Fiji.)

³⁰ Derrick, History Fiji, p. 92.

quite apparent to France and Great Britain that the United States did not wish to overthrow native rule and would probably decline to assume even a protectorate over any of the inhabited Pacific Islands. The American policy of respecting the territorial and administrative integrity of backward peoples, best known in regard to China, thus made an early appearance in American relations with the Pacific Islanders.

CHAPTER II

INTERESTS, AGENTS, CONSULS, AND MISSIONARIES

John Louis O'Sullivan, editor of the Democratic Review and the New York Morning News enriched the national vocabulary with the potent phrase, "Manifest Destiny" in an editorial in 1845.¹ O'Sullivan, a Democrat and Southern sympathizer, expressed the idea that it was the destiny of America to possess the whole continent. As an acquaintance of Presidents Polk, Pierce, and Buchanan, he steadily urged upon them the policy of expansion which his phrase implied. Even before the American pioneers crossed the great plains in their trek to Oregon and California, this feeling of "manifest destiny" was expressed in the forces at work which finally culminated in the acquisition of Oregon and California. President James K. Polk, whose aggressive policy won these two new territories was very much aware of the importance of the Pacific.

This spirit of expansionism, while it may not have permeated the Taylor and Fillmore Administrations to the same degree, was evident during the administration of President Franklin Pierce, who stated in his inaugural address in 1852 that the policy of his Administration would not be "controlled by any timid forebodings of evil from expansion."² This hint in Pierce's inaugural that he was interested in acquiring further territory was interpreted by many to mean Cuba. Be this as it may, even greater possibilities for the promotion of American interests were visioned in the Pacific and Far East. Secretary of State William

¹ Julius W. Pratt, Expansionists of 1898: The Acquisition of Hawaii and the Spanish Islands (N. Y., 1951), p. 1.

² James D. Richardson, comp., A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents (Washington, 1896-1899), V. 268. Hereafter cited as Richardson, Messages and Papers. Dulles, America in the Pacific, p. 63.

L. Marcy wrote in 1853; "Immediately after the extension of our laws over Oregon and the acquisition of California, not only Hawaii but also the whole of Polynesia, assumed an increased importance to the United States. More recently this importance has been vastly augmented by the wonderful events in China, events which threaten the overthrow of the Tartar rule."³

Commodore Matthew C. Perry's expedition to open up Japan to commerce had left not long before the Pierce administration began. This expedition was in itself a tangible expression of the spirit of expansionism. Perry in his dispatches recommended the acquisition of island colonies and declared that it was self-evident "that the course of coming events will ere long make it necessary for the United States to extend its territorial jurisdiction beyond the limits of the western continent." More specifically, Perry continued, "Fortunately the Japanese and many other islands in the Pacific are still left untouched by this unconscionable government England, and, as some of them lay in the route of commerce which is destined to become of great importance to the United States, no time should be lost in adopting active measures to secure a sufficient number of ports of refuge."⁴ This keen interest in establishing Pacific outposts along projected steamship lanes was not shared by a sufficient number in Congress for active support to be given to Perry's report. Indeed, any proposals for expansion between 1854 and 1864 received little attention in Washington because of the perplexing internal problems preceding the Civil War.

³ Marcy to Gregg, Sept. 22, 1853, Hawaiian Instructions, State Department Message; Quoted in Roy Franklin Nichols, Franklin Pierce. Young Hickory of the Granite Hills (Philadelphia, 1958), p. 268.

⁴ Senate Doc., No. 34, 33 Cong., 2 sess.; Dulles, America in the Pacific, pp. 5, 67.

CONSULAR APPOINTMENTS BY 1840

Tangible evidence of the American Governments concern over the Pacific Island interests of its citizens, and the limits of such concern, was the appointment of commercial agents. The first officially appointed American commercial agent in Oceania was John C. Jones who was to become one of the most influential resident traders in Honolulu. Jones, a resident of Massachusetts, was in Boston in October, 1820, when he accepted the appointment as agent for seamen and commerce in the Sandwich Islands. He continued to serve in this capacity until 1839, when, after considerable pressure from the Protestant mission and native chiefs, he was replaced by Peter A. Brinsmade.

During his years of service as American agent Jones was frequently so preoccupied with his own commercial pursuits as agent for Marshall and Wildes Company of Boston, that he lost some of the prestige and dignity that the representative of a great maritime power should have had.⁵ Wilkes felt that the practice of using traders and merchants to serve as agents and consuls was wrong and often aggravated the difficulties of the whaling fleet. He declared, "the whole system is wrong: those appointed to such situations should not be suffered to engage in trade, but should receive a salary adequate to their support. This would place them in a situation to assert our rights, prevent the difficulties now of daily occurrence, and enable the consuls to maintain the high standing they ought to hold in foreign ports."⁶ As right as Wilkes may have been,

⁵ Harold W. Bradley, The American Frontier in Hawaii: The Pioneers 1789-1843 (Stanford, 1942), pp. 88, 301.

⁶ Wilkes, Narrative V, 531.

and events at important Pacific ports indicate that he was, the practice of appointing traders as agents or consuls continued.

The two weaknesses of early consular appointments decried by Wilkes were combined in the person of J. A. Moerenhout. A Belgian by birth, he was appointed United States agent in Tahiti in 1835, after a short residence on the island as a trader. Optimistic when first appointed, Moerenhout met with Queen Pomare and the principal chiefs, who, he reported, "were all highly gratified for this mark of attention paid them and their country by the government of the United States, and I have no doubt /my appointment/ will have a favorable result and be a comfort to the American Commerce with the islands."⁷ Only a month later, however, Moerenhout was apparently quite discouraged. He wrote, "the English vessels of war visit this island frequently, still the English have not one fourth the number of vessells /sic/ the United States have in this sea and this people considering the foreigners only conformably to the display of strength of their government, the English are the only really /sic/ respected, so much so that as consul of the United States I can with difficulty obtain justice in cases of contestation."⁸ Concerned with his own welfare as well as the prestige of the United States in Tahiti, Moerenhout added, "I also beg to observe that decided /sic/ to my duty as counsul, I injure my interest as a merchant and that in such a place as this, where consuls are so much wanted, the government of the United States of America should allow a salary, which would make them independent."⁸

⁷ Moerenhout to Forsyth, January 11, 1836, USDS, CD, Tahiti, Vol. I.

⁸ February 15, 1836, ibid.

Just how much real service foreign or trader consuls on distant Pacific Islands were expected to render without pay, is difficult to ascertain. However, the appointment of such individuals without pay or support may be indicative of the amount of interest the American government had in the Pacific Islands during this early period. Moerenhout's plea for a visit from a man-of-war to lend support and prestige to the consular office was echoed throughout Polynesia. Not only were the visits of American war ships infrequent, but official correspondence with the State Department was extremely slow. This was notably true with regard to communications between Tahiti and Washington. In August 1837 Samuel W. Blackler, an American citizen, wrote to Secretary of State Forsyth accepting the appointment as consular for the Society Islands.⁹ Eighteen months later, January 1839 Moerenhout still had not received official notification of his dismissal. He was still corresponding with the State Department, reporting that he had not received an answer to his letter of January 1, 1838.¹⁰ Blackler arrived in Tahiti on March 15, 1839, and informed Moerenhout, who was later appointed French consul by Commodore Du Petit-Thouars.

While in at least two places, British citizens had been officially appointed to represent the United States, Wilkes pointed up the need for American citizens to serve in official capacities. The United States had had a consular agent in New Zealand at the Bay of Islands, J. R. Clendon, a British citizen, since early in 1839. Wilkes considered Clendon's partiality toward British interests as evidence for the neces-

⁹ Blackler to Forsyth, August 26, 1837, enclosed in Moerenhout to Forsyth, USDS: CD, Tahiti, Vol. 1.

¹⁰ Moerenhout to Forsyth, January 12, 1839, ibid.

sity of using only citizens in consular positions. Clendon had advised the most powerful and influential chiefs to sign the Treaty of Waitangi, ceding New Zealand to Great Britain, in 1840, he himself signing the Treaty as a witness.¹¹ Clendon resigned the following year and was succeeded by an American citizen named Mayhew who had served for a short time as vice-consul under Clendon.

A third instance wherein a foreigner was appointed to represent the United States in the Pacific Islands, took place during Wilkes' visit to Upolu in the Samoan Islands. Here, on November 4, 1839, in a meeting at Apia, Wilkes presented Englishman John C. Williams as the first American consul. The chiefs recognized the appointment with great willingness and satisfaction, for Williams was the son of the highly respected, martyred missionary.¹² Williams, however, did not receive his commission as commercial agent from Washington until five years later. In November 1844 John C. Calhoun, Secretary of State, in a dispatch to Williams, informed him of his appointment by the President as "commercial agent of the United States for the Navigator Islands", and enclosed a blank bond with instructions to execute and return to the Department. On February 19, 1847, Secretary of State James Buchanan sent Williams duplicates of Calhoun's letter and enclosures. More than a year later, Williams acknowledged receipt of Buchanan's communication, which was received before the original letter of appointment dated November 19, 1844.¹³

¹¹ Wilkes, Narrative, III, 47.

¹² Joseph W. Ellison, Penetration, p. 27. Williams, who served as consul and, later, as Commercial Agent until 1850, was acting consul again from 1859 to 1864.

¹³ Ryden, Samoa, pp. 23, 25.

Almost nine years had elapsed since his appointment to office before Williams acknowledged his official appointment.

There was no mail service between Samoa and Washington, and so it was not uncommon for many months to elapse between ~~communications~~ communications. However, the infrequency of dispatches between Williams and the State Department may be indicative of a lack of interest in both Washington and Apia. It is known that Williams was disappointed with his appointment at no salary and stated in a dispatch to Buchanan in June 1848 that the Department could consider his letter as his resignation unless a salary was given. Shortly before this, Williams had informed the Department that he had appointed Henry Gibbons to act as Commercial Agent to Tutuila, "till the pleasure of the United States Government is known." He explained that the distance from Apia to Tutuila made this necessary and that Pago Pago harbor was "frequented by vessels."¹⁴ The last communication received by the State Department from Williams was dated April 10, 1850, the day that a devastating hurricane struck Apia harbor, destroying one English, one French, and two American ships. After this, British consul George Pritchard, who had been transferred to Samoa from Tahiti in 1845, was recognized as the temporary representative of the United States Government until the appointment of V. P. Chapin, the first American citizen to represent his country in Samoa, February 19, 1853.¹⁵

When Wilkes first arrived in Levuka harbor, Ovalau, Fiji in 1840, he was met by a white resident, David Whippy, an American who had been in the island for eighteen years. Whippy, as a young lad, had come into the

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 24.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 25.

Pacific on a beche-de-mer ship and deserted in Fiji to avoid the bad treatment he had received aboard ship. Wilkes employed Whippy as his interpreter and reported him to be prudent and trustworthy. After the exploring expedition returned to America, Whippy was appointed 'vice-general consul for the Fiji group.'¹⁶

The first American consul for this group was John Brown Williams of Salem, Massachusetts, who received the appointment while serving as agent for the United States in New Zealand. In the case of Fiji, Williams' official title was commercial agent, and he continued to serve in this dual capacity, e.g., United States Consul in New Zealand and Commercial Agent for Fiji, for about five years. In 1845, after a preliminary visit to the islands, he obtained permission to remove to Fiji, leaving a vice-consul in New Zealand.

Soon after his arrival in Fiji, Brown and several others began to buy land, purchasing Nukulau and Laucala Point in June, 1846, for thirty dollars in muskets and ammunition. Additional land was purchased during this same year, and Williams became involved in frequent boundary disputes with the natives. In addition to his official duties, Williams, like his counterparts in Tahiti and Hawaii, was engaged in trade. He held profitable agencies for several business houses in Salem and Boston.¹⁷ There seems to be no question that American commercial interests in Fiji in the 1840's were sufficient to warrant the appointment of a commercial agent. In a letter to the State Department in October of 1847, Williams said, 'send us a war ship to protect American Commerce and trade . . . The

¹⁶ Wilkes, Narrative, III, 47.

¹⁷ Derrick, History of Fiji, p. 95.

United States has all of the trade of this group of islands.¹⁸ The wisdom of selecting, of John Brown Williams to fill this new posts, however, may be justifiably questioned in light of events which were to take place in the final months of the decade.

CONSULAR POSTS IN THE 1840'S

By 1845, the United States government had agents scattered throughout Polynesia. It should not be assumed, however, that this rather broad representation meant that Washington had a great deal of political interest there. As has already been noted, agents sometimes failed to hear from the State Department for many months and sometimes years. Agents too, became, on occasion, uncommunicative and devoted their time and energy chiefly to the promotion of their own commercial interests. This relationship between the agents and the government, coupled with the fact that some of the agents were not even citizens of the United States and that all served with little or no compensation, is indicative of the general lack of interest or concern of the government in distant Pacific Islands. Except for the demands of American traders and whalers for protection of their interests, and the influence of early missionary activities in the islands, it is clear that consular and commercial agents would never have been appointed at Polynesian ports. Certainly, the retention of these consular posts during the 1840's was more directly a result of extended commercial and missionary endeavors than the desire for territorial expansion.

THE INFLUENCE OF MISSIONARIES

The missionaries came to represent an important aspect of American

¹⁸ Williams to Buchanan, October 1, 1847, USDS: CD, Lauthala, Vol. 1.

interest and influence in the Pacific. This influence upon native mores and institutions should not be underestimated. Nor should the contributions the missionaries made toward the diffusion of knowledge of the islands on which they labored through memoirs, journals, and reports, be overlooked. The missionary field, in general, contributed towards the enhancing of the authority of the white men in the eyes of the natives and served to counterbalance the influence which the behavior of some of the beachcombers and traders had had on the natives. While sectarian conflict undoubtedly caused confusion with regard to the interpretation of Christian dogma and ideals, there seems to be no question that the missionaries did help to establish peace and goodwill among native populations. Their lengthy sojourns made the missionaries experts on the islands which they worked. They became conversant in native languages and established a pattern of indirect rule, through native leaders and councils, that with little modification was later adopted by the administrations of annexing powers.¹⁹

The presence of missionaries from a particular country was usually an asset for the consul of that country, who was able to use them as interpreters of native languages and custom. In general, the missionaries were highly respected by the natives who, at first at least, were inclined to treat all white men with the same high regard. Consuls and agents who extended protection and assistance to their missionaries were able to take advantage of this friendly missionary-native relationship. In Samoa and Fiji, the presence of a number of British and French missionaries

¹⁹ Aarne A. Koskinen, Missionary Influence As a Political Factor in the Pacific Islands (Helsinki, 1953), pp. 209, 211, 213, 215. Hereafter cited as Koskinen, Missionary.

enhanced the position of France and England and lessened the prestige of American commercial agents in the two groups, even though for a time, they were the only officials in hundreds of islands around.²⁰

The connection of American missionaries with their government was, however, obscure. Missionary development in Oceania by Americans reached fewer island groups than the British or the French. The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions concentrated their efforts in the Hawaiian Islands. Appeals made on behalf of this group, and other missionary groups, with the government had only limited effect. The only expansion of American missionaries during this mid-century decade was the arrival of the Mormons in Tahiti in 1844 and the Tuamotus in 1846 "to exasperation of their Christian predecessors."²¹

Since the United States was without an aggressive Pacific policy, the Government was not inclined toward annexation outside the American continent. Under these conditions Washington was not eager to protect missionary interests by force nor was the State Department responsive to consular reports suggesting the extension of American interests in the Pacific islands. Opportunity for thus extending political interests and even for annexation did exist. The responsibility for the failure of American Polynesian relationships to culminate in actual acquisition or annexation, before the latter part of the nineteenth century does not lie squarely on the shoulders of the agents, consuls, and missionaries. These American citizens, who served their country and their God without pay, and, in many cases, without official instructions, cannot ultimately

²⁰ Brookes, International Rivalry, p. 173.

²¹ Ibid., p. 167.

be held responsible.

CHAPTER III

OPPORTUNITY FOR ANNEXATION: 1840 - 1858

Among the several different factors that were responsible for American mid-nineteenth century activity in the Pacific was the national urge for further expansion which came as a result of the pushing out of the American frontier to the West Coast. Though, for many years after the acquisition of California, territorial annexation did not continue westward, it should not be concluded that opportunity for acquisition in the Pacific did not exist. Both opportunity and the desire for the acquisition of insular territory, while restricted to individuals and to specific islands in Polynesia, will be discussed in the following individual cases.

NEW ZEALAND

When the first signatures were affixed to the Treaty of Waitangi on February 6, 1840, there were no American claims to New Zealand, but the interests of American citizens were strong when the British took possession. Several months were required to obtain enough signatures and general agreement to proclaim the sovereignty of Queen Victoria over all of the islands. A matter of grave concern to Great Britain during the annexation process was the threat of a growing French colony on the North Island. The British were also cognizant of the presence of American interests in New Zealand which were more extensive than the French, but were given less governmental protection. J. R. Clendon, American consul, a British subject, was one of the most effective aides to his countrymen in persuading the natives of the North Island to acquiesce to the British annexation plan.¹

¹ Brookes, International Rivalry, pp. 98-99.

Lt. Charles Wilkes, who was in New Zealand while the Treaty of Waitangi was being signed, expressed great concern for American interests in New Zealand. He reported that:

Americans are not permitted to hold property, and, in consequence, their whaling establishments on shore must either be broken up altogether or transferred to other places, at a great loss of outlay and capital. Our whalers are now prevented from resorting to the New Zealand ports, or fishing on the coast, by the tonnage duty, port charges, etc.; are denied the privilege of disposing of any thing in barter, and obliged to pay a duty on American articles of from ten to five hundred per cent. The expenses of repairs have so much increased, that other places must be sought for the purpose of making them . . . Thus have our citizens been deprived of a fishery yielding about three hundred thousand dollars annually in oil.²

Secretary of State Forsyth, on November 25, 1840, directed United States minister Stevenson in London, to make clear to British Foreign Minister Palmerston that the American government, "though indifferent to the circumstances of territorial acquisition," would object to any arrangement that might injure the rights of American vessels at New Zealand ports. This would seem to indicate that the American government had no apparent designs upon these islands so far removed from her shores and evidently was only remotely aware of or concerned with the destruction of the commercial interests of American whalers and resident traders.

Vice consul Mayhew, in a letter to the Department of State, February 21, 1842, asked for instructions with respect to his relations with the new regime and expressed indignation with regard to the damage done to the American interests by the occupation. While no positive action was taken with regard to this and numerous other complaints, the American Government at the close of 1842, intentionally, or possibly quite by

² Wilkes, Narrative, II, 377-378.

accident, registered objection to British dominion through the non-recognition principle. Two years after British annexation, New Zealand was still listed on the official list of ministers and consuls of the United States among the "Independent Pacific Islands."³ The policy of the United States was, then, not to commit the government for the moment to recognition of British sovereignty over New Zealand. This policy might be interpreted as a mild form of protest against the discriminatory nature of the new laws as reported by Americans in New Zealand. Significantly, however, there was no talk of annexation.

SOCIETY ISLANDS

As early as 1836, a British admiral in the Society Islands, expressed the fear that the United States planned to annex Tahiti.⁴ It is possible that the presence of American ships and the appointment of an official representative, J. A. Moerenhout, could have prompted this fear. Moerenhout had reported on February 15, 1836, that, the English had less than one fourth of the vessels that the United States had in the area.⁵ There is sufficient evidence to show, however, that fears with regard to American annexation in the Society Islands, and particularly in Tahiti, were not well founded. In 1838, Moerenhout, in a letter to Washington, said, "I again respectfully but urgently beg . . . for the appearance of an American man-of-war . . . there being ten Americans whalers for every British ship anchoring here . . . the amount of American property that entered this harbor last year was not under three and one-half million

³ Brookes, International Rivalry, pp. 103, 121.

⁴ See chapter I, footnote 4.

⁵ See chapter II, footnote 10.

dollars.⁶ This plea was echoed by Moerenhout's successor, Samuel Blackler two years later, when he stated the need for a visit of a United States man-of-war to lend strength to the consul and to protect American whaling. According to Blackler, "such a measure would add much to the security of our whaling and commercial interests."⁷ Blackler's request was based upon the assumption that Washington was concerned about whaling and commercial interests in Tahiti. American relationships during that decade do not indicate, however, that such interest was strong enough to bring the American navy to Tahiti. Quite to the contrary, the United States made no formal objection to the establishment of a French protectorate over Tahiti in 1842. The American consul reported that he could have prevented this, but Washington had no comment to make in reply to his dispatch.⁸

Not only the United States, but Great Britain as well was apparently willing to condescend to a French protectorate in Tahiti. The main factor underlying the British policy of non-intervention was the desire of the foreign and colonial offices to avoid political entanglements over distant Pacific islands.⁹ The United States followed a similar policy.

The French, therefore, assumed control of Tahiti and began to transform it into a base of operations as a French protectorate, without formal opposition from either Great Britain or the United

⁶ Moerenhout to Forsyth, January 15, 1838, USDS: CD, Tahiti, Vol. 1.

⁷ Blackler to Forsyth, October 31, 1840, *ibid.*

⁸ Brookes, International Rivalry, p. 116.

⁹ Ward, British Policy, pp. 137.

States.¹⁰

Blackler had predicted that the inability of the Tahitians to sustain the sovereignty of the Queen would lead to a crisis that would compromise the independence of the island.¹¹ He felt that the action that France had taken had been promoted by Moerenhout, who was now serving as the French consul in Tahiti. He said, "Moerenhout by means of intrigue . . . promoted the French interest in aiding the establishment of the Protectorate at this island." In this same dispatch, sent to Secretary of State Webster September 26, 1842, Blackler stated that he could have prevented the signing of the request for a French protectorate by Queen Pomare by putting up a money guarantee to cover the French demands. In explaining why this was not done, Blackler said, "the smallness of the guarantee demanded by the Admiral Du Petit Thouars and the latent prejudice of the Tahitians against the French, placed it in my power to have made a successful opposition to their occupation of the sovereignty of this island had I have been directed, or had not the possession of foreign territories been opposed, to the constitution and policy of my government." He went on to say

I must not, however, disguise the fact that strong motives of policy induced me to cooperate with rather than oppose the Admiral Du Petit Thouars in establishing the Protectorate of the French Government at this island. The immense and increasing colonial power of Great Britain, its exclusive system, her recent colonization in the Southern Pacific, and above all the advantages, that in the event of war, our commerce would derive from the occupation of the Marquesas, and the Society Islands, by the French, are as I conceive arguments

¹⁰ For details of the agreement, see Pomare to Admiral Du Petit Thouars enclosed in Blackler to Webster, September 10, 1842, USDS: CD, Tahiti, Vol. II.

¹¹ Blackler to Forsyth, October 31, 1840, USDS: CD, Tahiti, Vol. I.

conclusive as to the policy which should govern me in such a course.

Blackler concluded, however, with this note of reluctance: "However, advantageously such a movement may prove in its result to our political interest, I cannot without reluctance, believe that the Government . . . will passively submit, to a clandestine foreign interference in its affairs, injurious not only to the official character of its representatives abroad, but insulting to its own dignity."¹² As insulting as this may have been to the American government and its representative in Tahiti, the French continued the Protectorate, recognizing the sovereignty of the Queen, until, on November 3, 1843, Du Petit Thouars raised the French flag of France over all important points on the island. Pomare was declared deposed, and her property confiscated.¹³

The absence of strenuous objection to a French Tahiti was indicative of American apathy with regard to all of the Society islands. That this continued to be true is made clear by the story of the intriguing relations of the American agent, Henry Owner, who was at the Leeward group in 1858. The point at issue at this time was the relationship of this group with the islands in the French protectorate.

Ten years earlier, United States consul Horace Hawes, writing to Washington from Papeete, had reported, "I returned late last evening from a visit to the Leeward Islands . . . These islands, Huahine, Raiatea and Bolabola sic have each of them a separate government, entirely independent of the French Protectorate."¹⁴ It is not clear whether Du

¹² Blackler to Webster, September 26, 1842, USDS:CD, Tahiti, Vol. II.

¹³ Brookes, International Rivalry, p. 140.

¹⁴ Hawes to Buchanan, November 21, 1848, USDS:CD, Tahiti, Vol. II.

Petit Thouars considered Raiatea and the Leeward group in the protectorate, but in Les Iles Taiti, published in 1844, the authors asserted that the Leeward group had recognized the French protectorate in 1843.¹⁵ Hawes did not believe this to be true, nor did American consular agent Henry Owner, who urged that the United States annex Raiatea in 1858.

Tamatoa, the young son of Pomare, was king of Raiatea and Tahaa when, in 1858, he was dispossessed by a majority of his chiefs and sent home to his queen mother. Henry Owner who arrived in Tahiti in 1858, visited Raiatea, where one-half of the meager foreign capital invested was American. There he was given documents, signed by a number of chiefs, offering the two islands to the United States.¹⁶ Returning to Tahiti, Owner sent a dispatch to Secretary of State Lewis Cass, enclosing the letters from the Raiatea and Tahaa chiefs containing the propositions to place the islands under the protection of the United States. Owner said that he felt that the propositions were evidence of a "general and spontaneous wish to rise from their degradation and be at least equal in the scale with other islands who enjoy the advantage . . . arising from stable and systematic forms of government. This appeal," he added, "is not one of a party or cabal, nor is it a call for redress of grievances of a weaker power oppressed by a greater, but it is a unanimous and well digested expression of the wish of all the people of Raiatea and Tahaa." Owner reasoned that the United States should by right have precedence in

¹⁵ Brookes, International Rivalry, pp. 158, 185. Vincendon-Dumoulin and Desgraz, Les Iles Taiti, Pt. II, p. 991.

¹⁶ Owner to Department of State, April 27, 1858, DS Memo. October 5, 1858, USDS:CD, Tahiti, Vol. IV. Jean I. Brookes, Anglo-French Rivalry in the Pacific Islands: 1815-1861 (Chicago, 1926), p. 270. Hereafter cited as Brookes, Anglo-French Rivalry.

the possession of these islands, since "Great Britain occupies a large and growing country in these seas . . . while the French at the same time have dominion over the islands of Tahiti and its dependencies thus forcing American commerce in the South Pacific . . . into comparative dependence upon those two powers." Explaining carefully that he did not want to give the impression that he was dictating policy, Owner pointed out "that the acquisition of the islands of Raiatea and Tahaa by the United States would exert a vast influence in bringing to those islands the extensive whaling fleet employed in these seas." He mentioned the advantages to be found in Raiatea and Tahaa stating that they "need but the energy of Americans to bring out their resources." Owner further urged that a depot be established at Raiatea. This, he felt, would bring the great bulk of the island trade at Tahiti to Raiatea and into American hands.¹⁷

A new consul to "Tahiti and the Independent Society Islands" had been appointed to succeed Owner before his Raiatea documents arrived in Washington. This may have been reason enough for the State Department to ignore the documents when they did arrive. However, a petition asking for Owner's recall, sent to the Department in July 1858 may have caused officials to question the validity of his report. The petition, addressed to President James Buchanan and signed by fourteen men, two of whom were masters of ships, made the charge that Owner was a habitual drunkard, an extortioner, and that he caused insubordination on board ships by discharging seamen whose term of service had not expired.¹⁸

¹⁷ Owner to Cass, April 27, 1858, USDS:CD, Tahiti, Vol. IV.

¹⁸ Petition to James Buchanan, President of the United States, July 5, 1858, ibid.

Owner's personal reputation, certainly not enhanced by the petition, may have been a factor in discrediting his report in Washington. A letter to the editor in the San Francisco Bulletin, dated December 16, 1862, stated that the consular activities of Owner and his successor, Vicissimus Turner, have "resulted in making the names of Americans there almost a synonym of disgrace . . . Since the beginning of the Administration of President Buchanan there seems to have been a fatality attending appointment of our consuls to Tahiti . . . The first appointment . . . was Henry Owner, who was by and by superseeded by . . . Turner. Both of these persons are sufficiently well known in this city to save me the necessity of dwelling on their unfitness for the position."¹⁹ What influence these character references may have had upon Washington's failure to consider Owner's Raiatea annexation plan has not been determined. However, since Owner was succeeded by another consul shortly after the restoration of King Tamatoa by an anti-American, Royalist party,²⁰ his unpopularity may have been confined to one particular group.

FIJI

For more than two decades, proposals for strengthening the position of the United States in the Fiji group, even amounting to suggestions for annexation, centered around the claims of John Brown Williams, long time commercial agent, in New Zealand and Fiji. Williams acquired Nukulai Island off the Rewa coast of Viti Levu in June 1846. Here at Nukulai Point he built a two-story wooden house with a cellar for use as an office and store. On July 4, 1849, while celebrating, a cannon being

¹⁹ San Francisco Bulletin, December 16, 1862, enclosed in USDS: CD, Tahiti, Vol, V. The name of the writer of this letter is not given.

²⁰ Brookes, International Rivalry, p. 224.

fired by a negro, William James, misfired, tore his arm off and set the house on fire. Native custom interpreted a fire as a legitimate time for plunder. The people who had gathered to watch, or join Williams in the celebration, seized what they could and made off with the loot.²¹

Williams then moved his headquarters to Laucala Point, where he built another house and continued his trade with the natives in guns and ammunition. In the meantime, he involved Thakombau who had arrogated to himself the title of Tui Viti, or King of All Fiji, and other high chiefs in a dispute with the government of the United States over claims for payment for his lost property, plus interest. Finally on New Years day, 1854, Williams sent a plea to the Department of State for naval protection for the local commercial trade. He reminded Washington that American merchants had carried on constant trade with Fiji since 1789; that the whaling industry in Fiji alone represented an interest of from seven to eight million American dollars. Williams included in his dispatch a schedule of plunder and spoiliations of property, the value of which he expected to be paid by Thakombau, whom he had recognized as King of Fiji. The list of items destroyed after the July 4, 1849 celebration revealed the nature of Williams' trade relationships with the natives. The schedule read as follows:

Plunder and Spoilation of Property at Nukulau, Feejee Islands, viz., July 6, 1849.

| | |
|--|-----------|
| 2 cases double barrell guns complete @ \$32.00 | \$ 992.00 |
| 400 whales teeth @ 62½ cents per pound | 406.25 |
| 40 dozen hatchets @ \$18.00 per dozen | 720.00 |
| | <hr/> |

²¹ Derrick, History Fiji, p. 95.

Interest at 12% per annum

\$3,006.12
1,863.79
 \$4,869.91²²

American relationships during the next two decades centered around these and subsequent claims. In 1853, and again in 1855, Williams suffered additional losses, along with other Americans, as a result of fires and plunder. For the next decade Williams referred to these losses in nearly every dispatch to Washington and attempted to burden the commanders of visiting American warships with the responsibility of collecting these claims.

In 1851, the U.S.S. St. Mary's, under the command of Captain G. A. Magruder, arrived in Fiji. Williams promptly present his claim for compensation to Magruder who, during his visit, was unable to complete an investigation. Leaving the matter unsettled, he appointed James Calvert, a missionary, and David Whippy as arbitrators, instructing them to report to the commander of the next American warship to visit Fiji.²³ No United States warships visited Fiji from 1851 to 1855, when the U.S.S. St. Mary's under Commander T. Bailey and the U.S.S. John Adams, Commander E. B. Boutwell, both arrived in September. Boutwell had specific orders to investigate, with impartial care, the American claims and to bring about a just settlement. Bailey left after a short stay, but before leaving he had warned Boutwell "to adhere strictly to his instructions."

²² Williams to Department of State, January 1, 1854, USDS: CD, Lauthala, Vol. III, Thakombau is also spelled Cakobau by Derrick and others. He is also referred to as The Tui Viti. Thakombau was used in most consulate dispatches and will be used in this paper.

²³ Derrick, History Fiji, p. 133. See in this paper, footnotes No. 29 Chapter I and No. 16, Chapter II. Magruder's initials found in his original log book of the St. Mary's, 1851. Derrick gives his last name only and spells it Macgruder.

The warning was apparently appropriate, for Boutwell brought Thakombau aboard the John Adams, soon after Bailey left and held an inquiry that was anything but impartial. Brushing aside any assistance from the arbitrators Magruder had appointed in 1851, Boutwell, accepted all statements made by Williams, and ignored the claims made by missionaries there. He assessed the amount of indemnity at \$30,000.²⁴

Thakombau was not allowed counsel. In evidence given before an American court of inquiry, October 28, 1869, he recalled the proceedings of his experience aboard the John Adams. Thakombau said Boutwell placed a paper before him and threatened to take him away to America if he did not sign. Not only was he forced to sign, but he had to guarantee the payment of the claims if England or France should take possession of the Fiji islands. Williams was also awarded legal possession of the properties at Nukulau and at Laucala Point. The final assessment was set at \$45,000 to be paid in three installments in twelve, eighteen, and twenty-four months.²⁵

After the John Adams sailed, Thakombau's fear apparently faded. On October 29, 1855, he addressed a letter to the United States consul at Sydney, J. H. Williams, stating, "I did not sign the treaty with Captain Boutwell of my own accord, but under the greatest fear. He threatened to take me away to America and stamped on the floor right in my face because I objected to give my signature."²⁶ James Calvert, the missionary

²⁴ Derrick, History Fiji, p. 135. See this page also for a summary of the Boutwell awards.

²⁵ "Sloop of War John Adams at Feejee Islands", House Ex. Doc. No. 115, 34 Cong., 1 sess.

²⁶ Thakombau to Consul of the U.S.A., Sydney, USDS: CD Bau, Feejee, Oct. 29, 1855, Lauthala Vol. IV. House Ex. Doc. No. 115, 34 Cong., 1 sess. J. B. Williams had a brother, J. H. Williams. Derrick, History Fiji, p. 135.

arbitrator ignored by Boutwell, in a letter to the editor of the Sydney Morning Herald said, "We do not dispute the right of the American Commander to compel redress, nay, we admit it was his duty to do so, but it was a duty . . . he should have performed in a spirit of strict justice . . . Mr. William's statement of losses . . . ought not be received, but undergo a thorough investigation . . . there can be no doubt that the American government will disapprove of Commodore Boutwell's arbitrary proceedings."²⁷

In 1858, the U. S. corvette Vandalia, Commander Sinclair, arrived at Levuka to settle the Boutwell-fixed claims of 1855. Sinclair forced Thakombau to sign an agreement to pay a total of \$48,234 within one year. This the Fijian "King" knew he could not do, so he requested British consul Pritchard to prepare a formal deed of cession offering to cede Fiji to Great Britain under conditions, which included the payment of the American claims by Great Britain. This cession document was signed on October 12, 1858, and taken to London by Pritchard, who returned twelve months later unable to announce approval of the deed of cession.²⁸ Pritchard was concerned about American interests in Fiji, though he had no reason to assume that America had colonial ambitions. While the claims could have been used as the opening wedge for annexation proceedings, such action was not taken.

Boutwell's aggressive and antagonistic attitude toward Thakombau, the British residents, and missionaries was not expressive of official

²⁷ Calvert To Sydney Morning Herald, January 9, 1856; enclosed in Pritchettel to Seward, March 31, 1868, USDS: CD, Lauthala, Vol. IV.

²⁸ Derrick, History Fiji, p. 140.

American policy in Fiji. It is true that Boutwell had instructions to investigate the claims made by Williams and other American citizens, but this was all. Fiji was far removed from the hallowed halls of Congress in Washington. To stimulate interest in this far-off insular territory, during a period when the United States government was confronted with grave internal problems and open conflict, would have required a stronger and more influential personality than John Brown Williams. The periodic visits of the United States Navy, while lending support to American interests, as was true with the Williams claims, were not enough to create great interest in America for Fiji. In Fiji, there was no general desire for American protection, at least up to the period immediately following the American Civil War.

SAMOA

Official American interest in Samoa began with the 1839 survey made by Lt. Charles Wilkes, whose estimate of the value of the Samoan group was still being quoted forty years later. Wilkes had drawn up a trade treaty in 1839, with the foremost leading chief, Malietoa Tavita (David), that provided for the safety and good treatment of consuls, traders, and shipwrecked sailors. While these terms were to apply to all nations, the United States, as the initiator, was in a position to extend her influence throughout the group. In fact, during half of the last century, control of Samoa's destiny could have been obtained by the United States for the asking. As times, the control of Samoa was pressed upon the United States by native chiefs. The American government could have rationalized annexation simply on the basis of the desire to avoid conflict with other powers over an area of relatively slight importance.²⁹ This, how-

²⁹ Ryden, Samoa, p. XI in Introduction by John Bassett Moore.

ever, was not the case. The chief interest of the United States representatives in Samoa seemed to have centered about the commercial and strategic value of the harbor at Pago Pago, but this did not warrant a policy of political and territorial aggrandizement.

V.P. Chapin, the first American citizen to represent the American government in Samoa as consul-agent, reported in 1853, "In a commercial point of view these islands bid fair become of considerable importance, occupying the position they do in the Pacific, with a climate as mild and the soil as productive as any perhaps in the world, lying directly in the route and about equal distance between San Francisco and Australia, the two great El dorados [sic] of the Pacific."³⁰ Chapin had been in Samoa less than a week when he made this report, having arrived June 3, aboard the Hawaiian schooner Laurita. Pritchard, the British consul, delivered to Chapin the flag, seal and official documents of the consulate, the day he arrived. By December, Chapin had organized the consulate, appointed an American by the name of Gibbons as vice consul at Tutuila, and began the first regular reports ever made to the Department of State by a United States representative in Samoa.³¹

Two weeks after Chapin's appointment as consul at Apia, Franklin Pierce succeeded Millard Fillmore as President of the United States. For this or some other reason, Chapin was soon replaced by Dr. Aaron Van Camp, who arrived at Apia on April 12, 1854. In May, Van Camp appointed E. V. C. Ripley vice commercial agent for Tutuila, and in July he appointed Elisha L. Hamilton to the same position for Savai'i.³² Intimating that

³⁰ Chapin to Marcy, June 9, 1853, USDS:CD, Apia, Vol. 1.

³¹ Ryden, Samoa, pp. 25-26.

³² Ibid., p. 27.

the islands needed the guiding hand of a foreign power, Van Camp wrote, "the natives of these islands being at war among themselves, they have not as yet got sufficiently far advanced in civilization to select one of their number as ruler . . . the Samoan Islands have for a number of years been a place of resort for whale ships (mostly American)."³³ Van Camp's observations were not profound nor were his activities in behalf of American interests thorough. Captain Boutwell of the John Adams stopped at Apia on the way back to the United States after his extended visit to Fiji in 1855. In a dispatch to his superior, Commander William Mervine, Boutwell wrote, "the American commercial agent [Van Camp] is connected with others in trade, and being anxious to make money rapidly, I should judge, must give offense to others in the same business; and being so far removed from his government, without the power of applying to it often for instructions, and there being no law on the island to govern him, has made decisions in cases, it is believed, that are harsh to Americans as well as foreigners."³⁴

Van Camp had been in Samoa in 1852. His activities as consul indicate that his desire to return to Samoa in this capacity was colored by ulterior motives. It is not unlikely that he sought the consulship in order to take advantage of commercial opportunities which he had observed during his first visit.³⁵ His commercial pursuits, were not compatible with his responsibilities as American consul. A visitor to Apia in 1855 noted that in the American quarter "a certain Mr. Van Camp, who styled

³³ Ibid., p. 28.

³⁴ House Doc. 115, 34 Cong., 1 sess.

³⁵ Ryden, Samoa, p. 27.

himself American consul, kept things lively."³⁶ This observation is interesting in the light of Van Camp's sudden departure from Samoa aboard the U.S. frigate Independence in April 1856. It was alleged that he had illegally seized the cargo of a ship bound for Melbourne. Van Camp was succeeded by Jonathan S. Jenkins who had been appointed several months before, and arrived in Apia just six days after Van Camp's departure.³⁷

American consular agents in Samoa during the 1850's served but a few months before being replaced or resigning. The weighty responsibilities of the position, coupled with the fact that instructions and monetary compensation were seldom received, contributed to the brevity of tenure in office. Jenkins left Samoa in December 1856 just nine months after his arrival. His vice consul, Robert S. Swanston, served as interim consul until the arrival of John C. Dirickson in June 1858. Swanston described the problems of the consular position in a dispatch to Washington. He said, "there is no law and no government, and no remedy for wrong to an American citizen but in his consul . . . he is defacto magistrate, and enshrouded with judicial authority; he is called upon to settle disputes; to preserve order, to enforce justice, and to compel recompense from the wrongdoer." Dirickson resigned and left Apia in November 1859 after turning the consular property over to the British consul and former American consul, John C. Williams. There was no regular successor to Dirickson until 1864.³⁸

³⁷ Ryden, Samoa, p. 30.

³⁸ Ibid., pp. 31-33.

In spite of the fact that individual agents and consuls may have felt that their multiple duties placed upon them the responsibilities of a full-fledged diplomat, Washington certainly did not afford them this recognition. There is little conclusive evidence to support the hypothesis that the early American consuls or commercial agents in the Pacific were able to substantially influence policy in Washington toward annexations. They provided a reporting service which became largely statistical when it became apparent to them that the United States had no specific Pacific policy.

MISSIONARIES

Much has been written with regard to the influence of missionaries upon native populations throughout the Pacific Islands. The fact that the various missionary groups did help to establish peace and goodwill among native peoples is an important factor in the consideration of annexation proposals. When the time came for the serious consideration of annexation, the missionaries quite often played an active and even decisive part. Not only did they serve effectively as interpreters, but the successful missionaries held great sway in the formation of public opinion. There is evidence to indicate that in cases where the government of a missionary's native country effected the annexation, after the missionaries had had time to prepare native opinion to consider the conquest as propitious, annexation was forthcoming.³⁹ This was true because, in most cases, missionaries gave priority to the interests of their own country. In Ralatea, for example, the English missionary, John Williams said, with regard to the treaty promoted there by Captain Jones

³⁹ Koskinen, Missionary Influence, p. 22.

of the United States Navy, "the King and Chiefs applied for advice on so important a subject . . . I suggested a mode of procedure that appeared to me most conducive to the British interest."⁴⁰

There seems to be no question that missionary endeavors in the Pacific were a contributing factor in insular acquisition. The flag of a missionary station was more than symbol. Missionaries were recognized as the representatives of their country whether they had been officially appointed to represent their country or not. The absence of American missionaries in most Polynesian ports, placed the burden of establishing American prestige upon the consul. It is possible that American policy in Polynesia would have been more aggressive if American missionaries had extended their efforts beyond Hawaii at an earlier date. In 1852, Mormon missionaries did abortively raise the Star-spangled banner on the Isle of Anaa in the Society Islands. The French, however, quickly dispatched a man-of-war from Papeete to re-establish French claims to this island.⁴¹ This incident has been perpetuated because it was an unusual display of missionary nationalism. Excluding such isolated exceptions, missionary influence upon Pacific acquisition and annexation was subtle.

⁴⁰ See chapter I, footnote 3.

⁴¹ Koskinen, Missionary Influence, p. 231.

CHAPTER IV

AMERICANS CLAIM CORAL ISLETS

On May 26, 1856, Senator William H. Seward introduced in the Senate a bill sponsored by the American Guano Company. This bill, which became law on August 18, 1856, provided that "when any citizen or citizens of the United States may have discovered, or shall hereafter discover, a deposit of guano on any island, rock, or key not within lawful jurisdiction of any other government, shall take peaceable possession thereof and occupy the same, said island, rock, or key, may, at the discretion of the President of the United States be considered as appertaining to the United States . . . the President . . . is hereby authorized, at his discretion, to employ the land and naval forces of the United States, to protect the rights of said discoverer (s) or their assigns, as aforesaid."¹ The enactment of this guano bill provided opportunity for American citizens to claim coral islets, and in so doing to enjoy the protection of the United States government. With this assurance as protection for their subsequent investment, many Americans became involved in the guano trade.

The modern fertilizer industry is said to have begun with the discovery that nitrogen, phosphorus, and potash are the principle plant foods. This was announced by Justus von Liebig, whose conclusions were supported by two eminent English experimental agriculturalists, Sir John

¹ John Bassett Moore, Digest Of International Law (Washington, 1906), 6 Vols., 1, 556. Hereafter cited as Moore's Digest. Eliece Aiman, American Acquisitions and Development of Minor Pacific Islands (Chicago, 1944). Hereafter cited as Aiman, Am. Acquisitions. By Section 5577 of the Guano Act, August 18, 1856, the President was specifically authorized to use U.S. forces to protect the rights of the discoverer or heir of island.

Lawes and Sir Henry Gilbert, in 1840.² Following this discovery, it was soon known that guano, the excrement of sea birds, was rich in nitrogen, phosphorus, and a small amount of potassium. Deposits of this excrement had accumulated for centuries on desolate islets that were the breeding places for millions of birds that subsisted mainly on fish from the sea. Almost everything soluble had been leached from this bird guano, by water, leaving a highly concentrated calcareous phosphate worth about thirty dollars per ton in the United States in 1859.³ This gray, powdery substance was to be found in deposits that varied from a few inches to several feet in depth.

By the middle of the last century, fertilizer was in great demand for the increasingly depleted farm lands of the Southeastern part of the United States. Guano was first discovered in the Caribbean. Later, the first source in the Pacific was found on the Chincha Islands of Peru. In 1844, Samuel K. George, the American agent for the English Company, Gibbs and Company, was selling Peruvian guano through his Baltimore office at forty-seven dollars per ton.⁴ During the next fifteen years the demand for this type of fertilizer kept the price high. It was only natural, then, that the search for guano was extended to other areas when it became evident that American efforts to gain Peruvian

² C. H. Grattan, "Our Unknown Pacific Islands," Harper's Monthly Magazine, 182 (April 1941), 529. Hereafter cited as Grattan, "Unknown Islands."

³ James D. Hague, "Our Equatorial Islands," The Century Magazine, LXIV (September, 1902) 661. The author gives an interesting account on Pacific birds, also an excellent detailed map of the Central Pacific on p. 662.

⁴ Roy F. Nichols, Advance Agents of American Destiny (Philadelphia 1956), p. 158. Hereafter cited as Nichols, Advance Agents.

concessions were bound to fail. Reports that guano existed on isolated Pacific islands reached Alfred G. Benson, an interested New York merchant who had had an unfortunate experience in the guano trade in Peru.

The possibility that guano existed in the Pacific must have been known before this for the barren, equatorial bird islands of the central Pacific had often be sighted by whalers from Nantucket and New Bedford. They had landed on such islands in search of water and eggs. Though the whalers did not recognize the value of the guano, their reports, giving the locations and descriptions of new island discoveries, were invaluable to Benson and other guano speculators. An officer of a whaleship wrecked on Christmas Island in 1836, reported that, "an island so isolated in the great North Pacific and so dangerous to navigators may perhaps claim some little notice, on the score of humanity, if no other plea may be allowed to exist." He went on to describe the interior of the island as being covered by extensive plains of sand over a strata of black earth, but made no mention of the guano deposit that attracted several companies twenty years later.⁵ Reports such as this, however, provided enough information for aggressive individuals who were willing to endure the frustration and hardship that awaited them in the Pacific.

The Guano Act of 1856, gave President Pierce the power to acknowledge claims over guano islands discovered by American citizens. On this basis, Jarvis and New Nantucket, or Baker were annexed by a naval officer in 1858. An account of this annexation as given in the Pacific Commercial Advertiser in Honolulu, explained that Commodore Mervine of the U. S. frigate Independence, was ordered by the Secretary of the Navy

⁵ Nichols, Advance Agents. p. 174.

to take possession of Jarvis and New Nantucket (Baker) Islands in the name of the United States government, survey the same and bring back samples of guano. Mervine sailed from San Francisco on January 18, 1856, with George W. Benson, aboard. After a short sojourn at Honolulu, the Independence continued on to New Nantucket where Mervine circled the island but refused to let George Benson and his party land. Mervine referred to the island as the "El Dorado of the mercantile and agricultural interests. The delusion was transitory, he wrote the Secretary of the Navy, for on applying his eye to his telescope he made the most marvelous discovery of modern time, viz., that, 'the island was covered with bird-lime in a state of decomposition'. Had the telescope been turned around and used as a microscope, the commodore might have recognized the bird lime as guano of the purest kind."⁶

The Advertiser continued with the story of the failure of the Navy to recognize the vast guano deposits on Jarvis and Baker.⁷ A naval expedition to these islands was made by Commander Charles H. Davis in the St. Mary's. An account of his report as given in the New York Tribune, December 2, 1856, contained the following: "Commander Davis has sent the Navy Department complete surveys of Baker's and Jarvis Islands with full reports in regard to the alleged guano deposits, fully confirming Commodore Mervine's original statement, and showing

⁶ F. H. Tresillian, "Remarks on Christmas Island Institute," Hawaiian Spectator (Honolulu, 1838), I (July, 1838), 241. Tresillian was a surgeon of the English whaleship Briton that wrecked on the North East side of the island. The crew was rescued by American whaler Charles Frederic and landed on Kauai, May 23, 1837. See also Hawaiian Spectator, I (April 1838), 64, for a sketch of Christmas Island.

⁷ New Nantucket or Baker shall be referred to by the latter name unless a direct quotation uses the older name.

them to be utterly worthless." The Advertiser report concludes with a dispatch received by the Honolulu agent of the American Guano Company, G. P. Judd, from one of the directors of the company in New York. "The fact Captain Davis does not recognize the deposit as guano, because of the absence of that strong smell of ammonia, does not at all alter our opinion of its value as a fertilizer. The analysis proves that it is good; the experiments made with it also prove good; and if your son and Arthur Benson gave to us fair samples, and they were really from the island . . . then we are satisfied of the quality; and if they made no errors in the area and depth of the deposit, we are satisfied with the quantity."⁸

Guano in the Central Pacific was discovered, then, in spite of the Navy, for Baker and Jarvis Island became two of the most important guano islands. The Advertiser, in May 1859, made these interesting comments and a prediction.

The value of phosphatic guano, of the quality of that obtained at Jarvis Island, is now established as an article of commerce . . . and the demand for it will probably keep pace with shipments. It is this trade that now brings to our port every two weeks, these fine eastern clippers, and which has and will prove a lasting benefit to our commerce . . . Since the reputation of the phosphatic guano has been established, and sneers of the doubters silenced by the rapid sales of entire cargoes as quick as landed at New York, various enterprises have been set on foot . . . this trade is destined to become extensive and Honolulu must be the center of this operation.⁹

The Honolulu newspaper thereafter carried some news with regard to the guano trade in nearly every issue during the early years of this new

⁸ The Pacific Commercial Advertiser (Honolulu, Hawaii), January 28, 1858, p. 2. Hereafter cited as the Advertiser.

⁹ Advertiser, May 12, 1859.

industry. Testimonials attesting the value of American or island guano often appeared. A letter from Cambridge, Massachusetts dated November 15, 1858 [sic] stated, "From a small quantity of American guano I made tests of its fertilizing properties in comparison with other manures. It was better than Peruvian or bone dust--producing a large stalk, and more ears on the stalk. On some I had five ears matured."¹⁰ Such testimonials, although considered judiciously by the wary, did help to establish Pacific island guano.

The guano industry provided employment opportunity for laborers, many of whom were recruited in Honolulu. In 1860, the agent for the American Guano Company, G. P. Judd, advertised for forty laborers and received three hundred applications. "Guano engagements are very popular with the natives and probably a thousand laborers could be obtained here as readily as fifty," the Advertiser reported.¹¹ A description of loading and working guano gives reason to wonder how the industry was able to recruit any laborers at all. The entire operation was one big, arduous task. The ships were loaded from whale boats that brought the canvas bags of guano through the surf. This was an enormous task, as was the loading operation on shore. The powder had to be sifted from the rock and placed in bags. On some islands tram cars carried the bags to the beach. The captain of one guano ship, in a letter to his San Francisco agents, advised, "you should send down two rail-cars with iron wheels and axles and two mules. With these facilities you can ship one hundred tons of guano per day with a force of fifteen men . . . The

¹⁰ Ibid., July 22, 1858. This testimonial was signed, Jno. Berreon.

¹¹ Ibid., June 21, 1860.

quantity of guano here [Johnston] is large, and your natural advantages for loading ships are superior to any guano island within my knowledge."¹²

Such requests for supplies were also frequently received in Honolulu, which became the supply center for the guano islands. The supply ships maintained a fairly regular schedule of four visits per year. The Hawaiian vessels, Helen, Odd Fellow, Active, Kam V, and C.M. Ward, were all used for this service.¹³ A seaman's journal of the day made the following interesting report with regard to supplying the islands. "The brig Kam V . . . left Honolulu on July 15, with supplies for the Guano Companies at Jarvis, Phoenix, Enderbury, McKean's and Baker. At Baker, the ships, Kenilworth, Rival, and Stewart Lane had loaded and gone. The Sea Chief is loading and the George Green is waiting."¹⁴

The guano islands of the Central Pacific were of little importance, apart from their guano deposits, prior to the establishment of air transportation and cable communication systems across the Pacific. While the market for guano remained strong, however, the legal acquisition and retention of these islands became the basis for many court cases.

According to the Guano Act of 1856, the conditions of annexation were:

- "(1) The guano must be discovered by an American citizen. (2) The island must not be within the jurisdiction of any other government. (3) The island cannot be occupied by the citizens of any other country. (4)

¹² ibid., October 8, 1859. Letter from John Brown Jr., Captain of Ocean Belle to Fry and Willis, F., Johnston Islands, July 21, 1859.

¹³ Edwin H. Bryan, Jr., American Polynesia and the Hawaiian Chain (Honolulu, 1942), p. 42. Hereafter cited as Bryan, American Polynesia.

¹⁴ Samuel C. Damon, ed., The Friend, A Monthly Journal Devoted to Temperance, Seaman, Marine, and General Intelligence (Honolulu), September 1867, p. 86. Hereafter cited as The Friend.

The discoverer to take and keep peaceable possession in the name of the United States. (5) The discoverer to give notice of facts to State Department on his oath. (6) A notice with description giving latitude and longitude. (7) Evidence must be given to the State Department to show that the Island was not taken away from any other government or people."¹⁵

It was found that though the conditions for annexation appeared to be quite specific, they were subject to varied interpretations. In a decision reached in 1860 it was determined that the terms of the guano statute "were not complied with by the merely symbolic act of possession, but there must be actual, continuous and peaceable occupation of the islands."¹⁶ Evidence that this opinion was the official American policy may be found in a statement made many years later by Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes. He said, "It is the opinion of the Department that the discovery of lands unknown to civilization, even when coupled with formal taking of possession, does not support a valid claim to sovereignty unless the discovery is followed by actual settlement of the discovered island."¹⁷ An opinion printed in London, however, states that, "In the case of small islands used merely for the purpose of a particular business, such as catching fish or collecting guano, the presence of an official or two may be sufficient to establish control."¹⁸ Though this

¹⁵ Moore's Digest, I, 558.

¹⁶ Ibid., I, 561. J. S. Black, Secretary of State to Marshall, December 28, 1860.

¹⁷ Grattan, "Unknown Islands," p. 529.

¹⁸ M. F. Lindley, The Acquisition and Government of Backward Territory In International Law (London, 1926), p. 159. Hereafter cited as Lindley, Acquisition and Government.

opinion does not specifically imply actual settlement by the discoverer, both opinions herein quoted, stipulated occupation as a pre-requisite to sovereignty. This pattern had been generally followed for many years before these opinions were expressed.

The problems involved in the acquisition of coral islets under the Guano Act were nearly as multiple as the islands involved. Prior to 1880, bonds were filed for about seventy islands.¹⁹ Only forty-eight of those filed upon were subsequently recognized by Washington under the Act of 1856. Of these, forty-eight, fifteen are not known to exist, and at least three bear duplicate names.²⁰ Claimants, to be on the safe side, often listed every island appearing in the region on charts. A New York Tribune list of the guano islands in 1859 bore these editorial comments, "Arthur's Favorite and Farmer's Islands do not exist. Walker's, Sarah Ann, Samarong, and David's Islands are of doubtful existence. All of the above are laid down on charts . . . but probably none of them exist. Flints, Clarence, Duke of York, Rierson's and Humphrey's islands are all inhabited and possession of them cannot be taken by foreigners. Sydney island is covered by trees or woods. Christmas and Caroline . . . are known not to possess guano."²¹ Until 1879 the Department of State issued a certificate to the alleged discoverer of a guano deposit, Such a certificate was recognized by the Supreme Court of the United States as

¹⁹ Moore's Digest, I, 567. For lists of guano islands, New York Tribune, March 5, 1858; The Friend, April 20, 1859; J. D. Hague, American Journal of Science (September, 1862); E. H. Bryan, "What Were The Guano Islands", Paradise of the Pacific, September and October, 1939.

²⁰ Bryan, American Polynesia, p. 45.

²¹ Advertiser, May 12, 1859, "Guano Islands Discovered"; Correspondence from the New York Tribune.

having the effect of determining that the island appertained to the United States.²²

Another important facet of the acquisition of the guano islands by Americans was the problem of tenure of sovereignty. After the supply of guano was depleted, most companies simply abandoned an island, considering it to be worthless. As long as the island remained unoccupied, no problem existed. In some cases, however, the desire to retain or regain possession after abandonment, created a problem. The Department of State opinion with regard to this problem was that, "United States citizens who discover guano, or their assigns, are protected by this government to prosecution of their enterprise which extends only to appropriation and disposal of guano thereon."²³ Another opinion that tended to substantiate the idea that sovereignty and occupation are interrelated, specified that should a United States citizen discover guano on any islet not within the lawful jurisdiction of any government, and not occupied, he may take possession in the name of the United States at the discretion of the President. The discoverer may then be granted the exclusive right to remove the guano. Once this has been completed, the United States need not retain possession of the islet.²⁴

Of all the islands claimed by the Americans under the Guano Act, only about twenty had deposits of guano large enough for a profitable operation. Possibly by the best known of this group was Baker. One

²² Green Haywood Hackworth, Digest of International Law (Washington, 1940), I, 502. Hereafter cited as Hackworth, Digest.

²³ Ibid., p. 503.

²⁴ Lindley, Acquisition and Government, p.7.

mile long by one thousand five hundred yards wide, and about twenty feet high, Baker is located at $0^{\circ} 15'$ north latitude and 176° west longitude. Known as New Nantucket before 1821, Baker is reported to have been discovered by Captain Elisha Folger in the early 1800's. Before permanent occupation whalers used to leave messages on Baker in a covered box fastened to a post upright in the sand. Here, passing whalers might both find letters for themselves and leave letters for others. Michael Baker, a seasoned mariner from South Dartmouth, Massachusetts, took possession under the United States flag and gave the island his name in 1832.²⁵ Captain Davis of the St. Mary's also "took formal possession of the island in the name of the United States, [August 24, 1857] and deposited in the earth a declaration to that effect, executed on parchment and well protected."²⁶ G. P. Judd, agent for the American Guano Company, visited the island aboard the Hawaiian Schooner Liholiho in 1857.²⁷ Four years later, Judd's company received a certificate for Baker, and about the same size, was visited by the American whaler Oeno in 1821. Captain George Netcher visited the island in 1842 and again in 1852, when he took possession. In 1860 Howland was bonded by the United States Guano Company of New York.²⁸

The islands of Canton and Enderbury are located about 3 degrees below the equator and 171 degrees west longitude. The discoverer of

²⁵ Leff, Pacific Islets, p. 43.

²⁶ Hague, "Our Equatorial Islands", pp. 653, 661. Report to Secretary of the Navy, Senate Ex. Doc. No. 11, 35 Cong., 1 sess., (1858). The date Commander Davis took possession is given in Nichols, Advance Agents, p. 191.

²⁷ Bryan, American Polynesia, p. 42.

²⁸ Leff, Pacific Islets, p. 43.

Mary Balcout, or Canton, according to Wilkes, is unknown. Little was known of Enderbury before it was officially proclaimed a part of the domain of the Phoenix Guano Company, December 31, 1859. Flat and barren, both of these islands were worked by this Company. This same company also found guano deposits worth claiming on nearby McKean, and Phoenix islands.²⁹

To the north and east of Canton, located near the equator at 159° West Longitude, is Jarvis island. Though separated by nearly twelve hundred miles, Jarvis and Baker islands were often associated in reports and correspondence during the last century. Jarvis, a small island just slightly more than one mile wide by less than two miles long, is said to have been discovered by Captain Brown, master of the American whaler Eliza Francis, in 1821. Michael Baker visited Jarvis and Baker in 1835, and Commander Davis of the St. Mary's took formal possession for the United States in August, 1857.³⁰ The American Guano Company formally occupied Jarvis in 1861, though an agent of the company had started operations there as early as 1856.³¹ At both Jarvis and Baker, the removal of guano was extremely difficult, since neither had a safe anchorage. They were, however, the most important of all the islands acquired by American citizens under the Guano Act of 1856.³²

To the south and east, about midway between Jarvis and the Marquesas Islands, lie two small islands, Malden and Starbuck, claimed by Americans

²⁹ Ibid., p. 51, Nichols, Advance Agents, p. 195.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 44.

³¹ Nichols, Advance Agents, p. 190.

³² Hague, "Our Equatorial Islands", p. 659.

under the Guano Act. Guano on Malden was discovered by an American whaler in 1848 who sold the find to a company in Sydney, New South Wales. Later, the American claim to Malden collapsed in view of the presence of the Sydney firm.³³ Starbuck or Starve Island was discovered by William H. Wood of New Bedford in 1845 and later became a part of the huge Benson guano empire.³⁴ An interesting letter received from a sailor at Starbuck, shed light on the American operation on this island. He wrote, "I think they ought to have called this the island of Desolation; . . . It puts me in mind of a vast flat iceberg . . . The Kanakas have to launch surf-boats over and through great monstrous seas and load ships . . . There are only five white men and about one hundred kanakas . . . We are the only ship, of course, we feel rather lonely . . . The guano is not, at all, a bad stuff to work."³⁵ This description of some of the problems related to the removal of guano at Starbuck could very well have been written from any of the line or equatorial islands, for the problems at each were much the same.

North of the equator several islands, reaching northward toward the Hawaiian chain, were claimed by Americans. Christmas Island, one of the largest lagoon islands in the Pacific, lies due south of Hawaii and is one degree north of the equator. Bonded by the American Guano Company in 1859, Christmas, a few years later, was claimed by Great Britain. This was also true in the case of Starbuck, Fanning, Washington,

³³ Ward, British Policy, p. 161. Bryan, American Polynesia, p. 30.

³⁴ Nichols, Advance Agents, p. 233.

³⁵ Friend, May, 1873, p. 36; A letter from a sailor on the George Thompson at Starbuck, October, 1872.

and Palmyra.³⁶ The latter, for a brief period, was claimed by both the United States and the Hawaiian Kingdom. This was also true with Johnston island, located just six hundred miles south west of Hawaii. Discovered by Charles Johnston of the H.M.S. Cornwallis, Johnston island was visited by the American schooner Palestine in 1858. At this time, an American flag was planted and crosses erected with an inscription stating that the island was taken possession of "for the owners and charterers of the American schooner Palestine, March 19, 1858, James Buchanan, President."³⁷ The joint claims of both the United States and the Hawaiian Kingdom to this island will be a topic of future discussion.³⁸

Any study of American acquisitions under the Guano Act of 1856 immediately brings to light the activities of Alfred G. Benson and members of his family, who were so active in the early Pacific guano trade. Together, they built a vast Pacific empire centered, primarily, in two guano companies. It was partly under the influence of the Benson interests that the Guano Act was passed in the first place. The bill, introduced in the Senate by William H. Seward, May 26, 1856, was sponsored by the Benson-controlled American Guano Company.³⁹ Claims of this same company were responsible for the investigation made by Commander

³⁶ The status of Christmas Island is discussed in Lindley, Acquisition and Government; Hackworth, Digest, pp. 507-508. Beatrice Orent and Pauline Reinsch, "Sovereignty over the Islands in the Pacific", The American Journal of International Law, XXXV (July, 1941), 455-456. Hereafter cited as Orent, Sovereignty in Pacific; Ward, British Policy, p. 161.

³⁷ Aiman, American Acquisitions, p. 47.

³⁸ See page 64, this chapter.

³⁹ Nichols, Advance Agents, p. 184.

Davis of the St. Mary's in 1857. The orders of Commodore Mervine, commander of the Pacific Squadron, to Commander Davis stated that, "a claim has been made by an association styled the 'American Guano Company' to the proprietorship of these islands, and it is the intention of our government to protect this claim if ascertained to be well-founded and to exercise sovereignty over the islands themselves."⁴⁰

The American Guano Company was organized by Alfred G. Benson and Captain Edward W. Turner as a New York corporation in September 1855. Capitalized at one million dollars, divided into one hundred thousand shares of ten dollars each, the company made its headquarters at 39 South Street, New York City. Benson was elected president, Bertram H. Howell, vice president, and James S. Wyckoff, secretary and treasurer.⁴¹ Turner left San Francisco aboard the Kalima December 7, 1855, arriving at Jarvis early in January 1856. Here he built a house and left some evidence of occupation. It was on the basis of this claim that the Mervine expedition was dispatched by President Pierce. Two years later, Benson and Charles H. Judd, son of the newly appointed Honolulu agent of the company, took twenty-four Hawaiian laborers to Jarvis on the Hawaiian vessel, Liholiho. They also took possession of Howland and Baker islands in the name of the new company. Possession of Howland was established on February 5, 1857, "by erecting a house and pole, putting up an American flag and leaving various implements of business."⁴²

⁴⁰ Orent, Sovereignty in the Pacific, p. 457.

⁴¹ Nichols, Advance Agents, p. 176.

⁴² Robert D. King, Index to the Islands of the Territory of Hawaii (Honolulu, 1931), p. 24. Hereafter cited as King, Index.

Similar action was taken at Baker, where a building which was to be the official residence of the company, a square, two story house, with a cupola to serve as a lighthouse and flagstaff, was shipped around the Horn.⁴³ A report in a Honolulu newspaper told the story. "The American Guano Company in New York, . . . will dispatch in a few days the ship Mary Bradford with a large amount of new machinery for loading guano . . . besides the frames of a dwelling house and also of a storehouse, for the use of the company."⁴⁴

In July 1858 the American Guano Company sent their agent at Baker, Charles H. Judd, back to Howland to begin the digging of guano. While thus engaged he also visited other islands, taking possession of Palmyra, an atoll of fifty-three islets about nine hundred miles south of Hawaii. About this time, A. G. Benson broke with Turner, and organized the rival United States Guano Company, which was incorporated November 25, 1858. George W. Benson, a half-brother, who had purchased rights to a number of islands, became the secretary of the new company. In 1859 the Bensons sold the right to take guano from Howland, Malden, Washington, Starbuck, and others, to William H. Webb and the Boston firm of Glidden and Williams. Several of these islands had been purchased early in 1859, including forty-two islets from the Phoenix Guano Company. At least nine of these were never located.⁴⁵

The United States Guano Company and the American Guano Company carried on independent operations amid rivalry and schism, which developed

⁴³ Hague, "Our Equatorial Islands"; p. 669.

⁴⁴ Advertiser, May 12, 1859.

⁴⁵ Nichols, Advance Agents, p. 197; The Documentary structure of the Benson guano empire may be found on p. 233.

into a "guano war" on several occasions. During the Civil War years the State Department was bombarded with the claims and complaints of both companies. In addition to these two companies, other Americans had formed corporations for the purpose of removing guano from Pacific islands. A brief description of these companies during the first years of their operations was published in Honolulu in 1859. The Friend reported, "The progress of Science and agriculture has introduced guano as a new article of trade which hitherto was looked upon as utterly worthless . . . Three companies have entered extensively into the business. The company at Jarvis and Baker Islands takes the lead as yet . . . The second company is the 'United States Guano Company' claiming Malden's, Christmas, Howlands, Arthurs, and other islands too numerous to mention. This company . . . has one vessel now loading at some island in the South Pacific . . . A third company is the 'Phoenix Guano Company' . . . This company claims McKean's, Phoenix, Enderburg [sic] . . . Storm or Barren islands . . . there is still another company engaged in making arrangements for taking guano from Independence Island. Let now the farmers of the United States only send out reliable reports, that guano from these various islands answers the purpose, and they will be furnished with a full supply."⁴⁶

'So it was that Benson was surrounded by a second lot of competitors by 1860. The Phoenix Guano Company, organized by the C. A. Williams Company of New London, Connecticut, filed bonds for several islands. On December 31, 1859, Secretary of State Lewis Cass issued

⁴⁶ Friend, July 1859, pp. 52-53.

⁴⁷ Nichols, Advance Agents, p. 192.

a proclamation recognizing the rights of this company on Starve, or Starbuck, McKean's, Phoenix, and Enderbury Islands.⁴⁷ News about the activities of still another company, printed in the Pacific Commercial Advertiser in 1859 informed the reader that "the Pacific Guano Company, having received perfect title of Johnston Island from the United States Government is now . . . removing guano with great vigor . . . built a wharf 500 feet long with a railway on it . . . unlimited supply of the very best quality of guano . . . loading about 50 tons per day . . . force of white men . . . the agents, C.A. and H.F. Poor, are sending natives."⁴⁸ A sea captain, William H. Parker, with a lawyer, Richard F. Ryan and two speculators, Byxbee and Stoddard, incorporated the Pacific Guano Company June 9, 1858 and under the laws of California.⁴⁹ This company, the American Guano Company, and the Hawaiian Kingdom all laid claim to Johnston Island. This island, moreover, was not the only island that was claimed by the Hawaiian as well as by American interests.

Honolulu logically became the Pacific base of operations for the guano companies. The Hawaiian Government, therefore, had opportunity to view at first hand the rapid growth of this new industry. Several of the Kings' advisors advocated the expansion of the Hawaiian Kingdom to include the Pacific islands close enough to be considered rightfully within the Hawaiian sphere of interest. Expeditions to explore the Pacific for guano deposits did not, however, receive

⁴⁷ Nichols, Advance Agents, p. 192.

⁴⁸ Advertiser, October 8, 1859.

⁴⁹ Nichols, Advance Agents, p. 192.

popular support, at first. Ridicule and sarcasm could be found in Honolulu newspapers. The following statement appeared in the Advertiser in 1857, under the caption, "Another Guano Expedition:" "the schooner Manuokawai, under the command of Captain John Paty . . . will sail in about ten days. Should no guano be found, we would recommend Captain Paty to fill the vessel with a cargo of eggs, which might prove as profitable as the guano."⁵⁰ This same newspaper expressed humiliation and regret for the events leading up to and culminating in the proclaimed acquisition by Hawaii of several islands already claimed by the United States.

Johnston or Cornwallis Island had been claimed for the embryonic Pacific Guano Company by William H. Parker in the Palestine January 8, 1858. This company sent the Palestine back to Johnston for guano in 1859. When it arrived, July 22, the American flag, crosses and inscriptions that Parker had left there had been thrown down or destroyed.⁵¹ The editor of the Advertiser, in an editorial entitled "Wrongly Taken for Hawaiian Government," commented, that the King would necessarily be forced to recede and withdraw the proclamation which appeared in the same issue of this newspaper. The proclamation boldly proclaimed that, "whereas on the day, 14th of June, 1858, Cornwallis Island . . . /and/ on the 19th day of June, 1858, Kalama Island /both Johnston Island/ . . . were taken possession of with usual formalities by Samuel C. Allen, Esq., he being duly authorized to do so, in the name of Kamehameha IV, King of the Hawaiian Islands; therefore this is to give notice that the said Islands so taken possession of are henceforth to be considered and

⁵⁰ Advertiser, April 2, 1857, p. 2.

⁵¹ Aiman, American Acquisitions, p. 49.

respected as a part of the Dominion of the Kingdom of the Hawaiian Islands.¹¹ The editorial went on to say,

the above anonymous notice has been flying for several weeks at the mast head of the government journal, till within a few days when it was quietly withdrawn and the colors were struck . . . with one dash of the pen, the kingdom of Hawaii was extended from eight or nine hundred miles to the southwest, by the unceremonious annexation of a few square miles of guano deposit . . . We find on good authority, that the information received in the late mails demonstrate clearly that agents of this government have been innocently trespassing on territory of the United States . . . It will be remembered that when noting the return of the Kalama from Cornwallis July last, we said, 'it was probably the same island that had been visited by the Palestine.' This should have led the government to act with a little caution in assuming authority over newly discovered territory . . . the bubble has at length burst! The guano annexation scheme will become in history as famous as the South Sea scheme . . . As the affair now stands, it places this government in the rather awkward position of trespassing on American territory . . . Annexation of United States territory to Hawaii, vi et armis, is what the most visionary has never dared to think.

Commenting on the inability of the Kingdom to protect Hawaiian interests, the editorial went on to say, "the course of the Hawaiian government on this guano hunting, is characterized with the usual weaknesses of our ministers. We have already more territory than we can occupy or defend. Even if this government had been the original discoverer of the guano islands . . . it has no power to afford the slightest protection to any of its subjects who might choose to be at any outlay there in obtaining guano . . . let those nations who have the power to guarantee protection, undertake to extend their sovereignty by the annexing of guano islands to their territory."⁵²

Lt. J.M. Brooke, commander of the U.S.S. Fenimore Cooper, in a message to the Secretary of the Navy from Hong Kong, reported that they

⁵² Advertiser, September 30, 1858.

had visited Johnston Island on March 14, 1859. In his report Brooke wrote, ". . . [we were] boarded several miles from land by a boat sent by the superintendent, Captain A. D. Piper, appointed by the Pacific Guano Company, to make . . . such observation as would enable him to prepare in time to repel any attempt to trespass upon the islands. Taking the boat in tow, we beat up to an anchorage off the camp of Captain Piper, who, with several men, holds armed possession of the island."⁵³ Following Lt. Brooke's report, Attorney General Black stated the opinion that Hawaii had no claim to the islands, because on the date of the Royal Proclamation of Kamehameha IV, Johnston Island was in actual possession of American citizens holding in name and under the flag of the United States.⁵⁴ This official opinion given in behalf of the United States, the editorial comments in the leading Honolulu newspaper and the fact that Piper and company held armed possession of Johnston Island must have been responsible for the "quiet withdrawal" of the King's proclamation. There was no further attempt by the Hawaiian Kingdom to acquire this island, which from 1858 to 1869, was in actual, continuous, and exclusive possession of the Pacific Guano Company.⁵⁵ The Kingdom, did, however, lay claim to other islands, also claimed by citizens of the United States.

⁵³ John M. Brooke, Lt. Commanding, U.S.N. to the Honorable Isaac Toucey, Secretary of the Navy, Washington, D.C., Senate Doc., 36 Cong., 1 sess., "Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy." "D", p. 62. Aiman, Am. Acquisitions, p. 49.

⁵⁴ Penrose C. Morris, "How the Territory of Hawaii Grew and What Domain it Covers", 42 Annual Report of the Hawaiian Historical Society, (Honolulu, 1934), p. 15; Department of Justice, Official Opinions of the Attorneys-General of the United States, (Washington, 1869) IX, 364 ff.

⁵⁵ Aiman, American Acquisitions, p. 49.

Captain John Paty, commanding the Hawaiian ship Liholiho, reported to the Hawaiian government, February 12, 1857, that Baker Island had been "taken under the United States flag by A. G. Benson, agent of the American Guano Company."⁵⁶ Had he visited Palmyra island during his cruise he could have made the same report, based on a notice posted there by Gerrit P. Judd. The notice read, "Be it known to all people, that on the 19th day of October, A.D. 1859, the undersigned, Agent of the American Guano Company, landed from the brig Josephine and having discovered a deposit of guano thereon, doth, on this 20th day of October aforesaid, take formal possession of this island called Palmyra on behalf of the United States, and claims the same for said company."⁵⁷ Discovered in 1802 by Captain Sawle, master of the American ship, Palmyra, this island had been visited by Wilkes in the Porpoise during his official expedition. The American Guano Company filed bond for Palmyra in 1860.⁵⁸ All this was either unknown or ignored, by those in the Hawaiian government who proposed and carried out plans to annex the island and islets known as Palmyra.

A widely read Honolulu periodical made the following comment in 1857 with regard to Hawaiian Pacific acquisitions: ". . . the idea of the Hawaiian 'sand'drift' undertaking to assume possession of inferior 'sand'drifts' [sic], may seem strange, especially to strangers, but a sovereign power enjoys its rights, whatever its size may be; the great advantage possessed by the larger powers is that they can also maintain

⁵⁶ King, Index, p. 23.

⁵⁷ Leff, Pacific Islets, p. 31.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 31.

their privileges."⁵⁹ As herein inferred, the Hawaiian Kingdom proceeded to assume possession of Palmyra Island in 1862. On Wednesday, February 26 of that year, the Hawaiian Cabinet Council had met in the palace with King Kamehameha IV, presiding. Prince Lot Kamehameha, Minister of the Interior, read, according to the minutes of the meeting, a petition from one Zenas Bent and Mr. J. B. Wilkinson, requesting that the Island of Palmyra be considered a Hawaiian possession and placed under the Hawaiian flag. After some discussion, the King directed the Minister of the Interior to grant what the Petitioners had applied for. Consequently, on March 1, Prince Lot addressed the following message to Wilkinson and Bent.

"I am instructed . . . to inform you, that they /Cabinet Council/ consent to the taking of possession of the Island of Palmyra . . . as described by you in said memorial; for the purpose of increasing the trade and commerce of the Kingdom, as well as offering protection to the interests of the subjects. I have the honor to forward with this dispatch, the authority under the Royal Sign Manuel to Zenas Bent, Esq., to take possession of the above mentioned Island of Palmyra, and I beg to request that you will, after having executed the orders . . . report the fact to this Department."⁶⁰

Several days before the date of this message authorizing Wilkinson and Bent to proceed with their scheme, the Advertiser had reported, "the sloop Louisa has been purchased by J. Wilkinson, and is now being fitted for a Southern Expedition, under command of Captain Zenas Bent . . . we understand she will take possession of an island during her cruise."⁶¹

⁵⁹ The Polynesian (Honolulu), August 29, 1857.

⁶⁰ Edwin N. McClellan, "Under Three Flags; Palmyra Island," Paradise of the Pacific, 52, (February, 1940), 22. Hereafter referred to as McClellan, "Three Flags", see also Joseph F. Rock, Palmyra Island with a Description of its Flora. (Honolulu, 1916), p. 3-5.

⁶¹ Advertiser. February 27, 1862.

The Polynesian described the return of the Louisa, five months later, and added, "the cruise had extended to Palmyra Island, an uninhabited spot north of the equator, which was taken possession of in the name of His Majesty, Kamehameha IV."⁶² On June 16, 1862, the official proclamation of the King, declaring Palmyra to be a part of the Domain of the King of the Hawaiian Islands, was proclaimed to the citizens of the Kingdom. Ten days later an editorial in the Advertiser suggested, "if we are to set up a prior claim to the American Government, and are going to hold it, vi et armis, under the motto that 'might makes right', our Secretary of War had better call for a larger appropriation for his department, and order half a dozen Monitors. Nothing like being prepared for an emergency."⁶³ Bent, in his report dated June 16, had stated that he had erected a flagpole on Palmyra at the foot of which he buried a bottle containing this message. "This island is taken possession of by order of His Majesty King Kamehameha IV, for him and his successors on the Hawaiian Throne by the undersigned . . . this 15th day of April, 1862, Zenas Bent." He further said that he had left on the island one white man and four Hawaiians who were curing beche de mer.⁶⁴

The claim to Palmyra established by Bent for the Hawaiian Kingdom did not evaporate as in the case of Johnston Island. Captain Bent sold what he considered to be his personal interest in the island to J. B. Wilkinson, December 24, 1862. After Wilkinson's death, June 25, 1866,

⁶² Polynesian, June 21, 1862, quoted in McClellan, "Three Flags", p. 21.

⁶³ Advertiser, June 26, 1862.

⁶⁴ McClellan, "Three Flags", p. 21; Interior Department, Hawaiian Government, Book 7, p. 376.

the island came into the hands of the Pacific Navigation Company.⁶⁵ Palmyra remained, however, the only island outside of the original Hawaiian Kingdom, that definitely belonged to the Hawaiian sovereignty before annexation by the United States.⁶⁶

Midway Island was claimed for the United States by Captain N. C. Brooks, master of the Hawaiian bark Gambia, owned by B. F. Snow and flying the Hawaiian flag. Brooks sighted Midway July 5, 1859.⁶⁷ After finding a deposit of guano on the island, he took possession for the United States under the terms of the Guano Act. He dug a well and erected a flagpole to which he attached a notice that "Brooks Island and Shoal" was an American possession.⁶⁸ Brooks, suggested, in reporting his discovery, that the island might be used as a coaling station went unheeded until 1867. In that year, representatives of both the United States Navy and the Pacific Mail Steamship Company visited the island. The United States government sent Captain William Reynolds of the U.S.S. Lackawanna to take formal possession. Captain Reynolds reported that on August 28, "I . . . hoisted the national ensign and called all hands to witness the act of taking possession in the name of the United States."⁶⁹ He went on to say, "It is exceedingly gratifying to me to have been thus concerned in taking possession of the first

⁶⁵ Bryan, American Polynesia, p. 151.

⁶⁶ King, Index, p. 24.

⁶⁷ Senate Ex. Doc., No. 79, 40 Cong., 2 sess., "Reynolds Report", p. 6.

⁶⁸ Aiman, Am. Acquisitions, p. 32.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 33.

island ever added to the domain of the United States beyond our own shores, and I sincerely hope that this instance will by no means be the last of our insular annexations."⁷⁰

Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles, had directed that Reynolds proceed to Brookes island and take formal possession, at the suggestion of Allan McLane, President of the Pacific Mail and Steamship Company.⁷¹ Thus it was that the first fruit of American acquisition, the guano claims excepted, was acquired at the instance of commercial interests. Reynolds' hope that the acquisition of Midway would not be the last insular annexation, may be interpreted as an expression of the same expansive policy as that of Secretary of State William H. Seward. The Senate Naval Affairs Committee did not recommend that a Naval Station be established at Midway until January 1869 and this station was to be "for both political and commercial reasons."⁷² Before assuming that the acquisition of Midway was a part of the policy of expansionism that brought about the purchase of Alaska just seven weeks later, two facts must be remembered. The Gambia was not an American vessel engaged in an official expedition. The first Americans to occupy Midway were commissioned by the Pacific Mail and Steamship Company and it was this private concern that requested the navy to take formal possession of the island.

John Matthewman, Attorney-General for the Territory of Hawaii, in

⁷⁰ Senate Ex. Doc. No. 79, "Reynolds Report", Reynolds to Thatcher, September 30, 1867.

⁷¹ Ibid., app. B., McLane to Gideon Wells, New York, May 13, 1867; App. C, Wells to McLane, May 23, 1867; App. D, Welles to Thatcher, May 28, 1867.

⁷² Leff, Pacific Islets, p. 13.

an opinion given in 1923, stated that if the Kingdom of Hawaii ever had valid claim to Midway, -- which appeared unlikely, it was certainly abandoned. Hence the Territory of Hawaii succeeded to, and holds, no rights over those two islands. Midway.⁷³ In the joint resolution to provide for the annexation of Hawaii to the United States, the status of Midway Island, prior to annexation, is further clarified. "It has been a question whether Midway Island was acquired by Hawaii on July 5, 1859, and so is part of the Territory or was acquired by the United States independently on August 28, 1867. The latter was assumed in *Downes vs. Bidwell*, 182, U.S. 304."⁷⁴ While these two opinions appear to give conclusive evidence that Midway was never lawfully a part of the Hawaiian Kingdom, the fact that the Gambia was a Hawaiian vessel, led many people to believe otherwise, even though the master was an American citizen.

The several islands lying between the Hawaiian chain and Midway were subsequently claimed by the Hawaiian Kingdom. In 1856, Captain Paty of the schooner Manuokawai received instructions from the Hawaiian Department of the Interior to proceed to Bird and Necker Islands to "take possession of said islands in the name of His Majesty Kamehameha IV."⁷⁵ Paty was responsible for the annexing of these islands as well as Laysan, Lisianski, and several other islets in their vicinity. The official list of islands, shoals, and reefs in the Hawaiian Kingdom when annexation to the United States took place, included Gardner, Laysan, Lisianski, Ocean,

⁷³ A. P. Taylor, Islands of the Hawaiian Domain (Honolulu, 1931), p. 15. Hereafter cited as Taylor, Islands.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 6.

⁷⁵ Interior Department Files, Book 6, (Honolulu, 1856), p. 494a, December 16, 1856.

French Frigate Shoal, Laysan, Nihoa, Molokini, Necker, Pearl and Hermes, and Palmyra in addition to the Hawaiian chain. Midway and Johnston were not included.⁷⁶ In an Advertiser editorial of July 9, 1870, the following comments with regard to Hawaiian annexation were expressed: ". . . We still read in the geographies that the Hawaiian Islands are eight to ten in number . . . but it should not be forgotten that the Kingdom extends beyond the group known as the Hawaiian Islands. This additional domain has been acquired solely by the modus operandi known as annexation . . . Would it not be well for the Foreign Office to issue a list of all the islands of the Hawaiian Kingdom? Otherwise, some of the more distant and valuable may someday be gobbled up by avaricious Yankees or others, and our claim entirely ignored."⁷⁷ Such a list ultimately became necessary, but only to ascertain, precisely, the extent of the Kingdom when annexation by the United States took place twenty-eight years later.

⁷⁶ Taylor, Islands, p. 18. Statehood for Hawaii: Hearings Before The Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, U. S. Senate, 83 Cong., 1 and 2 sess., Pt. 2, June, July 1953, January, 1954.

⁷⁷ Advertiser, July 9, 1870, p. 2.

CHAPTER V

AN END TO INTRIGUE IN FIJI AND THE SOCIETY ISLANDS

FIJI

The question of American claims in Fiji was still not settled when United State consul John Brown Williams passed away, June 10, 1860.¹ His claims and all matters concerning the United States became the concern of his successor, Dr. Isaac Mills Brower, who became vice-consul when Brown died. Brower, a Southerner by birth, had been a naval surgeon and later a coffee planter, drifting to Fiji in 1859 where he pioneered in the cotton and sugar industries.² Soon after his appointment, Brower became busily engaged in the heretofore futile task of forcing Thakombau to accept responsibility for the American claims and to begin payment.

Thakombau's offer to cede Fiji Islands to Queen Victoria in October 1858 had been made after United States representatives had applied considerable pressure for the payment of the ten-year-old claim. This offer expressly stipulated that Great Britain should accept responsibility for the debt owed to the Americans. As consideration for the payment of this debt, Thakombau promised to convey to the crown two hundred thousand acres of land in fee simple.³ When it became apparent that Great Britain had rejected this opportunity for annexation, Brower took up the part of collector with considerable enthusiasm. In a message to Thakombau he said, ". . . the matter of cession Great Britain having

¹ Derrick, History of Fiji, p. 151.

² Ibid., p. 151n. A brief biographical sketch of Brower.

³ Ward, British Policy, p. 186.

failed to consummate [sic] as was desirable [sic], however, it at once devolves upon you in good faith to devise some other method of payment in compliance with the agreement and promise made to Captain Sinclair of the U.S.S. Vandalia in October 1858." Referring to the Civil War at home, Brower added, "It is the most ridiculous folly for you to assume that the United States Government, having internal dissensions [sic] to contend with at home, will be prevented from attending to her rights and the rights of her citizens abroad."⁴ In response to Brower's demand, Thakombau promised to begin payment. To assure that this would actually happen, Brower undertook to provide a way in which this could be done. In a dispatch to the State Department he explained, "I have had an interview with the Chief [Thakombau] and have made arrangements to supply him with casks in which to place the [coconut] oil with which he proposed to pay from time to time such amounts as may be in his power." Brower hastened to add, "A very serious obstacle presents itself, however, in the form of invasion from the Tongan Islands, to the successful prosecution of the work of payment. I have thought it my duty under the circumstances to address the King of Tonga . . . warning him against any interference with the present established and acknowledged government of Fiji which may result in the endangering of American interests."⁵

In compliance with Brower's program of payment through industry, Thakombau placed a "tabu" upon the coconuts in all parts of his dominion. Brower, at considerable cost, arranged for securing casks in which the coconut oil was to be placed. An invasion from the Tongan Islands,

⁴ Brower to Thakombau, September 30, 1862. USDS: CD, Lauthala, Vol. 4.

⁵ Brower to Seward, December 3, 1862, ibid.

however, still threatened to disrupt this plan for reparations. Brower, therefore, sent King George of Tonga this message. "If you permit the threats of invasion made by your agents and people in Fiji . . . to be further carried into effect and thereby prevent . . . the work of payment now fairly commenced . . . you will . . . be personally liable for the amount now held due from Fiji . . . The United States Government will not allow her interests to be interfered with, with impunity. You are warned in due time; a copy of this letter is forwarded to the President of the United States who is able and willing to protect the interests of his government in any and all quarters of the world."⁶ This expression of faith in the desire of the United States government to protect American interests abroad was probably a bluff on Brower's part, in an attempt to intimidate King George.

During the American Civil War no ships could be spared for a cruise in the Pacific. After the war the problems of reconstruction kept the United States government pre-occupied. Consequently, no American war-ships visited the Fiji Islands after the visit of the Vandalia in 1858, until 1867. The absence of periodic visits by men-of-war caused Brower to complain September 4, 1861, "with all due respect and humility, I would recommend either that this consulate be abolished or that it receive such protection from the government as will enable it to maintain a position of respectability among the people to whom it is accredited."⁷ Six weeks later, Brower further reported an incident that served to dramatize his plea for protection. "I now report that the consulate was

⁶ Brower to King George, December 31, 1862, ibid.

⁷ Brower to State Department, September 4, 1862, ibid.

entered in the night on the 14th of June last and the ensign of the United States stolen by a Fijian . . . the flag . . . was subjected to the indignity of being trailed on the ground and trampled upon and is now performing the dignified purpose of mosquito curtain to a bevy of black imps who congregate under its protecting influence nightly.⁸ The report of this incident probably received little notice in the Department of State, however, in view of the momentous events that were taking place in Tennessee and along the Mississippi. In the light of the western campaigns of the Civil War in the spring of 1862, Brower's plea for the protection of American interests in far off Fiji, went unheeded for several more years.

The long respite finally ended in the summer of 1867, when the U.S.S. Tuscarora arrived in Fiji and anchored at Levuka. Captain F. Stanley, had arrived with orders to collect the balance of the claims, but in so doing he was instructed not to use force. Brower had received the following message from Secretary of State Seward with regard to the forthcoming visit of the Tuscarora. ". . . while it is anticipated that the visit of a man-of-war, in addition to its general happy influence upon American interests in your quarter, may give considerable moral support to your efforts to complete the liquidation of the awards for damages to our citizens within such reasonable time as the ability of the Fijians may permit, you will report your proceedings in the premises without delay, awaiting instructions, however, before asking or encouraging any employment of actual force by the commander of the ship which may visit

⁸ October 15, 1861, ibid.

you, with a view to the collection of this indemnity.⁹

During the course of the negotiations that began soon after the Tuscarora arrived, Thakombau presented Stanley with a whale tooth for President Johnson, in return for which he wanted the United States to keep the Tongans out of Fiji. The State Department declined to accept the tooth under these conditions but kept it for lack of a way of returning it at the time.¹⁰ The agreement which Thakombau signed, after Captain Stanley remitted the accumulated interest of nearly \$20,000, states

that whereas Cakobau Thakombau, King of Fiji has and does hereby assume, admit as correct, and agree to pay unto the Government of the United States, or consul thereof to Fiji, as indemnity for injuries to, and destruction of property owned and belonging to citizens of the United States . . . the said sum of forty-three thousand, five hundred and sixty-four dollars and nineteen cents, in accordance with the following stipulation (\$43,564.19) to wit:

- 1st \$43,564.19 to be paid in four years from May 1, 1867.
- 2nd Paid in four equal installments of \$10,891 each.
- 3rd First installment paid on May 1, 1867.
- 4th Second installment one year from this date.
- 5th Security. The islands of Matuliki, Patiki, and Nairai of the Fiji group are hereby hypothecated. The islands not to be released until the payments are completed.

In case of default of payment of any installment on day due, the United States Government or consul may sell in fee simple the aforesaid islands and appropriate the proceeds of such sale to the payment in whole or part of such installment as may be due and unpaid.¹¹

Thakombau was not anxious to sign this agreement, recognizing his inability to meet the stringent requirements for regular payments. When he demurred, however, Stanley threatened to bombard Levuka township

⁹ Seward to Brower, (Washington), December 5, 1866, ibid.

¹⁰ Derrick, History of Fiji, p. 177; Brookes, International Rivalry, p. 307.

¹¹ Stanley indenture, June 12, 1867, USDS: CD, Lauthala, Vol. IV.

contrary to his orders not to use force. Under these circumstances Thakombau signed the document.¹² In a dispatch to the State Department shortly after the signing of this document, Brower commented, "I sincerely trust that when the 24th of July, A. D. 1869 arrives, I shall have the pleasure to report full payment of the balance of our indemnity claim. I am not, however, without some fear to the contrary."¹³ In so stating, Brower was undoubtedly referring to his lack of confidence in Thakombau's ability to pay.

In less than six months, thereafter, Brower attempted to resign as consul and took it upon himself to appoint a successor. A dispatch signed by both Brower and his chosen successor, dated December 1, 1867, reads, "We certify that on the 30th day of November, 1867, the services of J. M. Brower ceased and . . . the services of Kintziag Pritchettel commenced the day following."¹⁴ This change was not approved in Washington, and in another six months Brower was reporting to the State Department, "Received your letter stating that the President revoked the commission of K. Pritchettel with instructions to turn over consul to predecessor Brower."¹⁵ Thus it was that Brower continued to serve as consul. He was no longer the official representative of the United States when the claims were terminated, but he firmly pursued the issue until he was replaced in 1869.¹⁶

¹² Derrick, History of Fiji, p. 177.

¹³ Brower to State Department, July, 1868, USDS: CD, Lauthala, Vol. IV.

¹⁴ December 1, 1867, ibid.

¹⁵ Brower to Seward, July 3, 1868, ibid.

¹⁶ Derrick, History of Fiji, p. 193n.

As the time for Thakombau to make payment on the American claims approached, it became obvious that he would not be able to pay. Under these conditions on May 23, 1868, the Chief signed an agreement with a Polynesian Company, which had been organized in 1867 by a group of Melbourne businessmen, one of whom was General Latham, United States consul at that city. This company agreed to pay the American claims in return for two hundred thousand acres of land, together with trading and banking rights in Fiji. Thakombau signed the company's charter only to withdraw his consent a short time later. This turn-about was prompted by John B. Thurston, the acting British consul, and Commodore Lambert of the H.M.S. Challenger, who alleged that Thakombau had promised far more than was his to give.¹⁷ A second charter, that had the approval of Commodore Lambert, was signed by Thakombau in July, 1868, over the protests of Thurston. Brower had signed a separate agreement with the company that guaranteed payment of the claims.¹⁸

Shortly before the Republicans met in Chicago to select Ulysses S. Grant as a candidate for the Presidency of the United States for the first time, another group convened in the convention city. Compared to the Republican Convention, the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church was a rather sedate gathering, free from political intrigue. A delegate representing the London Methodist Missionary Society, brought with him a rather significant message from James Calvert, a retired Fijian missionary, on the subject of American claims in Fiji. The

¹⁷ ibid., pp. 178-179.

¹⁸ Brookes, International Rivalry, p. 306. Brower to Seward, October 16, 1868, USDS: CD, Lauthala, Vol. IV.

message, with the support of this influential church body, was sent to President Johnson, who referred the letter to the Bureau of Claims.¹⁹ Calvert had addressed a similar message to Secretary of State Marcy while in Fiji in 1856.²⁰ He now asked the American Government to reconsider the claims. It is quite possible that the Calvert letter was the prime factor in prompting the President to take action with regard to the claims.²¹

In August 1868 the Bureau of Claims gave an opinion that the original investigation of Commander Boutwell in 1855 had been hasty, and concluded that the promise to pay had been made by force. The damages awarded to the late consul, Williams, were said to be three times as much as they should be. Commenting on the three islands mortgaged by Thakombau, the Bureau examiner recommended that Congress authorize a new agreement to be made rather than take or sell the islands. It was further suggested that a re-examination of the claims be made.²²

A new inquiry into the Fiji claims was consequently made by Captain Truxton aboard the U.S.S. Jamestown at Levuka in October, 1869. Truxton wrote to Thakombau, informing him that

Whereas the Government of the United States of America is fully determined to protect its citizens . . . it is equally determined to extend to all others full and ample justice.

¹⁹ Brookes, International Rivalry, p. 306. Brower to Seward, October 16, 1868, USDS: CD, Lauthala, Vol. IV.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 236. Calvert to Marcy, January 1, 1856, enclosed in Bishop to Marcy, May 2, 1856, USDS: CD, Lauthala, Vol. II.

²¹ Derrick, History of Fiji, p. 181.

²² Memorandum by Bureau of Claims, August 14, 1868, USDS: CD, Lauthala, Vol. IV; Brookes, International Rivalry, p. 307; Captain Boutwell was dismissed from the Navy in 1861.

I am fully authorized by my Government to investigate and settle all unadjusted claims either of long standing or of more recent date.²³

Thakombau complied with Truxton's request that he attend a Court of Inquiry. The court confirmed all claims except that of John B. Williams. With regard to this claim the court reached the same decision as that recommended by the Bureau of Claims. Captain Truxton observed that the Polynesian Company had assumed responsibility for full payment and concluded that they should be allowed to meet this obligation. The final payment of the American Claims was made by this company in August 1870.²⁴

The ever-increasing bill for American claims had been before Thakombau for nearly twenty-one years. The final payment of the claims eliminated a major reason for American interest in Fiji at a time when the pre-eminence of British interests was obvious. Without the claims at stake, it was no longer necessary for the United States to afford Thakombau recognition as King of all Fiji. American willingness to call Thakombau king was one of the strongest supports he had had to the throne. With no positive reason for continuing the recognition of Thakombau, American interest in Fiji was no longer dramatized by the visits of war ships and high level conferences. The growing number of American planters, merchants, and traders, however, remained as evidence that American interests in Fiji continued to exist.

The possibility of the withdrawal of United States support of Thakombau gave rise to expressions of fear that the interests of the white

²³ Derrick, History of Fiji, p. 182; Truxton's reports Robeson to Fish, February 9, 1870, USDS: CB, Lauthala, Vol. IV.

²⁴ Brookes, International Rivalry, p. 365.

residents would suffer. This segment of the population expressed a desire for either an independent Fiji or annexation by the United States or Great Britain. The formation of an independent government, protected by the United States, was suggested in a pamphlet entitled, "Some Settlers in Fiji to the White Residents in Fiji." The authors of the pamphlet proposed that a Fijian Government be established "as an independency", relying for assistance on American willingness to protect "any self-governed community professing the same principles of liberty and justice which are respected in the United States."²⁵ While such an arrangement would not necessarily require outright annexation, there were others who advocated that such action should be taken immediately.

In August 1869 R. Beckwith Leefe, who, in 1873 became the Warden of the Ra district on the North coast of Viti Levu, notified the British Foreign Office that "petition after petition is being signed to the Government of the United States from men of all shades of opinion and nationality to take these islands; the British sign because they very justly imagine that they are totally uncared for by their own government, and that it is useless to seek protection from that quarter; men of other nations, because they think the United States most likely to interfere."²⁶ It is evident that the writer was discouraged, feeling that he and his nationals had been abandoned by their government. The signing of the petition or petitions was, at least in part, a result of this general feeling of dismay.

²⁵ Ward, British Policy, pp. 206-207.

²⁶ Leefe to Belmore, August 17, 1869, enclosed in Rogers to Hamond, February 9, 1870, BPRO: FO 58/127.

The Fiji Times published at Levuka, Ovalau, announced, on September 4, 1869, that a petition to the President of the United States had been signed by nearly one hundred people. The Times reported,

A petition to the President of the United States has been prepared and signed by upwards of one hundred of principal residents in the Fiji group praying that the protection of the United States Government may be extended over the 'Local Self-Government of Fiji'. The United States Consul here Brower has expressed a hope that the boon asked for may be granted, and certified to his recognition, amongst the numbers of petitioners, men of respectability and property, who are bonafide residents of the country, likely to have the general good of Fiji at heart. It is, we believe, the intention of the movers in the matter to get the petition extensively signed, both in Sydney and Melbourne and then send it to its destination. The Vunivalu Thakombau has likewise expressed approval of the movement and intends to address the American government in support of the prayers of the petition.²⁷

Brower's approval of the petition, as reported by the Times, is understandable. Brower had been a planter since his arrival in Fiji in 1859. By 1870, he had developed a sugar plantation on Makaya Island. Annexation by the United States would have served as protection for his interests. Brower felt, moreover, that Thakombau and the majority of the white population favored American annexation.

Under the banner, 'British Citizens Petition United States for Protectorate', the Fiji Times, May 7, 1870, carried a report from the Melbourne Standard of December 29, 1869, which said,

. . . white settlers in the Fiji Islands, three-fourths of whom are British subjects, after having in vain solicited the protection of England, have finally resolved to petition the government of the United States to take them into the American fold. The petition, which we publish elsewhere is to the effect that the residents have begun to feel the want of the protection of some powerful nation, as well as for the purpose of maintaining their position with the natives

²⁷ Enclosure No. 1 to Earl of Belmore's, November 5, 1869, Dispatch No. 181, ibid.

authorities as for outward security in their trade and commerce. It points out that the excitement and doubt under which residents labor, consequent on the rival projects of annexation on the part of France, Prussia, and the United States, have tended materially to retard their progress; that the connection already maintained to some extent between the American Government and the native King Thakombau has been very advantageous to the latter in helping him to keep down native disturbances; that the geographical position of the islands, situated as they are in the highway between California and Australia, renders them valuable navy and coaling stations in American interests; that the islands, themselves are highly productive and blessed with an 'exquisite climate' forming a most desirous residence for Europeans.

The American consul at the Fijis, in acknowledging the receipt of this petition, expressed hope, which may be accepted as an indication of the answer which the petitioners will receive, that the American Government will be induced to consent to the annexation in the interests of the peace and the commercial, material welfare of the country. We can have very little doubt indeed that the United States, who know the value of these islands, if we do not, and who are just beginning to form such another colonial empire as that which England is neglecting and breaking up, will accede to the prayer of the settlers of Fiji. Should they do so, the consequences to that part of the British empire which lies in the South Pacific will be serious. If there is any value at all in such dependencies--if it is material to a great country, and especially a great naval power, to have a station for its ships and its commerce in a quarter of the world which is by-and-by, to be one of the principle hiways [sic] of the maritime nations, then the importance of such a possession as this can scarcely be over estimated.

Expressing great concern over the possibility of American interference in the British South Pacific, the report continued, "To the colonists of Australia, and of New Zealand at least, the establishment of a great American outpost, so near their shores cannot but be viewed with considerable anxiety as affecting their political and commercial position." Expressing a plea for recognition by England of her interests in Fiji, the Standard concluded, "Is it possible that their [Australia, New Zealand] anxiety can find no echo in England? Have we really arrived at the point in our history when it becomes no longer an object of national

ambition to extend our bounds? Is it certain that we shall hold even what we have, if we turn away from the path of empire--and not only turn away from it, but put our rivals in our place?"²⁸ This rather impassioned bit of reasoning had little effect, at the moment, on the British Foreign office.

The petition was subsequently forwarded in September 1869 by the United States vice-consul at Levuka to the American consul general at Melbourne. In this city and Sydney, forty more signatures were added.²⁹ A reply to this petition for American annexation was sent by the State Department in October 1870. The reply stated that "although President Grant was sensible of the compliment implied in the invitation to extend a protectorate over Fiji, he was constrained to decline it as incompatible with the national interests committed to his charge."³⁰ The American Government thus announced that it had no intention of assuming a protectorate over Fiji.

It now remained for Great Britain to either acquiesce in or refuse to acknowledge the pleas of British citizens in Fiji. Lord Granville had stated that there would be "more disadvantage in Great Britain taking the responsibility of the government of Fiji than the risk of the United States assuming the Protectorate."³¹ This assessment of American

²⁸ Fiji Times, May 7, 1870, enclosed in Rogers to FO, February 26, 1870, ibid.

²⁹ Derrick, History of Fiji, p. 193.

³⁰ Fish to Brower, October 12, 1870, USDS, Dispatches to Consuls, Vol. 60. Brookes, International Rivalry, p. 365.

³¹ J. M. Callahan, American Relations in the Pacific and Far East, (Baltimore, 1901), p. 70. G. H. Scholefield, The Pacific; Past and Future, pp. 84-86.

policy proved to be quite accurate. The threat of American intervention apparently did not disturb the Colonial Office in the least. Four years later, despite the apparent indifference shown in 1870, British imperialism accepted Fiji as worthy of annexation, and a new flag was raised over the islands on October 10, 1874.³²

THE SOCIETY ISLANDS

American interest in the islands of the South-Central Pacific seemed to subside with the passing of the heyday of the whalers. Papeete, the most important port for the whalers in the Society Islands, was too far South to become a vital link in shipping between San Francisco and Australasian ports. Foreign residents, however, some of whom were American citizens, continued to reside in this and other ports in the Societies, in spite of the decline in trade.

Horace Hawes, United States consul-agent in Tahiti, reported that nearly five hundred foreigners were residing on this island in 1848. In addition to Tahiti and Moorea, the islands of Raiatea, Tahaa, and Huahine in the Leeward group had a combined foreign population of about sixty-five. Hawes did not indicate in his report how many of the foreign residents were American, however, he did say, "many of our citizens are residing and doing business upon numerous islands within this consulate, some of which have no regular form of government that could always be depended upon to protect them."³³ There was no great concern in Washington for these citizens, nor was the government inclined to protect their interests. This apathetic attitude of the United States

³² Brookes, International Rivalry, p. 392.

³³ Hawes to Buchanan, November 21, 1848, USDS: CD, Tahiti, Vol. 11.

toward the Society Islands became particularly apparent when the State Department failed to even reply to Henry Omer's proposal for the annexation of Raiatea and Tahaa in 1858.³⁴

Though the United States continued to appoint a consul-agent for Tahiti and the surrounding islands, by 1870 there was a general acquiescence toward the French absorption of interests in these islands as well as in the Tuamotus and the Marquesas Islands.

³⁴ See p. 33, Chapter III.

CHAPTER VI

PRESSURES FOR PROTECTION AND ANNEXATION IN SAMOA

In considering American interest in the major Polynesian island groups south of Hawaii, the contacts of American citizens with Samoa between 1842 and 1872 were not significant. The consul-agents who represented the United States during most of this period confined their activities, for the most part, to the routine reporting of shipping and other commercial activities. Even in this area they found very little to communicate. The picture changed rather abruptly, however, in 1872. Events which resulted in a treaty in 1878, a joint protectorate in 1889, and finally, annexation in 1899, developed quite rapidly after the visit of Commander Robert W. Meade in the U.S.S. Narragansett in 1872.

Appointments to serve as commercial agent in Samoa had been given to one Englishman and three Americans between 1839 and 1856. In 1856 alone, four men served for brief periods. V. P. Chapin, who had succeeded Aaron Van Camp in 1856, was followed by Norman W. Stearns, Jonathan S. Jenkins, and Robert S. Swanston during the same year. James C. Dirickson was appointed in 1857 and served for two years. From 1859 to 1864 the United States had no official representative in Samoa. Considering the number of American residents in the group and the average number of vessels calling annually, it may be concluded that a consul or commercial agent was not needed. In 1871, only fifteen American citizens were reported to be living in Samoa, and there is no reason to believe that there were any more than this during the previous decade.¹ The entire foreign population in 1855 was approximately two hundred, of which only

¹ Masterman, International Rivalry, p. 106.

about fifty resided in Apia.² The average number of American vessels calling annually at Samoan ports from 1860 to 1870 was only seven, as compared to twenty-nine British, and forty-two German ships.³ This was a period of grave concern in Washington for the preservation of the Union. America was looking inward, not outward at distant specks in the broad Pacific.

The appointment of Jonas M. Coe as Commercial Agent at Apia was made by the Lincoln Administration on March 9, 1864. He rendered continuous service in this capacity for eleven years. Coe had been in Samoa for nearly twenty years prior to his appointment, yet he apparently had little political influence in the islands.⁴ The State Department policy with regard to far-flung minor outposts did not strengthen Coe's position. He considered himself quite helpless. In 1869, he wrote to the State Department, reminding Secretary Fish that no American warship had been at Apia since Commodore Mervine had visited the islands in the Independence in 1856.⁵ Coe felt justified, therefore, in requesting that a national vessel be sent immediately to protect the interests of American citizens. In response to this request, the U.S.S. Kearsarge arrived in July, 1869, to render, for less than a week, the support that Coe had requested. This short visit may have enhanced Coe's position momentarily. The fact, however, that Coe had no authority with respect to judicial

² Ryden, Samoa, p. 29.

³ Masterman, International Rivalry, p. 106.

⁴ Brookes, International Rivalry, p. 291; Ryden, Samoa, p. 33.

⁵ Coe to State Department, January 25, 1869, USDS: CD, Vol. III; Ryden, Samoa, p. 38.

matters and virtually no interests to protect, caused him to be considered quite unimportant, locally.

In 1867, Secretary of State Seward had explained to Coe in a dispatch, that with respect to criminal and civil cases, "the Executive Department of the government is compelled to leave you, where the Legislative Department has, without definite instructions as to your duty, which in this respect is that of an American citizen acting on his private responsibility, rather than that of an agent of the Government."⁶ Whatever Coe's reaction to this message might have been, he nevertheless remained in service. Within a few years he was to observe a sharp increase in American commercial and political interests in the islands.

The strategic location of the Samoan Islands, lying in the route from San Francisco to Australasian ports, and the excellent harbor of Pago Pago, were the principal reasons for American interests in Samoa by 1870. These interests were expanded through the efforts of two individuals, W. H. Webb and James B. M. Stewart. Webb was primarily interested in Pago Pago as a stopping place for his projected steamship line, which was to ply between San Francisco and Australia. Stewart's interest was centered in land speculation through his Central Polynesian Land and Commercial Company.

Before and during the Civil War William H. Webb of New York, a shipbuilder and operator, became interested in the guano trade in the central Pacific. In addition to this, he operated steamers on the Atlantic and visualized the day when steamers would cross the Pacific.

⁶ Seward to Coe, March 23, 1867, USDS, Dispatches to Consuls, Vol. 45; Brookes, International Rivalry, p. 290.

By 1869 Webb was ready to take action that would make his dream of a Pacific steamship line a reality. His attempt to get a government subsidy on the basis that his steamers would carry the mails, failed to gain the approval of Congress even though the Grant Administration showed interest in his plans. The New Zealand government, however, offered a subsidy to Webb in 1870, and he started operations the next year as the United States, New Zealand, and Australian Mail Steamship Line.⁷

In 1871, Webb sent his Honolulu agent, Captain E. Wakeman, to Samoa to investigate the possibility of establishing a coaling station there. Wakeman arrived at Pago Pago in August where he remained for about a week. Enthusiastic about the harbor there he wrote, "I found myself in the most perfectly land-locked harbor that exists in the Pacific Ocean."⁸ Continuing on to Upolu, Wakeman reported that conditions in general were favorable for the extension of American interests in Samoa. With regard to the native population he said,

as every man is a land owner, he is perfectly independent, but I have no doubt that in a short time like the Sandwich Islanders they would readily apply themselves to habits of industry. In the meantime good labor can be obtained from adjacent islands and a few Sandwich Islanders would soon teach them how to work. Chinamen would be invaluable here. I know of no other island Upolu with the same form of government which all the chiefs are willing and desirous of ceding to the Americans, which would in that event be so valuable. From its commanding position in mid Pacific, with the control of commerce of all the islands which are contiguous to this point, with Australia and New Zealand at their door to supply with sugar, coffee . . . no other group affords equal facility for a naval station as well as a coal depot for steamers

⁷ Ryden, Samoa, p. 46; Brookes, International Rivalry, p. 318. Webb made application for a subsidy to the 41 Cong., 3 sess., Dec., 1870.

⁸ House Executive Document, No. 161, 44 Cong., 1 sess., Sept. 20, 1871.

with a most lucrative and extensive commercial enterprise. Of the hundred and fifty Europeans, all told, upon this island, they are all strongly in favor of having American law established over the islands.⁹

Wakeman's enthusiasm for a coaling station and for the possibility of establishing a protectorate, was made in the light of a similar suggestion made by Theodor Weber, consul for the North German Federation, for the establishment of a German protectorate over Samoa. Both Wakeman and Coe were aware of this and made mention of Weber's plan in their respective reports.¹⁰ Coe sent a dispatch to Washington August 30, in which he described Weber's action. This message was sent on to George Bancroft, United States Minister to Germany. Bancroft, after inquiry, denied that Germany was interested in expansion in the South Pacific.¹¹ Weber's and Wakeman's suggestions however marked the beginning of the development of new diplomatic complications at Samoa.

On his way back to the United States Wakeman stopped at Honolulu where he met with Henry A. Peirce, United States Minister to Hawaii, and Commander Robert W. Meade of the U.S.S. Marragansett. At the request of Admiral J. A. Winslow, Commander of the U.S. Pacific Fleet, in Honolulu, Peirce composed a letter to Commander Meade explaining the Admiral's order for Meade to proceed to Samoa and locate a coaling depot there. It should be remembered, at this point, that such a coaling depot would be used by Webb's vessels. This was the specific reason for Wakeman's visit to Samoa. Since the Navy Department had not given

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 10.

¹¹ Ryden, Samoa, p. 52.

Admiral Winslow orders to send the Narragansett to Pago Pago, it is possible that Meade's mission originated in Honolulu after Wakeman had talked to Peirce.¹²

Judging from Minister Peirce's interest in Samoa, he should be counted among those who championed a policy of expansion in the Pacific. The letter which he wrote, as directed by Admiral Winslow, is further indication that this is true. The portion relating to Samoa reads,

It is of great importance to the future interest of our country in the South Pacific, and I may say in this Hemisphere that you should proceed as soon as possible, even before visiting Micronesia, to the Navigator Islands for the purpose of promoting by all legal and proper means, American interests and enterprises present and contemplated at that group . . . In view of the future domination of the United States in the North and South Pacific Oceans, it is very important that the Navigator Islands should be under American control--ruling through native authorities. Captain E. Wakeman an American, recently arrived from the Navigators, having informed you of matters political and commercial, relating to those valuable islands, it is unnecessary for me to dilate thereon. You will no doubt take such action there, for the protection and promotion of American interests as may seem to you just and proper. A treaty or convention if made by you with acknowledged, legitimate rulers of the Navigators or Samoan Archipelago, or with those of the respective islands composing it--granting to citizens of the United States all proper rights and privileges, would no doubt receive the approval of our Government. If otherwise, time would be gained by such treaty--people of other nationalities or their governments, would be anticipated in present designs in regard to those islands and our own citizens in the meanwhile, enabled to secure by purchase from the native authorities coaling stations, harbours, lands, and agricultural tracts. In my judgment the United States Government is not prepared to accept sovereignty of the islands in question--nor to rule them by a Protectorate government.¹³

Before leaving Honolulu for Samoa, Commander Meade sent a letter to Secretary of the Navy Robeson explaining that ". . . as important Ameri-

¹² Ibid., pp. 59, 67.

¹³ Ibid., pp. 60-61 Peirce to Fish, January 22 1872, received February 26, enclosing despatch Peirce to Meade, January 19, 1872, USDS: Dispatches Hawaii Vol. 14, No. 136.

can interests are at stake at Tutuila in the Navigator Islands, I shall . . . proceed thither and survey the harbor of Pago Pago and locate a coal depot for American steamers. I think some kind of treaty with native chiefs will be necessary to forestall foreign influence which is at present very active in this matter seeking to secure the harbor . . . with the Department's telegram before me, my judgment advises my going to the Navigators and securing a foot-hold for American citizens."¹⁴

There seems to be no question, in view of the instructions given to Meade that his primary mission was to negotiate a treaty in Samoa, for the benefit of the Webb interests.

Meade arrived at Pago Pago on February 14, 1872, and proceeded to draw up an agreement with Chief Mauga almost immediately. Thus protected, Meade went on to Apia and then returned to draw up formal commercial regulations with Mauga. These regulations, which were signed by both Meade and Mauga, showed special consideration for Webb and Company. Article Three provided that "Every vessel entering Pago Pago shall pay a port charge to the Chief, to be regulated by agreement between the Chief, the Agent of the California and Australia Steamship Company and the Foreign Consuls. Pilots shall be appointed by the same persons. The Agent of the Steamship Company to be the Pilot Commissioner ex officio, and the charge for pilotage for men-of-war and merchant vessels to be \$1.00 per foot of draft and \$1.00 per day for detention on board . . ."¹⁵

Not only did the regulations give preference to the Webb interests, but

¹⁴ Commander's Letters January-April, 1872, Navy Department, p. 51, Meade to Robeson, Honolulu, January 21, 1872, received February 29, 1872.

¹⁵ House Executive Doc., No. 161, 44 Cong. 1 sess., enclosure A, Meade to Robeson March 12, 1872.

Meade had implied a promise of protection. His agreement with Mauga, made before going to Apia, stated that in return for the "friendship and protection of the great government of the United States," the United States was to have "the exclusive privilege of establishing . . . a naval station for the use and convenience of the vessels of the United States Government."¹⁶ It was this implied promise of protection that defeated the ratification of the Meade treaty.

On March 7, 1872, Representative Sherman Noughton from California, by unanimous consent, submitted the following resolution, which was read, considered and agreed to; "Resolved that the President of the United States be . . . requested to transmit to Congress any and all correspondence and documents received by him relating to the application of the inhabitants of the Navigator Islands . . . to have the protection of the Government of the United States extended over said Islands."¹⁷ Slightly more than two months later, Senator Cole, also from California, submitted a resolution in the Senate proposing that the United States afford protection to the Navigator Islands. Just a few days later, May 22, President Grant transmitted the Meade Treaty to the Senate with his endorsement. He said, referring to Meade, "Although he was without special instructions or authority to enter into such agreement, the advantageous position of Tutuila, especially as a coaling station for steamers . . . that I should not hesitate to recommend its approval but for the protection on the part of the United States which it seems to

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 6-7, enclosure 4, Hamilton Fish to A. B. Steinberger, March 29, 1873.

¹⁷ Congressional Globe, Pt. 2, 42 Cong., 2 sess., pp. 1509-10. Ryden, Samoa, p. 75.

imply. With some modification of the obligation of protection which the agreement imports, it is recommended to the favorable consideration of the Senate."¹⁸ The protection implication must have been too much for the Senate, however, for the Meade Treaty never came back from the Committee on Foreign Affairs to which it was referred.

Meade left Samoa on March 12, 1872, after a sojourn of less than one month.¹⁹ Less than forty days later, the Chiefs at Apia signed a petition addressed to President Grant, asking for the annexation of the entire group of the United States. Dated April 9, 1872, the translation of the petition, certified by Dr. G. A. Turner, a member of the London Missionary Society read, "We, the Chiefs and rulers of Samoa deem it necessary for our future well-being and better establishment of Christianity, free institutions, fellowship of mankind, protection of life, and property, and to secure the blessings of liberty and free trade to ourselves and future generations, do petition the President of the United States of America to annex these our islands to the United States of America."²⁰ This petition was taken to New York by J. B. M. Stewart, of the Central Polynesian Land and Commercial Company. Stewart gave the petition to W. M. Webb for presentation to the President. The petition was received and acknowledged but it never appeared before the Senate.²¹

¹⁸ Richardson, Messages and Papers. Vol. 7, 168-169. House Executive Doc., No. 161, 44 Cong., 1 sess.

¹⁹ Ryden, Samoa, p. 70.

²⁰ House Executive Doc., No. 161, p. 4, encl. 2, Stewart to Webb, June 28, 1872.

²¹ Masterman, International Rivalry, p. 115. Brookes, International Rivalry, p. 322.

J. B. M. Stewart had been associated with his brother in a land venture in Tahiti. They had organized "the Central Polynesian Land and Commercial Company," incorporated under the laws of California, for the "purchase of lands in the Navigator Islands and sale, lease or otherwise disposing of same." The Company Charter also proposed the formation of a coaling station for the United States, New Zealand and Australian Mail Steamship Line, and the establishment of a central Polynesian depot to be connected with various groups in the South Pacific. Webb had an option to buy at cost price 54/100 of all lands purchased. Stewart planned to buy land around Pago Pago harbor and sell at a profit after a coaling station was established. Stewart had arrived in Samoa soon after Meade left and purchased from several chiefs, he claimed, four hundred and fourteen square miles of land.²² Webb, however, informed Stewart that he would not be able to take up his option until he received aid from Congress. Upon learning this, Stewart made an unsuccessful attempt to raise money in London in order to obtain enough capital to purchase additional land and also to expand his distributing business into Fiji, Tahiti, and Tonga.²³

The success of the Central Polynesian Land and Commercial Company depended upon a rapid development of the Samoan Islands, which would enable the company to sell land at a profit. The failure of Congress to ratify the Meade Treaty threatened the destruction of Stewart's plans as well as the Webb Steamship line. Stewart and Webb needed a naval station

²² Masternan, International Rivalry, pp. 114-115. H. Stonehewer Cooper, Coral Islands, (London, 1880), Vol. II, 32. Hereafter cited as Cooper, Islands.

²³ Cooper, Islands, II, 35-37.

at Pago Pago as stipulated in the treaty. Without it and the United States interest it implied, the real estate business was not profitable, and the steamship line would have to bear the burden of establishing a coaling station.

Stewart was in Washington during the summer of 1872. In August, Webb reached an understanding with A. B. Steinberger, who had been a clerk for Stewart in San Francisco, that President Grant be asked to secure the appointment of Steinberger as a special commissioner to Samoa.²⁴ It is possible that Stewart suggested that Webb recommend Steinberger for this task.²⁵ At any rate, Steinberger met with President Grant at Long Branch, New Jersey, on August 16. After some delay, he was officially appointed on March 29, 1873, to serve as a special agent at twelve dollars per day for expenses, but no salary. In the same letter which confirmed his appointment, Secretary of State Fish enclosed these instructions. "It is not unlikely that perhaps in the most distant future the interests of the United States may require, not only a naval station in the Samoan group, but a harbour where steam and other vessels also may freely and securely frequent. Full and accurate information in regard to the islands will be necessary to enable the Government here to determine as to the measures which may be advisable toward attaining that object."²⁶

Steinberger sailed from San Francisco June 29, 1873, remaining in Samoa until December.²⁷ During this visit of slightly more than five

²⁴ ibid., p. 38.

²⁵ Masterman, International Rivalry, p. 117.

²⁶ ibid.

²⁷ Ryden, Samoa, p. 89.

months Steinberger was presented with a new petition for U. S. annexation. Though he took no definite action, he may have given the native chiefs the false impression of the possibility of the United States extending a protectorate over them. In at least one case he intervened in a problem between the natives and the German consul in such a way that the assumption could have been made that the United States had already accepted the responsibility of protecting the islands.²⁸

In October, Chief Malietoa Laupepa at Moata'a, Upolu, addressed a letter to President Grant, giving it to Steinberger for delivery. In this letter, Malietoa expressed pleasure, "with regard to the union between our government."²⁹ On the very same day, October 4, 1873, Steinberger received a letter from certain foreign residents, expressing their views with regard to the establishment of a protectorate over the Samoan Islands by the United States. Signed by the Chairman and Secretary of the London Missionary Society, the letter read, ". . . we assure you, (1) That we believe the expressed desire of the Samoans for a United States protectorate is a bona-fide wish on the part of chiefs and people generally of Upolu, Savai'i and Manono. (2) That we, and our mission generally, heartily concur in the desire of our people for the protectorate believing that . . . it will be the saving of the race."³⁰

The British Foreign Office was soon to receive word with regard to this request by British citizens for an American protectorate. British

²⁸ ibid., p. 110.

²⁹ "Steinberger Report", Senate Executive Documents No. 45, 43 Cong., 1 sess., encl. E. Hereafter cited as Steinberger Report.

³⁰ ibid.

consul Williams reported from Sydney that:

a few days before I left Samoa on the 13th of September, Col. Steinberger the United States Special Commissioner sent to inquire into the resources /resources/ of the Navigator Islands arrived and had two interviews with the Chiefs and rulers. The first interview was for the purpose of ascertaining if the Samoans were still desirous of having the American Protectorate . . . From the conversation I had with Col. Steinberger, I believe he will report favorably on the islands and recommend the establishing the Protectorate as the Chiefs and Rulers are united and in favor of it. A majority of the foreign residents are desirous of having it also.³¹

In spite of what Steinberger might have said while in the islands, in his report made after his return to Washington, he said, "I told the government officials and Chiefs that I had no power to treat with them; that my instructions were to gather facts and report the same, and that this I hoped faithfully to do, but that I had no pledge upon the part of my government to make, and our meeting ended."³² Steinberger had not presented his position so clearly, however, in a letter he addressed to the Upolu Chiefs in October. In it he said, "I am deeply sensible of the necessity for law and an established government upon these islands. I regard it as being necessary for the salvation of the Samoans that some government extend to them power and protection . . . Your petition I will present to our Government of the United States. I will carry with me your hopes; your prayers will be in my mind and heart."³³

Other letters and petitions asking for annexation were received by Steinberger before he left for Washington in December 1873. The "Chiefs

³¹ Williams to FO, Sydney, October 28, 1873, BPRO:FO 58/137.

³² Steinberger Report, p. 40.

³³ ibid., encl. C. 2.

and Rulers of Samoa" said that annexation by the United States was necessary for the future well-being of the Islands.³⁴ Chief Mauga at Tutuila, in a letter addressed to President Grant, said, "We know that you are a great people, with many ships and many warriors, but that you are all united in peace, that you cultivate the soil, build great homes, make great roads and talk to each through the air. We want the same, and pray for the aid, protection, and friendship of the President of the United States . . . We want unity and laws and beg you to come and instruct us in concord and law-making, extending to us the protection of your excellency's great Government."³⁵

Steinberger's replies to these earnest appeals for American intervention, indicate that he found it difficult to remember the instructions that Secretary of State Hamilton Fish had given him before his departure. Fish had cautioned Steinberger to remember "that you are not a regular diplomatic agent, formally accredited to another government, but an informal one, of a special and confidential character, appointed for the sole purpose of obtaining full and accurate information in regard to the Navigator's Islands."³⁶ Without actually promising protection, Steinberger had, nevertheless, given the impression that he was the official representative of the United States Government. The appeals of the native rulers reflected the confidence which they placed in Steinberger. "We know," wrote Chief Ta'imua to President Grant, "the object for which he/Steinberger/ was appointed, and the reason for which he came to Samoa; that is,

³⁴ Cooper, Islands, 11, 33.

³⁵ Steinberger Report, p. 41, encl. A 1.

³⁶ Fish to Steinberger, March 29, 1873, ibid.

the union between the government of Samoa and America. We very much desire that affairs to be confirmed."³⁷

Steinberger spent nearly a year in and around Washington before he returned to Samoa, at his own request, but bearing the mantle of authority afforded him by an official Presidential appointment. Fish cautioned Steinberger, as he prepared to depart for his second visit to Samoa, that it was deemed inexpedient "to originate a measure adverse to the usual traditions of the Government, and which, there probably would not receive such sanction as would be likely to secure its success."³⁸ Steinberger carried with him a letter from President Grant addressed to the Samoan government, in which Grant stated that Steinberger had been "authorized to visit you, for purpose of informing me of the progress of your affairs since he left you."³⁹

This time Steinberger overreached the bounds set for him by his instructions, and became involved in unorthodox relationships with the Chiefs and rulers of Samoa. Incurring the wrath of both the British and American consuls, he was deported in 1876. Webb and Stewart gained nothing from Steinberger's visits, nor did the United States. The government had, however, through the two Steinberger missions, expressed a positive interest in the Samoan islands that within three decades would culminate in a treaty, a protectorate, and eventually, partial annexation.

³⁷ Ta'imua to Grant, October 6, 1873, p. 40, ibid.

³⁸ House Executive Document, No. 161, 44 Cong., 1 sess., p. 76; Dulles, American In Pacific, p. 106.

³⁹ Ryden, Samoa, p. 118.

CHAPTER VII
CENTRAL PACIFIC INTERESTS BY 1872

By 1872 it seemed that territorial expansion in Polynesia had come to an end with the failure of the Neade Treaty with Samoa to reach the Senate floor. One reason for this was to be found in the decline in the interests which had brought Americans into the Pacific in the first place. Another factor was the assumption that the British and French were destined to control the central Pacific. Still another reason for what appeared to be the cessation of American interest in Polynesia outside of Hawaii was the internal change taking place in the American economy by the 1870's.

The most dramatic change in American activity in the Pacific, by 1870, was probably the decline of the whaling industry. American pre-eminence in this enterprise had been recognized by 1842, and all-time records were set in 1846 and 1847. Large scale operations had continued without any sharp decline, until the outbreak of the Civil War, and until this time, whalers continued to operate in much the same way as they had for the previous fifty years.¹ It was the Civil War period, however, that witnessed a sharp decline in the whaling industry. Between 1861 and 1866, the American whaling fleet decreased forty-nine per cent--from five hundred and fourteen vessels to two hundred and sixty-three.² Some whaling ships were used as merchantmen in the prosecution of the war. Others continued to search for whales under the Hawaiian flag or were tied up to the home wharves where many remained to rot away after the war.

¹ Hohman, American Whalers, pp. 41-42.

² Ibid., p. 290.

The Civil War was an immediate and obvious reason for the decline in the American whaling industry. There were, however, other causes that were observable several years before the war. Foremost among these causes was the increasing difficulty whalers were experiencing in finding whales. Grounds were either being fished out or the whales were becoming shy and wary. This fact alone meant that the whalers had to make longer voyages in order to obtain a profitable cargo of oil and bone. Consequently, the whaling business became more costly each year, since longer voyages meant increased operating costs as total production decreased.

The increasing use of petroleum after the war rapidly undermined the market for whale oil. The daily yield of oil from the Pennsylvania fields rose rapidly after Drake's successful strike in 1859. Production soon exceeded demand and the price of petroleum dropped to the point where whale oil could not possibly be sold in the same market. The increased use of natural and manufactured gas also cut into the whaling industry. As if this were not enough to forecast complete ruin for the whalers, industries that had created a demand for whalebone began to use steel instead. These factors, added to the loss of thirty-three additional vessels in the Arctic ice, had by 1871, dealt the whale fishery a blow from which it never recovered. During the year 1871, sixty-eight ships totaling 16,671 tons, passed out of whaling leaving the industry with only two hundred whalers and a tonnage of fifty-two thousand.³

A general decline in all shipping, at Central and South Pacific

³ ibid., pp. 294-295.

ports, was reported by American commercial agents. In 1868 Brower reported to Washington, "our whaling vessels find valuable cruising ground about the outskirts of the group but seldom come to this port." Commenting on all shipping in Fiji, Brower continued, "It is to be noticed that our merchants of Boston, Salem and New York who in years past had almost the a monopoly of the trade of Fiji now do entirely abandoned it . . . of vessels touching at this port during the past year, forty-five were British, three Hamburg and one Fijian . . . It will be observed from my report that the entire commerce of this group is now conducted in British and German vessels touching." Suggesting that Fiji and other South Pacific ports still offered opportunity for trade and even territorial aggrandizement, Brower added, "American manufactures of almost any variety would now find ready sale now at remuneration and an extensive trade might with advantage be carried on between this and Pacific outposts . . . I would venture to suggest that the establishment of a Naval Depot by the United States in Southern Polynesia would add much to our commercial advantages and perhaps contribute to our prestige as a Naval power. The Southernmost Island of this group possesses many natural advantages in harbors and position of the lands are largely owned by United States citizens."⁴ Brower, by this time, had considerable commercial interests of his own that would have benefited by an increase in American shipping and the establishment of a depot or coaling station.

Brower reported that only one ship from the United States entered and cleared the port of Levuka, Ovalau, Fiji in 1867. In addition to

⁴ Brower to Seward, September 30, 1868, USDS: CD, Lauthala, Vol. IV.

this lone vessel, he listed ten from Australasian ports and three from the Navigator Islands.⁵ For the same year, Coe, at Apia, in reporting the commercial relations of the United States with foreign nations, remarked that trade was dull and limited; that there was a decrease in shipping, most vessels being British guano vessels homeward bound. Coe, on a table showing the number of vessels entered and cleared at Apia in the year 1866, listed only one American ship of three hundred and seventy-five tons. Of the remaining forty-nine, thirty-seven were British, one French, ten German, and one from Tahiti.⁶ Under these conditions, Washington experienced some difficulty in getting consuls or agents to accept proffered posts because of the lack of fee-paying American shipping at Pacific ports. Several years later, American shipping at Samoa had increased only slightly. Of the one hundred and five vessels stopping at Apia during 1873, forty-seven were German, fifty British, and only eight American.⁷

During the Civil War many attempts were made to cultivate cotton in the South Pacific to replace the sharp decline in cotton production in the United States. For several years South Sea cotton looked most promising. An advertisement in a Honolulu newspaper in 1867, a peak year for island cotton, read, "Cotton wanted in the seed. Will pay cash on delivery. Marquesan, Tahitian, or Fiji Sea Island cotton will always receive highest price obtainable. Pure Sea Island seed supplied to applicants without charge." Editor H. M. Whitney added this note: "There

⁵ House Executive Documents, No. 160, 40 Cong., 2 sess.

⁶ Ibid., p. 720.

⁷ Brookes, International Rivalry, p. 270, 342.

is no crop more apt to pay a sure and handsome income to the planter."⁸ Not many months passed, however, before the Southern plantations in the United States revived sufficiently to cause a collapse in the boom prices offered for South Sea cotton. The collapse of France, during the early months of the Franco-Prussian war, in 1870, and the subsequent disruption of French production also affected the island cotton trade.⁹

The relationship between American shipping and the interest of the United States Government in the Pacific after 1872 was not absolute. The Civil War period had witnessed the beginning of a general decline in shipping. Yet after the war some in the United States continued looking ambitiously outward. The completion of the Panama railway in 1855 and the transcontinental railway in 1869 made it possible to ship goods from the East coast of the United States to the Pacific with comparative ease and rapidity. This led to the establishment of steamship lines across the Pacific and new demands for coaling stations, forcing Washington to recognize the desirability of acquiring insular territories. By 1872, the age of the commercial agent-consul-diplomat was drawing to a close, and the United States was destined to become involved in the international problems associated with annexation.

The purchase of Alaska and the acquisition of Midway Island have often been referred to as proof that the United States had, by 1867, entered into a period of territorial expansion into non-contiguous areas. It has been suggested that this marked the beginning of American imperialism in the Pacific. Territorial acquisition, however, confined to

⁸ Advertiser, June 22, 1867.

⁹ Derrick, History of Fiji, p. 127.

Alaska and Midway at this time, seemed to have reached an end by 1872. In the decade prior to this, a number of individuals had expressed sentiments in favor of expansion into the Pacific, but, excluding the two exceptions just mentioned, their plans failed to culminate in acquisition.

American annexation proposals came through the initiative of individuals, not by direction of the Federal Government. Some persons were seeking pecuniary gain. Others felt that the United States should annex areas in order to save them from being engulfed by other powers. Missionaries favored annexation as a way to provide greater opportunity for promulgating their gospel message among native peoples. In these ways American interest in annexation in Polynesia emanated from individuals, not from Washington.

Commodore Matthew C. Perry was one of the few Americans with broader vision. Tyler Dennett expressed the view that Perry was the first official to view the commercial and political problems of the Pacific as a unity. Dennett said, "No American before his time, and few after, ever had such extensive ambition."¹⁰ Perry was, perhaps, the forerunner of many who felt that the acquisition of Pacific ports of refuge was a minimum requirement for an expanding America. The Civil War, however, focused attention upon problems nearer home, and after the war domestic issues continued to dominate American interests for the next thirty years.

Another person who was ready for expansion into the Pacific, but was in a better position than Perry, to augment his designs with political

¹⁰ Tyler Dennett, "Seward's Far Eastern Policy", American Historical Review, XXVII (October, 1922), 45. Dulles, America in Pacific, p. 66.

and administrative power, was William H. Seward. As Secretary of State during the Lincoln and Johnson administrations, Seward consistently pursued a policy of expansion, highlighted by the purchase of Alaska. His zeal for expansionism was expressed by Andrew Johnson in his annual message to Congress, December 9, 1868. Seward was responsible for the portion of the message which declared, "Comprehensive national policy would seem to sanction the acquisition and incorporation into our Federal Union of the several adjacent continental and insular communities as speedily as it can be done peacefully, lawfully, and without any violation of national justice, faith, and honor."¹¹ In addressing the Senate, he said that European commerce, politics, thought, and activity would sink in relative importance, while the Pacific Ocean, its shores, its islands, and the vast regions beyond, will become the chief theater of events in the world's great hereafter."¹² Seward urged surveys of the Pacific and promoted commerce in the Far East. It is with some justification that he has been referred to as the "prophet of the new Pacific era."¹³

Seward's service as Secretary of State came to an end as Grant's first term as President began. Interest in the Pacific seemed to carry over from one to the other. It has been noted that Grant gave his support to a treaty in Samoa which would have provided for the establish-

¹¹ Richardson, Messages and Papers, Vol. IX, 3886. Julius W. Pratt, America's Colonial Experiment (N.Y., 1950), p. 7.

¹² George E. Baker, ed., Works of William H. Seward, 5 Vol. (Boston, 1884), III, 409.

¹³ Dulles, America in Pacific, p. 63. J. M. Callahan, American Relations in the Pacific and the Far East, p. 52.

ment of a naval station there. The administration's interest in Pacific expansion was enhanced by the appointment of Henry A. Peirce as minister to the Hawaiian Kingdom, in 1869. America's interests in the North and South Pacific were cared for with great diligence by Peirce. Congressional dread of distant possessions, however, delayed the acquisition of Samoa and other possible island territory. Carl Schurz, Senator from Missouri, for example, argued in 1868, that "to govern tropical islands as dependencies--satrapies," would, "demoralize and corrupt our political life beyond any degree yet conceived of."¹⁴ A basis for such Congressional opposition to territorial expansion and colonization had been given by Chief Justice Taney. In his opinion in the Dred Scott decision in 1857, Taney wrote, "there is certainly no power given by the constitution of the Federal Government to establish or maintain colonies bordering on the United States or at a distance, to be ruled and governed at its own pleasure, nor to enlarge its territorial limits in any way, except by the admission of new states."¹⁵

The Senate and the House did not look with favor upon Pacific acquisition and annexation in 1872 nor for some years thereafter. The administrative set-up of the United States Government provided no specific, definite authority or procedure for making claims to territory, as Chief Justice Taney had reminded the government in 1857. The anti-imperialists, therefore, had their own way for a time. The policy of the United States was one in which expansion beyond our shores was looked upon with disfavor. This policy was reiterated by Secretary of State Freylinghausen in

¹⁴ Congressional Globe, 41 Cong., 3 sess. p. 225.

¹⁵ U.S. Supreme Court Reports (Rochester, N.Y., 1901), Bk. 15, S.C. 19, Howard 393-633, p. 718.

1882, when he said, "the policy of this government . . . has tended toward avoidance of possessions disconnected from the main continent."¹⁶ In 1885, Secretary of State Bayard stated, "the policy of the United States . . . discountenances and in practice forbids distant colonial acquisitions." The policy of the administration, at this time, was further expressed by President Cleveland, when he said, "I do not favor a policy of acquisition of new or distant territory, or in the incorporation of remote interests with our own."¹⁷

Within the next two decades the United States departed from its traditional policy of no entangling alliances abroad. During Cleveland's first administration the groundwork was laid for a subsequent program of annexation inspite of the fact that the President was personally opposed to territorial expansion. A new urge for 'manifest destiny' was carried forward by the Republican administration of Benjamin Harrison. This new 'manifest destiny,' delayed during Cleveland's second term, within the decade culminated in the acquisition of far-flung territories across the vast Pacific, when policy-making bodies began to feel the influence of Admiral Thayer Mahan, Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, and Theodore Roosevelt. The interest of this group of expansionists was expressed by Roosevelt when he said, "The Mediterranean era died with the discovery of America. The Atlantic era is now at the height of its development and must soon exhaust the resources at its command. The Pacific era, destined to be the greatest of all . . . is just at the

¹⁶ Leff, Pacific Islets, p. 1.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 2.

down."¹⁸ Under the leadership of these men, a new era of expansionism, bearing tangible fruit, marked the Republican administration at the close of the nineteenth century.

¹⁸ Department of State, (Confidential) Series D, No. 79, "The Islands of the Pacific," Papers Relating to Pacific and Far Eastern Affairs Prepared for the Use of the American Delegation to the Conference on the Limitation of Armament, Washington, 1921-1922, p. 1057.

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